



**Dorset Gardens Trust Schools**



**e-newsletter 32 - February 2024**

**A belated Happy New Year and welcome to the Spring term!**

**Rain, winds, ice - brrr your school gardens have had a pounding but we look forward to warmer days and plans for planting new bulbs, sowing seeds and enjoying being outdoors!**

**Hot give-aways!!**

Help the pollinators in your school garden by creating a beautiful wildflower area. The DGT Schools Group have some annual seed packets to cover an area of 1m square to give away. Do apply to your school's DGT visitor for more information. The packets will be sent out at the beginning of next term together with full sowing instructions.

We also have some snowdrops which can be planted in the green. We only have a limited number so we are afraid it will be the case of 'First come - first served.'



Please let us know your interest either through your school visitor or by emailing [schools@dorsetgardenstrust.co.uk](mailto:schools@dorsetgardenstrust.co.uk)

Don't forget - for more up to date information and help please go to the DGT website schools page

<https://www.dorsetgardenstrust.co.uk/schools>

We are always thrilled when we can check out a finished garden project that a school has worked on and can present them with our DGT Plaque - well done to all at **All Saints Primary School** at Bishops Caudle.



This was awarded for completion of their extensive newly planted and landscaped garden area which includes an avenue of fruit trees, forest school, raised vegetable beds and an amphitheatre. We heard about the project at the Twilight Training Session at Milton on Stour.

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Congratulations also to Ben Smiley, the new ECOLead at **Shaftesbury CofE Primary**, who came up with great plans for developing a large open playing field to be more wildlife (and child) friendly. He obtained 500 saplings of mixed woodland hedging from The Woodland Trust and advice from a local Shaftesbury group on planning the planting. He approached us for a grant for tools to be used on the planting day and afterwards for gardening groups.



In November there was a whole school day of planting, which was brilliantly organised, with every child involved at some point. We are hoping that at some point Ben will be able to share his experience of managing and raising funds for this venture and report back on development of the site

## WE HAVE SOME ADVICE FROM OUR DGT AMBASSADOR VICKY MYERS ON HOW TO WELCOME WILDLIFE INTO YOUR SCHOOL GARDEN



All school gardens attract wildlife, but over the last few years at **Mudford Infant School**, we seem to have created a haven for nature. We generally keep our raised beds tidy, but around them things are rather neglected, quite overgrown and look a bit messy. This relaxed approach to garden management seems to have given our local wildlife a chance to explode. We see newts, frogs, slow worms, foxes, all kinds of birds, squirrels, evidence of hedgehogs and endless butterflies and bees in our education sessions with the children. Some of you may also have gardens full of wildlife, but these are a few of the things that may have helped us take the wildlife to the next level.

- We have a pond which is the best way to encourage wildlife to a garden and endless fun for children. It doesn't have to be big, we also have an old washing up bowl dug into the ground as a small pond under a hedge.



- Two bug hotels. We have made these with full size pallets that were delivered free from Stewarts garden centre. We have also topped our bug hotels with old pond liner to keep the residents inside nice and dry. Here is

<https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/resources/project/make-a-bug-hotel>

- One of our six raised beds is dedicated to pollinating plants. We have a mallow, Buddleia, anemones, catmint, lavender, Teucrium, and other plants that flower throughout the year to encourage bees and butterflies.

- Two hedgehog houses - we bought our hedgehog houses from New Milton Hedgehog Rescue and they are big boxes with an entry tunnel and waterproof roof. We prepare them with some newspaper on the bottom, then stuff them

full(ish) with straw and leaves, before hiding them in quiet corners of the garden. Also, we checked our hogs can move around the school grounds by looking for (or creating) holes 13cm x 13cm for hogs to pass through.

- Mature trees. We are lucky to have inherited a huge pine tree and a pretty big oak tree within the fenced area of the garden.
- Log and rotting wood piles - whenever we cut down bigger branches we make brushwood piles around the edge of the garden for things to hide in.
- Weed banks. We leave weeds in some places, and when we pull out grass and weeds, we stuff the cuttings under our mature hedges for more thing to hide in!

When we started the gardening at the Infant school, we never realized how much potential our space had to offer as a habitat for wildlife. But minimal gardening effort seems to have worked in our favour. So my advice to other school garden custodians looking to encourage more wildlife in their patches is to embrace the messy. I am even thinking about making a sign saying 'Wildlife Welcome... You will not be Disturbed'.



We are very grateful to our Schools' Ambassadors for sharing their experience and expertise.



Sadly Ruth Steele, whose contributions you will have seen in previous newsletters, is now retiring and taking time out to spend time with grandchildren in the USA, but we hope to continue links with her on her return. She has made major contributions to two Twilight sessions, as well as generously sharing her expertise on site in the garden she has developed at Shaftesbury Abbey Primary School.

**We were asked by one school about which tools are best for young children and we are most grateful to Steve from Milton on Stour school for this advice:**

- I take about 10 pupils each gardening session and would recommend, if possible, getting enough tools for each child to have one of each; most of the tools I originally bought we still have after twenty years.
- I have a spade, fork, hand fork and trowel for each pupil, plus four rakes. However, I found that the hand forks were not of great use.
- the other thing to remember is to get the child sized spades and forks
- the tools are quite expensive but it is not worth trying to get cheap ones as they just break very quickly. It can cost about £35 per spade or fork.\*
- do get wooden handles, you can always replace them if they get broken.

\*The DGT Schools Group obtained the tools we gave away in the autumn from the building materials group Bradfords and they were about £10 each



*Many thanks to Steve, who is always generous in sharing his expertise.*

**Note:** you might be interested in a photo of a school in the 1920s with their garden tools and also the complete tool sets that Prince Albert provided for his children at Osborne House.



