

The past year has been extremely challenging for our group.

As we had quite a mild start to last year we did manage to create a new area by the pond which previously had become unworthy of planting due to soil condition. Most of these plants had come from our own gardens or donated from local residents.

Any attention to the gardens during the first lockdown such as watering was done by one of our volunteers.

At the beginning of June when we resumed as a group socially distancing in our home bubbles where possible and working in separate areas of the gardens that needed attention. Some of us had been cultivating or receiving plant donations during lockdown. We also gained extra volunteers as people who were furloughed came out to help.

We had made plans during our final meeting last March to put forward to LTC but these were shelved because of the uncertainty of the length of the pandemic. I have included a rough plan of our proposal. We have funding in place for this project and Robert Breakspear has detailed drawings and timber pricing from Smith's timber yard. Ideally this should be situated in the sunken or Japanese gardens.

Although we have been unable to hold normal committee meetings we have been able to discuss future projects and plans during our volunteer sessions.

One such project that has arisen is to produce an area to recognise this awful situation we are going through and have something more positive and a way to move forward from a dark time.

A garden to portray the rainbow colours which have become significant during this pandemic.

This could be known as the "rainbow walk" or as it would be in the area of the old vagaries the "nightingale walk". Rough plan of ideas is supplied.

During a spell of near normal we were able to host a heritage day in September. We had a very successful afternoon and it was well supported.

Our followers have continued to be very supportive of our involvement in the gardens and appreciate that the gardens are a fantastic attribute to Lowestoft. This encourages our group to continue enhancing this public open space to gain its full potential, and hope that more events can be held there when possible.

Shortly before restrictions came into place again in November we were out in force to do some much needed mulching and a final push to plant bulbs.

We were also involved in the seagull theatres walking pantomime and hosted a magical section of the walk decorating and lighting up the gardens to entertain families at a time that was so important to show local support for a community event.

Our Facebook page and chat group does give us the opportunity to put forward ideas and allows followers of the group to comment or bring their own ideas to attention.

Three areas which have come up in discussion are the border opposite the "first light" or "long border" could do with attention as many of the shrubs need replacing. Looking back at old postcards of this area this was planted with mostly hydrangeas, they survive well in these conditions and give abundant flowering for a prolonged season. We could even attempt a varied collection to attract visitors.

A replacement "Peter Pan" statue to be re-instated for the centenary of the gardens in June 2022.

A fountain in the centre of the boating lake.

Not only a welcome feature for the gardens but also create movement in the water and reduce the risk of algae forming, which has become a persistent problem.

From the Friends of Kensington gardens.