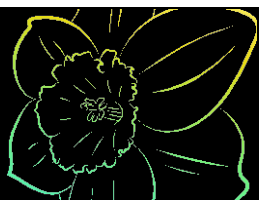


ABERGAVENNY IN BLOOM

PORTFOLIO 2023



Abergavenny
In Bloom

Welcome to the Gateway to Wales!

Abergavenny in Bloom is delighted to welcome RHS Britain in Bloom to our beautiful town. Our group is made up of over 100 volunteers covering more than 10 different groups, all working towards making Abergavenny a vibrant and beautiful place to live, work and visit. (<https://youtu.be/a-mm3GUv8is>)

Since 2022's Wales in Bloom, our group has come together under the Abergavenny In Bloom banner. With 4 Green Flag awards held by groups in the town, we wanted to showcase the incredible work and commitment that is put into maintaining and improving the green spaces in and around Abergavenny, from community litter picks, to spring picnics, to 'guerrilla gardening', encouraging participation in annual events and activities which continue to return and thrive since the pandemic:

July 22: Integrated Youth Event organised by 7Corners in Bailey Park – encourages all generations to engage with the younger people of the town, using the green space in Bailey Park.
Cattle arrive for 6 months' grazing on Castle Meadows.

Sept 22: Hay crop taken in the Community Orchard. Juicing event organised by the Community Orchard Group, held at the Abergavenny Community Centre.
Annual town-wide Food Festival returns showcasing local produce.

Nov 22: Christmas Light Parade around the town encouraging families to be outside and enjoy the winter weather with outside seating areas enhanced by the annual plant displays.

Dec 22: Christmas Event with Friends of Bailey Park and Monmouthshire Housing Association at the Pavilion encouraging volunteering, highlighting the wellbeing benefits of using the park in winter months.

Jan 23: Floods across Castle Meadows – cattle that usually remain on the Meadows until the end of January had to be removed due to the rainfall experienced causing the meadows to flood for three days.

Feb 23: Wassail held in Community Orchard, attended by over 150 people, involving children in the ceremony to bless orchards to ensure a good harvest for the year to come.



Bus Station Improvement Project is started, with the three raised beds cleared and the mill wheel relocated.

March 23: Pruning and grafting workshop held in the Community Orchard

April 23: FIT (Flower-Insect Timed) Count training carried out with volunteers and schoolchildren to encourage citizen science to monitor insect biodiversity in our green spaces. (<https://ukpoms.org.uk/fit-counts>)

New roof decorations for 2023 Food Festival installed in the Market Hall, showcasing organic growing. (<https://youtu.be/7TknM9HI55E> - Market Hall)

May 23: Planting and completion of new Mill Wheel Herb Bed at entrance to Community Orchard to encourage Community Growing.

(<https://youtu.be/v8e3mwkFHHs> - Mill Wheel)

Greater Gwent Goes Wild Event in Bailey Park – 5 counties of Gwent came together to showcase the natural environment across South Wales, with talks and activities by NRW, BBNPA, Friends of Castle Meadows, Friends of Linda Vista Gardens, and Friends of Bailey Park. (<https://youtu.be/LRubZL5kigE> - Greater Gwent Goes Wild)

Reprint of Exploring Places in Nature Leaflet – originally funded by Local Places for Nature grant, this very popular walk is now in demand by our Tourist Information Office as a top recommendation for visitors to the town.

June 23: Water/Soil Sensor Project started with 6 soil sensors ordered for locating in town centre planters. Dashboard for data will be able to monitor moisture levels and can link in to weather forecasts to enable better understanding of when planters need to be watered and how often.

<https://youtu.be/AgPvBG4SsKY> - Sandra Rosser Interview

<https://youtu.be/LwTDZr2goFU> - Mayor Cllr Anne Wilde Interview

As we go into July, and celebrate the 75th Birthday of the NHS, we hope to continue promoting the enormous benefits of green prescribing and wellbeing benefits of being outside & enjoying the natural world. Abergavenny In Bloom are linking with the Community Team at Nevill Hall Hospital to start on a project to work with staff and patients to improve their gardens and green spaces in readiness for the new cancer unit now being built on the site.

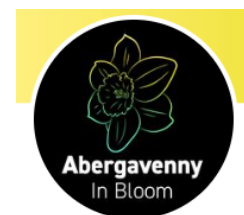


Abergavenny
In Bloom

Meet the Team!!

Abergavenny Town Council

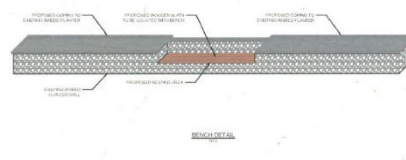
We have continued to act as a facilitator for a growing number of community groups to be involved with Abergavenny in Bloom. We've held regular meetings with all of the groups and shared feedback on their individual plans and projects.



Together we decided to brand Abergavenny in Bloom and have created a logo, and launched a Facebook page. We are working towards wider social media engagement and are creating an Abergavenny in Bloom portal on our newly developed website, which will host not just regular photos and updates but also video footage of all the groups project work throughout the year.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089878944076>

We have continued to fulfil our environmental improvement plan and have started work on the Bus Station area. Griffiths Engineering have assisted us in drawing up a scheme to refurbish the walls of the beds and include seating. This work is being done pro bono as part of their community engagement. The beds have been cleared,



including the removal of a cast iron mill wheel, which has been taken and used as a feature bed at the entrance of the Community Orchard. Meanwhile, the beds are in preparation for planting by removing the existing vegetation, mulching the soil, and sowing green manure.



Abergavenny
In Bloom



As part of the town improvements, the Amberol Planters which had been in use for 24 years have all been replaced along with a review of the locations and styles. The old planters have been repurposed and donated to schools and community organisations. We have engaged with

the Business Community to encourage participation in Abergavenny in Bloom with hanging baskets.



As we embark on our Smart Town project, our first initiative will be to use soil moisture sensors in our beds and planters to monitor and conserve watering, to ensure we have optimum conditions for growing plants. Additionally, we are piloting rainwater collection from commercial premises to assist with the watering of planters in the town.

In conjunction with MCC Green Infrastructure, we have undertaken a Citizen Science project to monitor pollinator biodiversity in areas around the town. The training (FIT Pollinator programme) was undertaken by enthusiastic intergenerational volunteers



in April looking at areas in and around Castle Meadows and the Community Orchard. As a result, rare orchids and a black oil beetle were recorded, as well as different



bee species: *Anthophora plumipes* (male) from the car park, *Anthophora plumipes* (male) from the orchard, *Osmia bicornis* (male) from the orchard, and *Andrena fulva* (female) from the orchard.



On 20th May 2023, the Mayor unveiled a mural of a Peacock Butterfly at the Greater Gwent Goes Wild event in Bailey Park. The event was attended by environmental groups including all of those that participate in Abergavenny in Bloom, and there was a Pollinator Parade for children who had made wings as part of engagement workshops that MCC Gwent Green Grid Project had undertaken in the spring.



Abergavenny
In Bloom

Our Lady and Saint Michael's RC Primary School

Over the last year we have developed our school grounds to achieve the following targets:

1. Improve the school allotment areas, allowing children to appreciate the process of growing, cultivating, and cooking vegetables and fruit.
2. Improve the biodiversity of the school grounds by planting hedging plants, more pollinator plants, a new community woodland and an orchard.
3. As a school to develop the local green corridor supporting the local 'looking after our pollinators' agenda.



School environmental development.

<https://youtu.be/LH5D17RJIE>



Our allotments have been prepared for planting much earlier in the year. Our peace garden has been maintained with our gardening club working with school parents to re-lay a gravel path, regularly weeding the entire area, adding a wormery to allow for ecological plant feed, and flowers such as snowdrops, to increase the period that flowering plants appear in the area. Via the Woodland Trust 'My Tree, Our Forest' project we planted 40 additional trees to continue to develop a hedge in the school.



Abergavenny
In Bloom

Vegetable plots



This year our gardening club has been supported by a grandparent and a father to support our understanding of vegetable planting and seasonality. In the autumn we planted garlic, Japanese onions and broad beans which overwintered and will allow early crops to be harvested this year. We also reinstated our compost bins.

Our kitchen garden area has been removed of bindweed and over winter we improved the soil condition adding well-rotted manure and covering the beds to prevent weeds.

Front garden area.

This year our front garden areas will focus on planting pollinator friendly flowers with the help of a donation of flowers from Morrison's of Bio lavender, sunflower and calendula.

Community engagement



We have worked with our local church to develop a green space into a Parish/school woodland. The woodland has 14 rowan trees, 14 silver birches and 2 oak trees that have been donated by school parents/carers via the Woodland Trust 'My Tree, Our Forest' project. These trees have been planted by our Year 6 class along with their buddies in our Reception class. At the front of this area a school governor successfully applied for 4 fruit trees to develop a small orchard.



Abergavenny
In Bloom

Supporting our community.

This year our school community is supporting two 2 external projects.

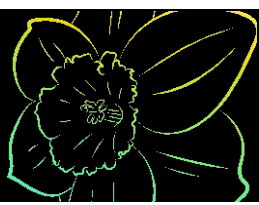
Gwent Green Grid's 'Pollinator Friendly Gwent' project work are working with our foundation classes to develop their understanding of the importance of pollinators and to also to take part in a pollinators parade in a local park. We will also receive a wildlife camera and marvellous minibeast tower to be used in our school grounds.

Our year 5 class will also support the local community taking part in a pollinator ID training session in May working with other local groups identifying the diversity of pollinators both in our school grounds and also in the Castle Meadows area of the town.



Next steps

The children will continue to replant, weed and tender garden and allotment areas, ready for the summer.



Laurie Jones Community Orchard

<https://www.facebook.com/abergavennycommunityorchard>

Activities

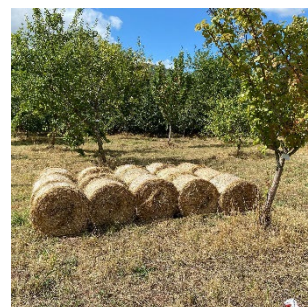


Hedge Laying: Removing an old fence and replacing it with a laid hedge with native species. Improving biodiversity and providing a habitat for a wide variety of species.



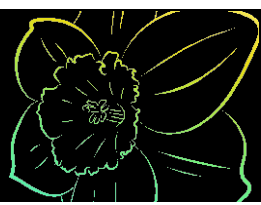
Wassail: Community Event to celebrate the harvest and the forthcoming crop which is a traditional activity for all generations, to preserve the future of the orchard.

Hay Crop: A meadows hay crop is taken from the orchard every year, maintaining the orchard as a meadow has seen a remarkable increase in the biodiversity of the grassland.



Apple juicing: Another opportunity for the community to come together and enjoy the process of juicing the apple crop.

Community Orchard grafting and pruning workshop – sharing skills to show how to preserve and propagate traditional Welsh apple and pear species.



Abergavenny
In Bloom

Friends of Bailey Park

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofBaileyPark>

Environmental responsibility

Conservation

*Planting of six Silver Birch whips given to us as part of the Welsh Government and Coed Cadw's initiative to give every household in Wales a tree to grow for the "My Tree Your Forest" project. We took some left over trees to care for

*Planting of donated shrubs that would otherwise have been thrown away.

*Creation of woodland area with snowdrops, bluebells and daffodils planted for the benefit of pollinators in early Spring and for the pleasure and well-being of passers-by.

*Creation of wildflower area using Monmouthshire mix and adding plug plants eg *Meadowsweet and Mallow, again for the benefit of pollinators during the Summer and into Autumn. Use of Yellow Rattle to discourage growth of couch grass to, enable wild flowers to grow. Plugs donated by Monmouthshire County Council

*Use of recycled wood compost bin and taking particular advantage of leaves from giant Copper Beech to compost

*Gathering garden refuse which is then collected by MCC for composting

*using old wood to make bird boxes, hedgehog houses and insect homes, ornamental wishing well to be used as planter and seat overlooking gardens



*restoration of numerous abandoned flowerbeds, left unattended by MCC through lack of funding

*sharing knowledge and skills with school children, young adults and members of Monmouth Housing Association who needed advice with planting in another part of the county

*offering advice, when asked, to members of the

public who are passing by

*sharing and resolving problems and celebrating successes with other volunteers in the group

*informing members of other groups and the Town Council of our plans, projects and achievements



Abergavenny
In Bloom

- *picking up litter discovered before we begin gardening tasks and liaising with Keep Abergavenny Tidy members
- *addressing damage and vandalism issues, and reporting to the Police, Town Council and Press if appropriate
- *painting out graffiti on nearby walls within the park and through Nature isn't Neat inviting an artist to paint on some of them over time
- *politely asking members of the public to keep their dogs on a lead within the park environs
- *we are engaging with the Town Council to see if we can have a dog run in one separate part of the park where there would be no impact on sports activities or the gardens, in order to further encourage dog owners to be more respectful
- * we are waiting to hear that the by-laws have been improved and that new signage will inform dog owners that they can be fined for not carrying dog poo bags

Gardening Achievement

- * maintaining a balance between the wild and the more formal type of garden
- *using more hardy perennials that are pollinator friendly and more likely to withstand the extremes of temperatures in both winter and summer, a learning curve from the drought last year.
- *much fewer bedding plants used as they are expensive, not generally pollinator friendly and easily die in hot dry weather
- * providing plants that thrive in shade, due to the huge Copper beech tree that shades part of the Bank as in the past we found that certain plants did not thrive
- *using peat free compost, vermiculite, horse manure and chicken pellets to improve drainage and provide a rich feed for plants
- *purchasing good quality bulbs from a reasonably priced but reputable company
- *weeding at least twice every week between March and November
- *cooperating with volunteers so we are as efficient as possible eg don't dig up bulbs or mistake good plants for weeds or vice versa





- *ensure unbroken round the year colour considering heights, width and compatibility of different plants
- *in winter ensure that interesting variegated shrubs and different greens are on show
- *ensuring that urgent tasks get carried out when necessary, regardless of the day
- * calling regular Committee meetings

to evaluate progress and to plan for the future, keeping all volunteers informed

- *calling an AGM each October to evaluate the year
- * introducing new signs both to amuse and educate, as well as point out gardens that might otherwise be missed
- * introducing a sturdy notice board made by a volunteer near the entrance to a main gate

COMMUNITY

- *working with schoolchildren to show them how to plant bulbs cooperatively
- *working with Monmouthshire Housing Association to raise funds and to share a Volunteering Day with them to do some serious tidying up in the gardens and enjoy a meal in the park provided by them
- *talking to passers by who admire our work, ask about the identity of plants and sometimes we can give bits away



- *entering Community Plus Award, sponsored by Gwent Association of Volunteers Association, to discuss possible options about layout of Sensory Garden, and we were able to earn funds for a new tarmac path in the Garden, to give access to disabled and wheelchair-bound visitors, who can now enjoy our new disabled bench and patio area with family and friends
- *supporting a Special Needs youngster to develop his learning skills relating to gardening
- *liaising with Monmouthshire County Council to ensure jobs get done eg grass cutting, removal of build-ups of debris by a culvert, removal of garden waste,



collection of Autumn leaves, placing of new benches, and to discuss arising problems or future initiatives

- *liaising with representatives of the Home Office to discuss the placing of CCTV cameras and path lighting to provide better protection for women and girls



- *reporting to the Mayor about our projects in order to gain funds. A three year contract has been drawn up in order for the Friends to receive these funds

- *Annual reports are written by FOBP Chairperson to inform the Town Council of projects and developments

- *regular reports to the local paper and a local magazine as well as on our Facebook

page to ensure residents are aware of what we are achieving

- * linking up with eg Gardening groups who may be interested in our activities

- *advertising other groups' events to be held in the park

- *inviting members of Keep Abergavenny Tidy to help with major bulb planting sessions

- *liaising with other Friends groups in the town and sharing information and ideas

- *participating in a Monmouthshire Housing Association Christmas Fair for vulnerable families

- *attending Volunteering award winning events, and meeting volunteers from many backgrounds and organisations

- *helping to organise planting of memorial trees and placing of memorial benches for loved ones

- *receiving bulbs from Monmouthshire County Council and Monmouthshire Housing Association to develop our woodland areas

- *benefitting from monetary and plant donations from members of the public

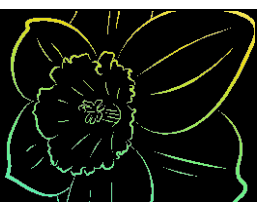
- * being part of Nature Isn't Neat and participating in art workshops

- * engaging with an artist who has painted a butterfly on a nearby wall, followed by a parade of pollinators- children wearing wings- and learning about wild life and the importance of helping to preserve our planet -Greater Gwent goes Wild event

- *liaising with the new Mayor and Town Clerk to discuss the possibility of having a Sunday concert in Bailey Park Bandstand so people might enjoy a picnic and music in pleasant surroundings

- *attending meetings with the Town Council to discuss plans for Wales in Bloom and Britain in Bloom over the years, and going on walkabouts

- *liaising with the Police about problems with antisocial problems



*engaging with Duke of Edinburgh Award boys for a number of weeks so that they could experience various tasks relating to caring for a park

*attending Volunteers' coffee mornings and training sessions eg health and safety, hygiene

*liaising with a local garden centre who provide free of charge both the plants and the labour to create a special garden design on a bank, to celebrate eg the Platinum Jubilee, 75 years of the NHS

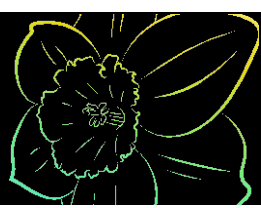
*advertising for new members to join us, and ensuring our volunteers can occasionally enjoy a social outing together



*planning for elderly visitors in sheltered accommodation to come and enjoy a coffee and a chat in the Sensory Garden in the summer

*enjoying a Volunteer Day with employees of Morgan Sindall who are building the new 3-19 School in Abergavenny. They helped to completely clear the Rockery of weeds and

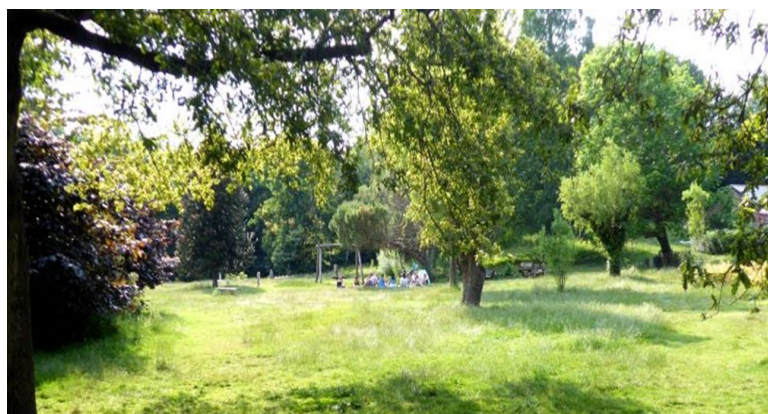
cleared another area in the wildflower garden. They will come to help with bulb planting in the Spring.



Abergavenny
In Bloom

Friends of Linda Vista Gardens

2022-2023 has been a time to try to achieve a balance between the old Victorian formal garden structure and a wilder, looser and informal planting conducive to biodiversity and wild life, which provides the public with attractive and useful



space for relaxation and recreation. From public reaction, it is working very well.

Picnics and children's parties often take place. The Ambika Cafe becomes more and more popular and is a tremendous asset

and draw for visitors.

Specific projects, over and above general maintenance, pruning, weeding and so on, have been:

- Installation of a polytunnel in which to propagate cuttings
- Commissioning and installing tree labels in the arboretum, with financial assistance from Abergavenny Town Council
- Creating a dead hedge round the bog garden to delineate it and provide a habitat for insects
- Installation of a hedgehog house for rehoming rescued hogs in need of rehabilitation through the local hedgehog helpline
- Nurturing the arboretum, shrub bank and wild grass/flower bank
- Attempting to curb the spread of ground elder, brambles, herb bennet, wild lettuce, quaking grass, three-cornered leek, and similar thugs without the use of chemicals
- Compiling scholarly notes on the trees in the gardens



- Welcoming monthly help in the gardens from people with mental health problems, under an arrangement with Gwent Wildlife Trust's health and wellbeing project.

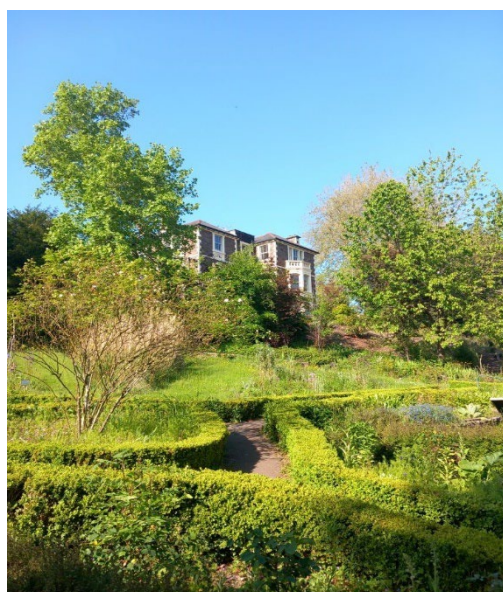


'Dead hedge' around the bog garden

The 2022 medlar crop from the gardens bletting before being made into wine



View across garden to Linda Vista House from Winter 2022 to Spring 2023



Abergavenny
In Bloom

Friends of Castle Meadows

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofcastlemeadows>

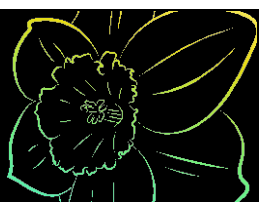
- Created a copse in an area of fenced scrub, mainly composed of brambles and nettles.
- Planted a bank of 100 native trees to commemorate those who died in conflicts 1918-2018.
- Contributed to the erection of a large stone monument, engraved to commemorate those who died in conflicts 1918-2018
- Designed and contributed to the construction of the Eisteddfod monument on the Meadows.
- Created a woodland glade in the copse, using native flower and grass seed.



- Planting in excess of 2000 spring flowering bulbs.
- Hedging the copse, as part of the Welsh Long Forest project.
- Working with the Brownies and Rainbows to create a Spring flowering area and a small spinney.
- Working with Scouts to create a wood chip path in the upper part of the Copse.
- Numbering the Horse Chestnuts in order to monitor tree health (Opal Tree Health Survey, even though the project is now closed the recording regime is still valid)



- Contributing to the cost of a pipe linking the Cibi to the “Big Pond” to ensure the pond is no longer ephemeral.
- Contributing to the installation of a dam in the pond to regulate water flow into the Usk
- Installing pre-planted coir rolls of native marginals to stabilise the pond banks and increase biodiversity within the pond environment .



- Contributing to the cost of draining a reen and planting native hedge species to connect two copses

- Completing training with Riverfly to monitor the health of the Gavenny and Cibi.

- Contributing to the installation of the dipping platform at the pond.

- Paying for the replacement wooden bridge over the reen, when the last one was destroyed by the floods

- Installing bat and bird boxes.

- Working regularly with the Squirrels, Beavers and Cubs and Church groups on environmental issues.



- Establishing Young Friends groups which work with local schools.

- Organising an annual programme of walks and talks on the Meadows.

- Working to monitor and where appropriate the removal of NNIS

- Planting over 100 native woodland appropriate

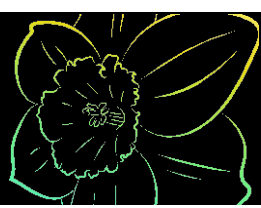
trees in the Copse to improve biodiversity.

- Sourcing and planting Black Poplars on the Meadows (one of Britain's rarest trees).

- Working with a local school to create a woodland hedge tunnel to connect two more copses and involving them in the creation of the bilingual interpretation panel.

- Planting a Willow arch to allow invertebrates/small mammals to move safely across a path.

- Participating in the Welsh Government initiative "My tree, Our forest" and giving away around 1400 native trees to Welsh residents.



Abergavenny and District Civic Society

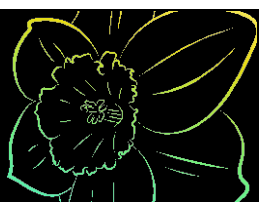


The Civic Society commissioned Greenfinch Nursery to replant the beds with native and pollinator friendly species, that reflect the environmental improvements taking place in other areas of the town. We are very happy with the results.



After the Greater Gwent Goes Wild event in Bailey Park in May, the Society commissioned a Bee mural to compliment the butterfly mural which was commissioned for the event. We hope to encourage other groups to sponsor other murals in the

park and elsewhere in the town, including a large mural on the big wall at the far end of the park. This builds on from the mural at the Bus Station on the hydrogen fuelling point, created by the same artist.



Abergavenny Community Centre



Urban Nature Garden

Our outdoor space is bringing people together using the power of nature to inspire, heal, and keep us feeling happy and connected.

The People's Postcode Lottery awarded the Trust a grant to carry out 'Operation Nature Garden'.

<https://www.facebook.com/abergavennycc>

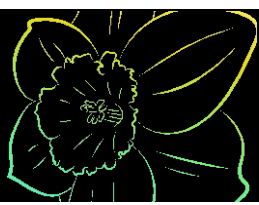
As the site was when handed over to Abergavenny Community Trust.



Work begins to create 'Operation Nature Garden'.



The completed project in May 2023.



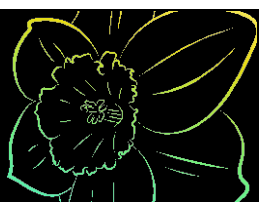
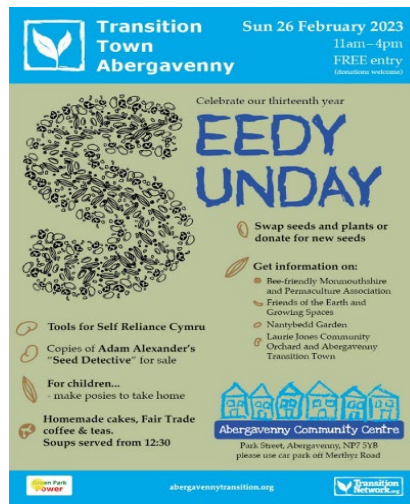
Abergavenny
In Bloom

Community Support Group to encourage social interaction through gardening.



Seedy Sunday 26th February 2023

Annual event held at Abergavenny Community Centre to raise money for the Community Centre and Laurie Jones Community Orchard.



Abergavenny
In Bloom

7Corners



We are a new member of the Abergavenny in Bloom Gang, wanting to improve the natural space along our walkway leading from Frogmore Street to Trinity Street Car Park. We are hidden away from the main street, but get a lot of passers by, so we are working to show what can be done with the little space that we have.

We have embraced the concept of Nature Isn't Neat, and are working to

encourage wild growth of things like brambles and alpine strawberries, alongside our own sunflowers and mint that have been cultivated in the centre before being planted out.



Our new addition of a repurposed planter thanks to the Town Council will enable us to expand what we can look to grow in future that will now be out of reach from passing four legged visitors!

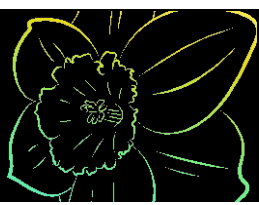
All this is looked after by centre staff and volunteers, and we encourage the kids that use 7Corners to get involved and learn what can be achieved with a little care and effort.



The Chapel



A beautiful haven in the middle of town, a true hidden gem designed by Sarah Price Landscapes who recently won Gold at Chelsea for this natural style of planting and horticulture.



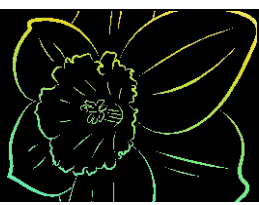
Abergavenny/Y Fenni Women's Institute



Another new member of the Abergavenny in Bloom group, this group of volunteers are responsible for the transformation of the platform planters at Abergavenny Train Station.



They have encouraged Transport for Wales to install new planters on both platforms, and they have been planted up with pollinator friendly species.



Abergavenny
In Bloom

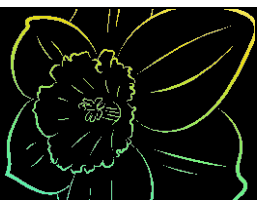
The Willows Garden Centre

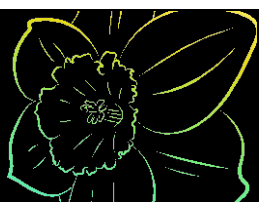


Russell and his team have looked after the traditional municipal planters throughout the town for a number of years. He uses surfinias, begonias, bidens, verbena, lysmaci, a ipomea, and plectranthus across the variety of troughs, planters and tubs in the town.



The local cub group assisted Russell and the staff at The Willows with the planting up of the hanging baskets for the businesses and lamp posts throughout Abergavenny at a gardening group outing held at the garden centre in May this year.



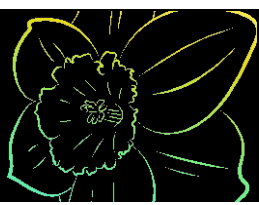


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In Bloom

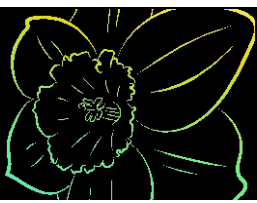
Greenfinch Nursery



Josie and Keri have taken care of the modern planters and raised beds across the town for a number of years, implementing designs created by Sarah Price Landscapes and continuing their maintenance. They use a large variety of salvias, Gaura (bee blossom), Dahlia, cosmos, Nicotiana (for the night time moths), phlox, catenache, and Scabiosa achillea (good for pollinators). In shadier spots they use Pericaria, tradescantia, plectranthus, mahonia and hardy geraniums.



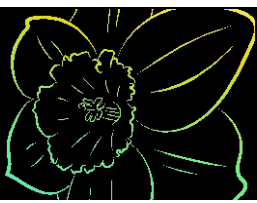
Abergavenny
In Bloom



Abergavenny
In Bloom

The Angel Hotel

Embracing the need to change the way plants are used to enhance the open areas around the hotel, these beautiful spring planters were a great focal point as the warmer weather attracted both pollinators and people to spend more time outside!



In conclusion



(Floods on Castle Meadows January 2023)

Our changing climate throws many challenges when looking at enhancing our green spaces and protecting the biodiversity we have around us. By encouraging everyone to learn more about the ecology of the area we live in, to pay attention to the seasons and be more respectful of the land, we can start to appreciate the wonders of nature and all that it can give us.



(Orchid discovered in the Laurie Jones Community Orchard in April/May 2023)

