



My Family Garden.

Ellen Nicholls 2312882. Regaining paradise? Sustainability in the Early Years.



Welcome to a tour around my family garden. It is not a large garden, and for many years it was neglected and unused, often because the ground was uneven, and when it rained, it would fill up with water, making it look like a big bog. Then COVID-19 hit us, and as you know, we couldn't go out on our usual walks in nature, which was something we loved to do as a family. So, the garden makeover commenced.

It all began with a good clear up, and we hired a mini digger and got rid of the uneven ground and soggy grass and replaced it with artificial grass. I know artificial grass is not eco-friendly, but we were going for the low maintenance, and my youngest son wanted a football pitch. We bought a shed, a wooden bench with a shelter, and filled the garden with as many flowers and pretty lights as we could. Our little haven was coming together, and we

loved it. The John Muir award has given me the incentive to continue making our family garden a beautiful space for us all to enjoy and create a space that welcomes more wildlife.



The whole family enjoyed the garden as well as our family pets at the time, Wilbur the Herman tortoise and Carly, our chocolate Labrador. At the time, Carly was 10 years old, and the garden was an amazing space for her to show everyone her doggy football skills. From a puppy, she was obsessed with footballs, and she would like to steal the ball from my son. She probably spent more time in the garden than we did. she loved lazing in the sunshine on sunny days.



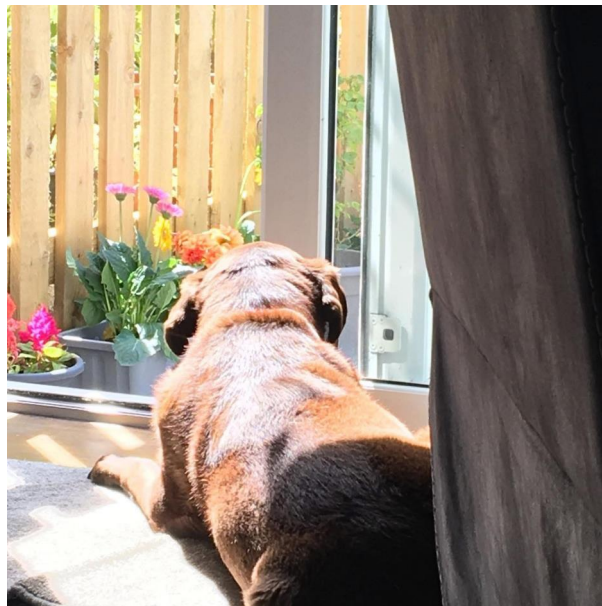
1 - Carly with one of her much-loved footballs. A flat football, but she didn't mind



2 - Summer barbeques were so much fun for the whole family! Carly is enjoying a cooling lolly.



3 - Carly dressed in a football kit, ready for a serious game of football with my son. Carly was a huge part of the family, and I always said I think she thought she was a child, not a dog.



4 - Carly is enjoying the sunshine on an early morning. Sadly, in 2024, we lost Carly to old age. And being in the garden became quite a sad place to be because she was such a big part of our family, and she loved spending time in the garden.



5 - Without Carly, the children were too sad to play in the garden because she was always with them, even though she would steal the ball. So I thought it would be a good idea to make a memorial for Carly that the children could help with. So we painted the wooden seating area a lovely blue colour, added some fake flowers and lights, a pretty plant, and laid her old scruffy favourite ball on the seat. The children were proud of their hard work, and it gave them the incentive to help around the garden and make it beautiful in Carly's memory.

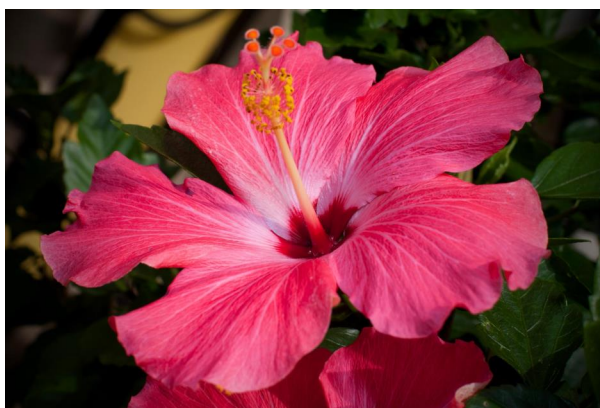


6 - And here is Wilbur! Our Herman Tortoise. We got Wilbur in 2020 when COVID-19 restrictions were starting to lift. He lives in the house but spends some time outside in the garden, especially on hot sunny days, as tortoises are unable to control their body temperature, so when it's not warm outside, he has an artificial UV light that he sleeps under when he's indoors.

Herman Tortoise Facts-

- The Hermann tortoise is European. Mostly found in Spain.
- They can grow to around 8 inches.
- They feed on a variety of plants and certain flowers.

- They can live between 50 and 100 years old.
- Tortoises have been on the planet for over 220 million years.
- Tortoises are from the reptile family.
- Their shells comprise bone and cartilage and are there for their protection.





These are a selection of plants and flowers that the Herman Tortoise can eat.

While I'm on the subject of pets, I'd like to introduce you to the new additions to our family who also enjoy the garden. Especially on sunny days, they are not fond of the rain. Our family didn't feel complete without the craziness of a dog, so we decided it was time to bring another dog into the family. However, instead of just one dog, we got two! Two miniature Dachshund sisters, 7 months old.



7 - Meet Little Lulu.



8 - Meet Miss Daisy.

I have always loved the outdoors and nature, and I always feel my happiest when the sky is blue, the trees are full of bright green leaves, and the flowers are blooming. I live in Birchgrove, and I feel lucky to live in a cul-de-sac that has the most beautiful trees. Every day, I get to drive into the estate and see these beautiful trees. In Spring and summer they are full and bright green in colour and autumn we are lucky to see the leaves change to oranges, red and brown before they fall off and cover the roads and pavements with beautiful coloured leaves that we always love to walk through and listen to the crunching of the crispy leaves on the ground. On windy days, our garden fills with leaves that have been blown off the trees.



9 - Autumn leaves are falling down.

Can you hear the crunchy sound?

Pile them up and jump right in,

Twirl around and take a spin!

Throw them way up high in the air

Autumn leaves are everywhere.

(Sung to the tune of Baa Baa Black sheep)

By Jennifer Blanchard.







These photos are of some of the trees that we are lucky enough to pass every day on our way out or home. We get to watch them change with every season.



My Spring Garden

Here is my little garden,
Some seeds I'm going to sow,
Here is my rake to rake the ground,
Here is my handy hoe.

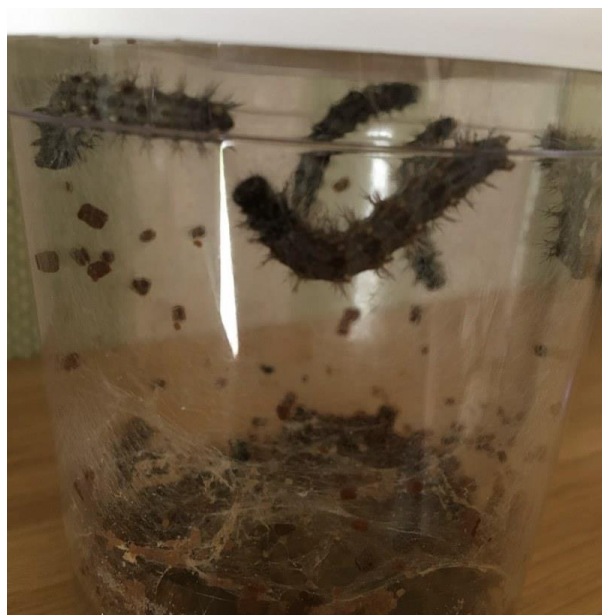
Here is the big, round yellow sun;
The sun warms everything.
Here are the rain clouds in the sky;
The birds will start to sing.

Little plants will wake up soon,
And lift their sleepy heads;
Little plants will grow and grow
In their little, warm earth beds.

Butterflies



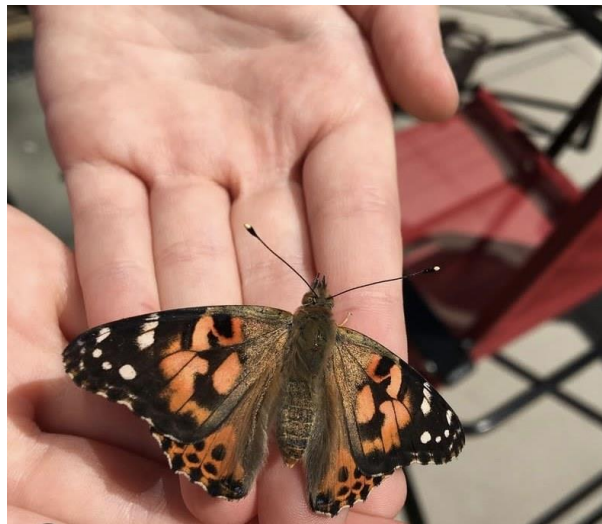
A few years ago, I was scrolling through Instagram and an advert came up showing a product I could buy where you can watch how the caterpillar grows and changes into a butterfly. I thought this was a fascinating idea and something I would love my children to experience. So I purchased the kit and excitedly waited for it to arrive. When it arrived, it consisted of a mesh-covered container, instructions, and a small tub with some brown substance at the bottom and the tiniest caterpillars inside the pot. After reading through the instructions, we were ready to watch these creepy, crawly caterpillars eat and grow, and change into butterflies. The children were fascinated and watched closely every day. We watched the tiny caterpillars eat away at the brown substance at the bottom of the pot, and every day they grew and grew. After a few weeks, the caterpillars were ready to be hung from the inside of the mesh container and change into their cocoons. We watched with excitement and couldn't wait to see the butterflies emerge.



10 - The caterpillars are munching away at the substance at the bottom of the pot.



11 - The beautiful butterflies emerged. We fed them sugar water and oranges as directed on the instructions, and after a few days, when they were strong enough, we could set them free. It was a wonderful experience.



12 - The first butterfly was ready to fly. We called this one Bertha.



13 - This little guy we named Bertie, and unfortunately, one of his wings didn't form properly, so he couldn't fly away with the other butterflies, which was very sad to see, but we looked after Bertie, fed him every day, let him walk around outside, and watched him very carefully. Then, sadly, he passed away. Poor Bertie.

These Butterflies are called Red Admiral. Here are some facts;

- Scientific name- Vanessa Atalanta
- When to see- January to December
- Wingspan- 6.4-7.8cm
- Habitats- Grassland, Farmland, Coastal, Woodland, Towns, and Gardens.
- Most Red Admirals are migrants to the U.K. from North Africa and continental Europe, arriving in spring and laying eggs that hatch in July onwards. But some adults survive the winter here by hibernating.
- Attract the Red Admiral by planting nectar-rich borders for them.



TOP 30 plants that attract pollinators

Attracting pollinators and other beneficial insects is an important part for any thriving garden. That's why we've created this list of our favorite flowers that attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

ANNUALS



1
Floss Flower
(Ageratum)
ZONE 2-11



2
Borage
ZONE 2-11



3
Cosmos
'Sensation'
ZONE 2-11



4
Mexican
sunflower
ZONES 2-11



5
Milkweed
ZONES 3-9



6
Egyptian
Star Flower
(Pentas)
Herbaceous Perennial
ZONES 10-11



7
Pincushion flower
(Scabiosa)
ZONES 5-9



8
Verbena
Herbaceous Perennial
ZONES 7-11



9
Zinnia
ZONES 2-11

14 - An example of flowers that will attract butterflies.

Bird song



One of my favourite things to do in the garden is to sit quietly first thing in the morning when the family is still asleep and listen to the bird song. We have many different birds that visit our garden, from pigeons, magpies, seagulls, and smaller birds like robins and finches. Being able to take just 5 minutes with a cup of tea and sit in the garden and listen is something I like to do for my well-being. Nature is so beautiful to experience and since doing the John Muir award I have decided that I should take more time out to sit and relax in the garden and forget about all the worries or the long list of things to do and just be there in the moment listening to the bird song, and the leaves on the trees rustling in the wind.

My favourite flowers in the garden.



15 - I rescued this pretty sunflower from the shop this week. It needs a little TLC to bring it back to life. I will repot it in a larger pot, with some fresh soil, and make sure it is watered daily, and hopefully it will continue to grow.



16 - My favourite colour is orange. I saw these flowers and thought they were absolutely beautiful.



17 - Roses are Red, Violets are Blue! The roses i bought 5 years ago are starting to bloom.



18 - I bought this rose plant in memory of my parents, whom I sadly lost in 2019. They are still going strong and bloom for me every summer.



19 - Again, the colour orange on these lilies is just beautiful.

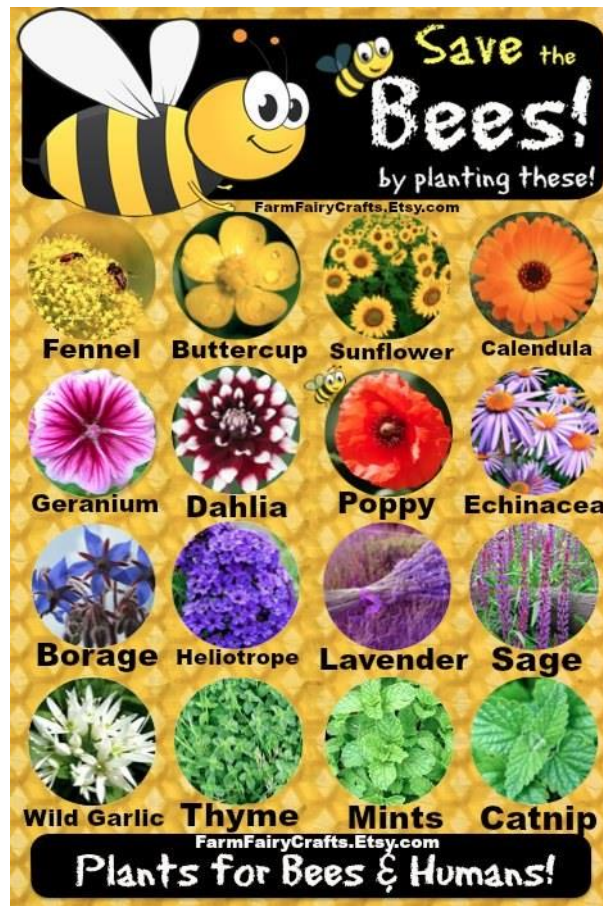
Going forward

Taking part in the John Muir award has brought about a new love for my garden, and I have been making plans to start making the garden more sustainable for the future. I have always wanted to try and grow our own vegetables, so I have planned on buying a small greenhouse, and just to start off, we are going to try and grow some cucumbers and peppers for us to enjoy with a nice summer salad.

It would be lovely to see more wildlife in the garden, so the children have decided that they want to make a bug house and add some flowers to attract the butterflies and the bees.



20 - We have started collecting broken twigs, sticks, and natural resources to create our very own Bug Hotel.



21 - Some of the flowers that will attract the bees. Save The Bees!

Recycling.

We have a BBQ sitting in the neglected corner of the garden, which we haven't used for many years, so it's a little rusty and grubby. Instead of throwing it away, we have a plan to turn it into a big planter for some wild flowers. I am not sure if it will work, but I think it would look amazing filled with some beautiful wild flowers. Watch this space...



22 - The neglected BBQ will soon be a beautiful flower bed for some wild flowers.



23 - Wild flower seeds.



24 - Beautiful assorted wild flowers.

"Daffodils" by William Wordsworth.

"Daffodils" by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.



Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:



For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.



25 - As I come to the end of my scrapbook about my family garden, I want to share a picture of my favourite flower, The Daffodil. I have never actually grown daffodils in my garden; I have always bought them and displayed them inside the house. Maybe now is the time to start growing some so I can admire them both inside and outside in our wonderful family garden.

John Muir (April 1838-December 1914) was a renowned naturalist and conservationist who played a key role in the early environmental movement. John Muir was deeply passionate about nature and wildlife. He explored wild landscapes, wrote extensively about their beauty, and encouraged and campaigned for the importance of protecting nature and wildlife. He believed that wildlife should be protected for the wellbeing of humanity. Through his writings and activism, he helped people to understand the importance of wildlife, and he is known for his creation of the first national park.

In conclusion, the John Muir Award has been a valuable experience that has encouraged me and my family to appreciate our environment and understand the importance of nature and protecting it for the best possible future for all. Through taking part in the award and exploring my surrounding area and our garden I have gained a greater appreciation for the nature that surrounds me. I am inspired to continue making our family garden a safe haven for us as well as the wildlife around us. The award has inspired me to continue exploring, enjoying, and protecting nature wherever I go.