

REGAINING PARADISE?

S U S T A I N A B I L I T Y I N T H E
E A R L Y Y E A R S

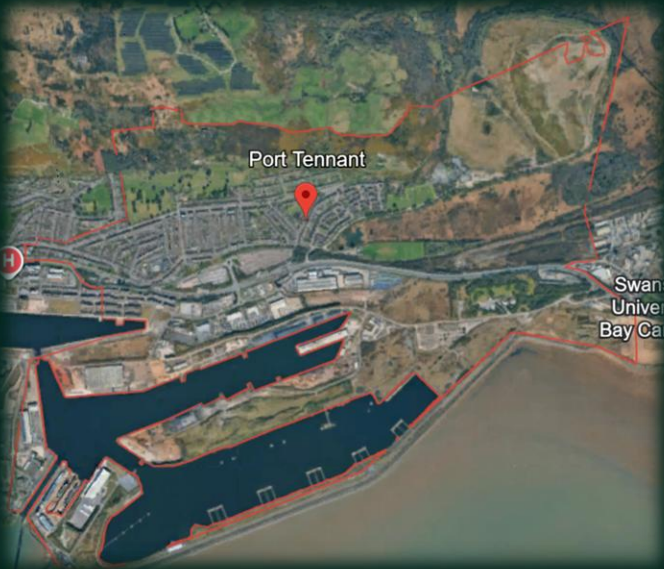
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Lucy Willimer-Cant

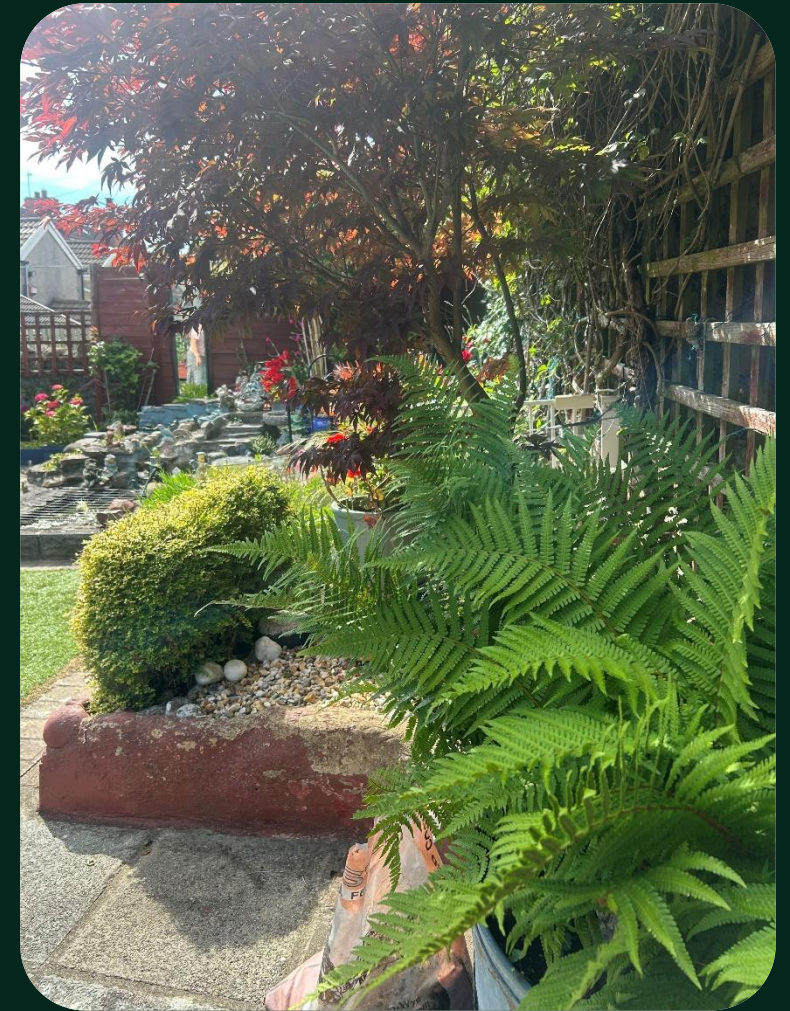
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Discover

The natural area I have chosen for my John Muir Award is my nan and bampi's garden because it has always been a place where I have felt calm, connected to nature and holds lots of wonderful memories for me and my family. I spent a lot of my childhood in this garden, mostly with my nan and bampi, but also with the rest of the family. From planting seeds, to watching birds play and fly around the space, to family BBQ's in the sunshine. Since my bampi passed away, the garden has become an even more cherished and meaningful space to me. It reminds me of him, the love he had for nature, and because of the memories I have here, it still feels like a place where he is very much part of.



Their house is based in Port Tennant in the city of Swansea, Wales and they have spent over 50 years creating a beautiful family home and garden. For as long as I can remember, my nan and bampi have always been avid gardeners and love spending time outdoors planting and creating natural spaces, which is evident in the love they have for it shown in the pictures.





My nan and bampi have spent many years creating and maintaining their beautiful garden. Over the years, they have planted lots of different flowers, shrubs, trees and herbs, as well as building their own fully functioning pond and waterfall. The garden also includes numerous fruit plants, bird baths and bird houses, which make it an even more magical and peaceful place to relax. Every part of the garden has been carefully created with love and care, making it a welcoming environment for both our family and the wildlife that visit it.

Explore

As I began exploring the garden, I was instantly drawn to the wide variety of colourful flowers growing throughout the different flower beds, planters and pots. When I looked more closely, I realised that they were not just beautiful to look at but they also attracted lots of bees and butterflies. This made me realise that even simple flowers in a small garden play an important role in supporting wildlife and a healthy ecosystem.



I also took my time to observe the different trees, herbs and fruit plants throughout the garden. As I walked around, I noticed how they were spread across different areas of the garden and added different layers to it, which helps create shelter, shade and habitats for the insects and birds that visit, whilst the fruit plants provide fresh food for both people and birds.

Trees



Japanese Maple



Coral Bush

Herbs



Lavender



Rosemary



Thyme

Fruit Plants



Strawberry Plant



Raspberry Plant

As I continued exploring the garden, I noticed just how much wildlife it attracted, mostly because of the many features my nan and bampi have created to support it. The plants, pond, bird baths and bird house all provide food, water and shelter for different species, which makes the garden a welcoming place for nature. During my visits, I spotted bees, butterflies, dragonflies, ladybirds and several garden birds, which shows how even a small family garden can support a wide range of wildlife.



The pond, bird baths and bird house in the garden attract lots of wildlife. I spotted several dragonflies, including a Migrant Hawker, flying above the pond and resting on the lily pads. Ponds provide an important habitat for dragonflies, offering places to feed, rest and lay their eggs. I also saw dunnocks using the bird house as a place to rest before flying back into the garden.



Even though I could not get a picture, I spotted butterflies resting on the flowers before flying around the garden. Butterflies are attracted to colourful flowers as they provide nectar, while the trees and shrubs offer shelter, making the garden a welcoming place for butterflies throughout the warmer months. Seeing them in the garden showed me how important small gardens like this are for providing food and habitats that butterflies need to survive.

I also observed several bees moving from one flower to another collecting nectar and pollen. It was lovely to watch them so closely and reminded me how important gardens like this are in providing food for pollinators.

I also saw some ladybirds on the leaves of different plants. Ladybirds help keep the garden healthy because they eat aphids, which can damage plants.



Experiencing the garden through my senses

Using all of my senses really helped me slow down and appreciate the garden in a different way. Rather than just looking at nature, I became more aware of the sounds, smells and textures around me, which made me feel more connected to the natural environment.

What I heard..



I could hear the gentle sound of the waterfall, a robin singing and the buzzing of bees as they moved between the flowers.

What I saw..



I noticed bright and colourful flowers throughout the garden, a Dunnock hopping around the flower bed and a Migrant Hawker dragonfly flying above the pond.

What I smelt..



I could smell the strong scent of lavender and fresh mint as I walked around the garden.

What I tasted..



I picked and tasted fresh strawberries and raspberries that were growing in the garden.

What I felt..



I felt the cold water from the pond, the soft petals of a Pelargonium and the delicate feathery leaves of a fern.

Bampi's Garden

Some people see a garden,
I see a lifetime of memories.

I see colourful flowers blooming in the spring,
bees collecting nectar and buzzing between the flowers,
and birds splashing happily in the bird bath.

The waterfall still flows gently into the pond,
where the fish swim peacefully below,
watching dragonflies resting on the lily pads above.

The roses planted just for you,
grow more beautiful every year,
and are now a favourite spot for butterflies to visit.

I sit in Tony's Cwtch,
watching the birds and listening to the sounds of nature,
just like you always loved to do,
reminding us that spending time outdoors
is always good for the soul.

This garden is much more than flowers and plants.
It is happiness. It is love. It is blooming with life.

Nature continues to thrive in the garden,
just as you always hoped it would.

And because of that,
a part of you always will too.



What is in the area?

There are also other natural areas near my nan and bampi's house, which I also used to explore when I was younger and have rediscovered recently whilst taking part in the John Muir award.



Tennant Canal

Tennant Canal is around 8 miles long and was built in the early 1800s by George Tennant. The canal was used to transport coal and other goods between the Neath Valley and Swansea Docks. However, today, it is a peaceful place where people can walk, cycle, enjoy nature and go birdwatching. The canal and the surrounding wetlands support a variety of birds, insects and plants, which provide important habitats for the wildlife. It is interesting to see how an area that was once used for industry has transformed into such an important space for nature and wildlife.



Kilvey Hill

Kilvey Hill is 193 metres high and provides beautiful views across Swansea and the North Atlantic Ocean. It is made up of numerous footpaths and woodland trails that intertwine with one another and are enjoyed by both people and wildlife. Before becoming a popular place for nature walks, Kilvey Hill was used for mining as early as 1399. However, in the 1970s, it was transformed by the local community who planted thousands of trees, turning it into the beautiful green space it is today. The woodland provides habitats for wildlife, such as birds, insects, mice and foxes and shows how important these local green spaces are for both wildlife and the community.

Conserve

John Muir, born in Scotland in 1838, was a naturalist who had a deep love for the outdoors, nature and wild spaces. When he was 11, he moved to America with his family, where his passion for exploring nature continued to grow. John spent his life discovering and learning about natural environments and encouraged other people to appreciate and protect them, because he believed it was important for both wildlife and people's health and wellbeing. Throughout his life, John helped protect many wild places, including Yosemite National Park and Sequoia National Park in the United States. He believed that if people spent time in nature, they would appreciate how important it is and be encouraged to care for and protect it, rather than misuse it. Since his death, he has become known as the 'Father of the National Parks' and still continues to inspire people to care for and protect the natural world for the future generations.

John Muir inspires me because, after exploring my nan and bampi's garden, I understand what he meant. Spending time in the garden has made me realise that even a small family garden can be important for wildlife and should be cared for and protected.



How I helped conserve the garden

As part of my John Muir Award, I wanted to give something back to my nan and bampi's garden after spending some time discovering and exploring it. To conserve the garden, I carried out a few small jobs to help keep it healthy and make it a better place for wildlife.

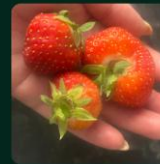
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Due to the recent heatwave, I watered the plants and flowers to help keep them healthy and stop them from drying out. Water is essential for plants to grow, flower and survive, so it was important to keep them well watered.



2

I picked some of the ripe strawberries and raspberries in the garden to stop them from becoming overripe and rotting, which also encourages the fruit plants to continue producing fruit.



3

I refilled the bird baths with fresh water so that the birds would have a safe place to drink and bathe, especially during the warm weather. Clean water encourages more birds to visit the garden.



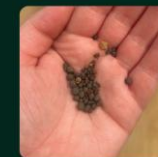
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I added a bird feeder to the bird house to provide birds with an extra source of food and to encourage more birds to visit the garden throughout the year.



5

I planted some wildflower seeds to provide more nectar for the bees and other pollinators. I also removed weeds to give the new flowers more space to grow.



Share



Choosing this garden for my John Muir Award has allowed me to reflect on both my personal connection to nature and the importance of looking after the environment. It has shown me that everything in nature is connected, and that even a small family garden can make a big difference to wildlife. I feel really proud of everything I have completed whilst working towards my John Muir Award and wanted to share what I had learnt with others.

I started by sharing this scrapbook presentation with my colleagues at work. As I work in a primary school, I was hoping that it might inspire us, either in our classes or as a whole school, to complete our own John Muir Award.

I also shared the scrapbook and poem with my family, who really enjoyed reading it.

I hope that by sharing what I have learnt, I have encouraged other people to appreciate the nature around them, no matter how big or small it is. My John Muir Award has shown me that even small gardens can provide an important home for wildlife, and that by caring for these spaces we can all play a part in protecting nature.



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