

## Braunston Village Gardens Association Chairman's report 2020

In early 2020 it was clear that many activities would be restricted due to the coronavirus pandemic. We were pleased that it was not an Open Gardens year and that we had already moved forward on our aim towards a peat free garden store. Our BVN announcement summarises our Garden Store actions.

*We have replaced previous products with a new brand, a 40 litre size of peat-free compost. It makes a useful grow bag and requires less feeding. We have been unable to source John Innes composts that do not contain about 25% peat so for this season we will continue to offer the two varieties listed.*

*Peatlands only cover about 3% of the world's land surface, but store at least twice as much carbon as all of Earth's forests. At least one-third of the world's organic soil carbon is in peatlands. Peatlands are "the most essential terrestrial ecosystem," says Tim Christophersen, at the UN Environment Programme. Peat extraction for commercial composts and grow bags is destroying this vital ecosystem.*

*We do not think we should be using a product that speeds up climate change. We hope all Braunston gardeners agree. By using peat-free compost we can all reduce our carbon footprint.*

Initially we ran the garden store with distance measures in place and then offered a delivery system. We received favourable comments about the peat free compost and we sold all the stock, so a great success. During the pandemic we encouraged Braunston gardeners to support local independent garden centres and nurseries. We are now looking forward to 2021. Having helped unload the delivery in the rain two of our BVGA Supporters have offered to join the Garden Store team. Together they will be looking to build upon this year's success and investigate further how to replace the John Innes peat products for seed sowing.

Members of the BVGA committee worked closely with Braunston Climate Action Network (Braunston CAN) to increase verge biodiversity. Five of us worked alongside family members from Bragborough Hall Farm to plant perennial wildflowers on the east verge of Butlin's Hill and keep them watered through a very dry summer. This location demonstrates how biodiversity can be increased and carbon emissions reduced when managing verges. Braunston CAN have been working with the Parish Council to review all verge management across the Parish in line with these priorities and the BVGA added its name in support of this policy alongside other village organisations. In 2021 we will continue to help with other wildflower planting within the village.

Throughout the year a small team of committee members, working apart, have maintained the Jubilee Garden, Help Yourself Herb garden, Village Hall planters and car park borders. As well as weeding we have added to the planting with more insect friendly additions, aiming for all round colour too. For 2021 we have agreed to fund new planters near to The Green/ Welton Road fence and we will be repairing the herb garden plant signs.

A key role for the BVGA is to raise awareness of environmentally appropriate gardening within the community. BVGA Supporters helped Braunston School with their lockdown gardening projects and we made a donation towards library books for the school. Our BVN articles raised awareness of Wildlife Friendly gardening and highlighted the joint RHS and Wildlife Trusts 'Wild About Gardens' campaign.

There have been disappointments. We were unable to run the plant sale as in May the government advised people to avoid congregating. As most of the committee were shielding we were unable to organise the Gardens Competition. By July we knew that we would have to cancel Braunston Show too. We held our AGM at distance and will ratify the decisions made at our first face to face meeting in 2021.

We have a full programme planned for 2021 and so are delighted to welcome new members to the committee as well as meeting others, new to the village, who would like to come along to find out more about the BVGA. So, a huge thank you to all the committee and supporters for all you do. It is appreciated.