

**Braunston Village Gardens Association**  
**Chairperson's report 2018**

Gardening is becoming more popular in the UK. At the same time the ways to learn are easier to do from the comfort of your own home whether via TV, radio, books, the internet, social media or apps. The BVGA was re-established in 1951 to develop the interest in gardening within Braunston. This year we have continued in the way we know best, with face to face contact. Throughout 2018 we have enjoyed meeting people at our events and learning from each other.

We encourage children to garden through the sale of sunflower kits at the garden store and participation in the Braunston Show. This year we were delighted that children once again were entering the adult classes as well as the children's and that some took part who had been supported by the BVGA in learning about gardening as part of their preparations for a gardening badge at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Braunston Cub Scouts. BVGA committee members lent various tools as part of a gardening quiz and the cubs visited a member's garden to find out about growing vegetables, the benefits of mini-beasts and safety in the garden.

We have learnt more gardening skills this year thanks to Dennis Bancroft running a grafting workshop resulting in the propagation and planting of seven Braunston Pippin apple trees in gardens throughout the village. Mike McCarthy, a founder member of the reinstated BVGA, found the pippin and he and Dennis propagated the first to create the scion plant stock. We are all nurturing our young plants carefully. Marie Le Nepveu, with her autumn talk, encouraged us to plant for winter colour. Marie, who runs a nursery in Thurlaston, shared a few secrets using a range of bulbs, shrubs and annuals, all with vibrant colour combinations. For this event there were 23 in the audience. Earlier in the year, for a talk about Upton House garden the audience had been 31. These are lower numbers than in previous years so we will review this further in 2019.

Both the garden visits this year provided members the opportunity to see gardens less visited.

Winterbourne House led a number of members to say how they were surprised that they had not heard of it before. The Leicester Botanic Garden guides were very well informed and the tour was most interesting. About 30 people went on each visit, slightly more than in previous years. However, increasing costs of coach travel and the amount of time required to organise such visits means that there will be none planned for 2019.

The BVGA committee provide support to gardeners through discussions about plant habits, soil and light requirements when at the annual plant sale. At the Garden Store during its spring opening, discussions about composts, fertilisers and, of course, the best bamboo canes for miles also take place. Both contribute significant profits to the BVGA funds and so maintain a healthy balance for us to buy plants, award prizes and pay for Village Hall use. I would like to thank the BVGA Supporters who respond to our requests and help us with these types of events.

We enhance the Village Hall through maintaining the Jubilee and Herb gardens with our monthly community gardening. This year three new raised beds have been planted and maintained around the car park to provide summer colour for Village Hall and bus users. We delayed the planting due to the very dry conditions during the summer, so we hope to enjoy the full benefits of these beds in 2019.

We look to support the village businesses and residents to enhance containers and gardens around the village by organising the annual gardens competition. We were pleased once again to present these prizes at the annual show and that some of the awards were presented to people who had not won previously. Without a Show Secretary in 2018 all committee members rallied around and the organisational load was shared. We had expected the extreme weather; late winter, cold and wet spring followed by a hot and dry summer to affect the garden produce classes, but despite many "I have nothing to enter" comments before The Show this turned out not to be the case. The number of adult entrants was the largest in six years and while the number of adult entries was lower than last year it was our second best year. Clearly Braunston is a village of resilient gardeners. It was particularly pleasing that two people put their name forward at the end of the show to become more involved with organising it in 2019.

The BVGA values working in partnership with other organisations in the village in meeting its aim of developing an interest in gardening. As well as the Village Hall and 2<sup>nd</sup> Braunston Cubs this year we partnered with Braunston Bakes when selecting the date for the joint plant and bakes sale. We look to continue working with such groups in 2019.

We have ended the year by reflecting upon the number and variety of activities, events, publicity and the amount of organisation required to run these. 2019 and 2020 will see some changes to our programme of events as we reduce some activities in relation to the time we have available.

I would like to use this opportunity to say a big thank you to the BVGA committee members who each take on specific responsibilities throughout the year to ensure that the BVGA activities run smoothly and enable many people within Braunston to develop their interest in gardening.

Kate Mawer  
Chairperson  
December 2018