



What's happening? In the garden



May 2020

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE KNOLL GARDENS FOUNDATION

The Knoll Gardens Foundation is registered as a charity in England and Wales: 1159390

New challenges, new successes

Spring has always been our busiest season on the nursery and that pattern has continued this year.

The new challenges we are all facing appear to have created a genuine enthusiasm for gardening in general and wildlife-friendly gardening in particular. Online plant sales have flourished as a direct result and at times we have even had to suspend orders to catch up with packaging and despatch.

We have never experienced so many orders being received in such a short time, peaking in late April with over 777kg despatched in just one day - in 93 boxes! Quite a record.

Luckily Neville was on hand to help out with the packing.



NEWSPAPERS NEEDED

The frantic packing schedule has already resulted in a shortage of newspapers. As soon as you are allowed to travel we will be desperate for additional supplies!



Melica uniflora Alba
Dainty grain-like white flowers contrast beautifully with fresh green foliage. Good early season grass for dry shady areas. Will gradually colonise if happy.
Height 35cm – 45cm. Deciduous.

Melica uniflora Alba

As all our garden volunteers know, this dry shade lover has always proved a bit problematic when it comes to producing it in sufficient numbers for sale. At one point we even had it germinating on the nursery pathways - but not the pots it had been put in! With little stock across the UK we have always felt this was not a problem limited to Knoll and have been determined to solve it. Now we have finally worked out how to keep it happy and have just sold our first 2 litre plants online.

Once established *Melica uniflora Alba* seeds easily in the garden - and our volunteers have also been very successful lifting and dividing it here at Knoll where it currently looks particularly beautiful.

The garden in pictures

We wish you were here to enjoy the garden as it moves through spring to summer. Walking through the borders there is a pervasive sense of waiting - for summer, for visitors, and for whatever the new 'normality' is to come.

Social distancing should be possible in the garden and we very much hope to be able to welcome back both volunteers and visitors soon.

Until you can visit us again we are trying to ensure you can still keep up with progress in the garden. We know that virtual gardening will never be as good as the real thing - but hope we can offer you a flavour of Knoll online, until we can welcome you back in person.

You can view Knoll Gardens' instagram and facebook pages at your leisure, check out Neil's posts on the website - or follow us on twitter for regular updates.

NEIL'S BEEN POSTING



If you haven't looked recently Neil has a new post up on the Knoll Gardens website featuring the garden's spring flowers - including Primula Minicombe, above - always good to know what you've missed! Garden volunteers in particular may be interested in seeing the fruition of their labours before next spring!

Meanwhile, the Facebook pages are highlighting some great garden vistas such as the silvery blue foliage and flower of Poa labillardierei (below) currently looking very effective in the Gravel Garden.



DAILY POSTS ON INSTAGRAM -

Luke is making daily posts on Instagram @knoll_gardens He's getting rather good at capturing the spirit as well as the beauty of the Knoll, as you can see below.



Left, *Erigeron karvinskianus* growing on the steps at Neil's house, and below *Ipheion* in the garden at Knoll



Self-seeding and a slow spreader, *Erigeron karvinskianus* has colonised Neil's private garden steps without soil or watering; beautiful to look at it also provides insects with habitat and food. Current residents include a nest of bees under one of the steps.



As well as photographs Luke is posting the occasional video including one capturing a lot of activity at the bee hotel. And if you turn up the volume you'll also hear a robin singing its heart out with the background notes being supplied by a nuthatch. Listen to the sound of the garden at . . . www.instagram.com/p/B-zUI9Fg1SK/

Social media links for Knoll Gardens are below:



Facebook: @knollgardens

Instagram: @knoll_gardens

Twitter: @KnollGardens

Luke drafts in Neil to help plant Dry Meadow

In our last newsletter we said that *“this spring planting will move forward on the new Dry Meadow to replace the old eucalyptus lawn”*.

Without our amazing garden volunteers this plan was obviously going to be challenging.

As Head Gardener Luke’s answer to the challenge was to recruit Neil to help with the planting in his spare time. The rumour is that the incredible duo did well, and even succeeded in getting in some bulbs, including watsonia, ixia and iris.

Following their hard work they are now both very much looking forward to welcoming back the Friday morning volunteer gardening team as soon as is safely possible.

In full sun, and covering around 200 metres, the dry meadow will mainly features grasses and perennials under one metre tall alongside more than 2,000 bulbs.



Top right, Luke and Neil (centre - can you spot him?) planting in Knoll’s new Dry Meadow, and below, the finished result with some of the 1500 grasses and perennials that we hope to plant by the end of the summer.

Bee-spotting in lockdown

Whilst our regular garden wildlife surveys will have to wait, our surveyors are still watching the changes in their own gardens. Foundation trustee and bumblebee surveyor, Rowena Jecock has noted how active bumblebees have been this year, particularly buff tail, common carder and early bumblebees.

“I’ve seen a couple of nest-searching buff-tailed queens in the past week, which makes me think they might be on their second generation

already this year. Given the prolonged spell of mild/warm weather, I would have expected all the over-wintering buff-tailed queens to have emerged from hibernation a couple of months ago.”

SPOT-A-BEE-APP

A new Spot-A-Bee app is looking for citizen scientists to help create a map of bee-friendly plants across the country. Created by the School of Education at the University of Glasgow in partnership with the



Buff-tailed bumblebee on an aster

School of Pharmacy at Cardiff University you can get involved by downloading the app, and uploading any photos you take of bees on or around a plant in your garden. It is hoped the data

gathered nationwide will provide information about plants that bees like and then encourage their planting to create bee-friendly habitats. The free app is available from the Apple App Store or Google Play.

Wonderful world of wildlife



It's been a good start to the year for many birds, including this siskin and bullfinch pictured recently in KGF Chairman, Peter Gear's New Forest garden

The **RSPB** has lots of information online about planting to support birds in your garden, including using wisteria and other climbers to add colour and fragrance whilst also acting as a source of food and shelter.

Find out more at rspb.org

Dorset Wildlife Trust has a rather stunning wildlife webcam running at present featuring a barn owl nest. It's unedited, live streaming so this really is nature in the raw, but it is also an amazing opportunity to invest some time on something a bit different during lockdown. Go to www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlifewebcam

SUPPORT US FROM YOUR SOFA!!

The Knoll Gardens Foundation is registered with easyfundraising.org.uk, the UK's biggest charity shopping fundraising website. It works with over 3000 retailers including Amazon, John Lewis, M&S, ebay, Sainsbury's, Argos and AVIVA.

Simply adding a couple of clicks every time you do your normal shopping allows you to support us and costs you nothing at all! With more and more shopping being done online this really is a great way you can keep supporting the Foundation without leaving home.

The Knoll Gardens Foundation

The Knoll Gardens Foundation is dedicated to refining and promoting a wildlife friendly naturalistic gardening style, using the garden at Knoll as a practical example and base for experimentation.

The Foundation relies on donations, legacies, fundraising events and grants to finance its work and welcomes contributions from those who share a passion for gardening and wildlife.

knollgardensfoundation.org

BUTTERFLIES & BEETLES

Keith Powrie has been recording Knoll's butterflies and dragonflies for many years. He suggests that we should now be looking out for emerging Holly Blues (pictured). He's already seen good numbers this year which should augur well for this summer's broods.



Keith adds, "Speckled Woods were also starting to appear before the weather turned cooler - watch out for them as the temperatures begin to rise again".



Butterfly Conservation keeps a record of 'earliest sightings' of butterflies on its website and Dorset currently has five confirmed first sightings: Lulworth Skipper, Wood White, Small Copper, Small Blue and Brown Argus. See the full list at butterflyconservation.org

The People's Trust for Endangered Species is asking for sightings of stag beetles. Feeding on dead wood, a stag beetle's life cycle can last up to seven years making them vulnerable to predators and habitat destruction. Find out more about stag beetles, join in the 'Great Stag Hunt' and report your sightings of our largest land beetle on the PTES website at <https://ptes.org/>



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Knoll Gardens Foundation
Wimborne, Dorset
BH21 7ND
01202 873931

Email: foundation@knollgardens.co.uk