



Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden



Nearly time to get sowing.....

Now we are into February, this is the time when we can look at sowing more seeds, indeed the power of seed germination is a real joy to behold.....  
So, when a tiny seed that in some cases is almost like a speck of dust, given the right growing conditions, seeds will germinate and grow into vibrant green plants. Once the seeds have germinated, then another feat of nature is that plants start to make their own food through photosynthesis.....  
Seed germination and photosynthesis. Real wonders of nature.....

The power of seed germination.....



On the far left you can see that the sweet pea seeds that we have sown are now starting to germinate. A little trick here is to start the germination process of sweet peas by placing the seeds on a piece of damp kitchen roll – this will start the process off, so, once there are little shoots then plant the seeds into your compost.....

Sweet peas



# Snowdrops are in flower.....

Usually, the first of the flowers to appear in the winter months, the snowdrop...  
Here you can see the aptly named snowdrops that resemble drops of snow.....



# Snowdrops.....



## More seed sowing taking place.....

February generally is a month when you can sow more crops although some of these crops will need a measure of protection from frost. Indeed, some seeds prefer colder temperatures to get them started but once they germinate, some protection is required. We are sowing peas next.....



## Peas.....

## Garlic is growing quickly.....





# More landscaping work taking place.....

There is always plenty of development work to do in the garden which we have continued to work on with more willow work continuing – using the willow that we have cut down from our original willow dome. At the front of the garden area, we have set up a willow “screen” which you can see below.....

Hopefully, once the willow rods establish a root system, they will send out plenty of green shoots – also, we might plant a climbing plant such as a clematis or honeysuckle, this will depend on the amount of growth that the willow rods make.....





## **Wildlife being catered for.....**

**We have undertaken a massive tree planting programme in recent years all funded by Smart Learner Driving School. Once all of these trees establish themselves, the garden space will be a haven for wildlife. Add in all of the planting that has been done in the garden which is so pollinator friendly, then the solitary bee houses the bird boxes and the hedgehog houses you can start to see the efforts that have been put in to make the garden such a wildlife friendly space with more work planned.....**

**Simple things like log piles will create shelter for many different types of insects plus leaving areas of grass long and uncut – very easy ways to help.....**



## **Wildlife Mini – Ponds being set up.....**



**Here you can see that we are setting up some mini ponds.... These ponds will be set up in different locations all around the garden area..... Once the mini – ponds are all in place, we will add some big rocks, some water - based plants and then we will fill the mini – ponds with rainwater.... Also, we will set up some water stations for the birds and the bees.....**



# Six Mini – Ponds are all set up.....

We have now completed the set up of six mini – ponds in different areas of the garden. They are empty apart from one of the ponds, we will allow them to fill up naturally with rainwater with perhaps a top up from our water butts.....

Come the spring we will then plant them up with some pond and marginal plants of which some will be flowering plants which will attract and help the pollinators. Also, the set up of these mini – ponds will be a great asset for the garden and more importantly the wildlife that inhabit the garden.....

Here you can see some of the mini – ponds.....

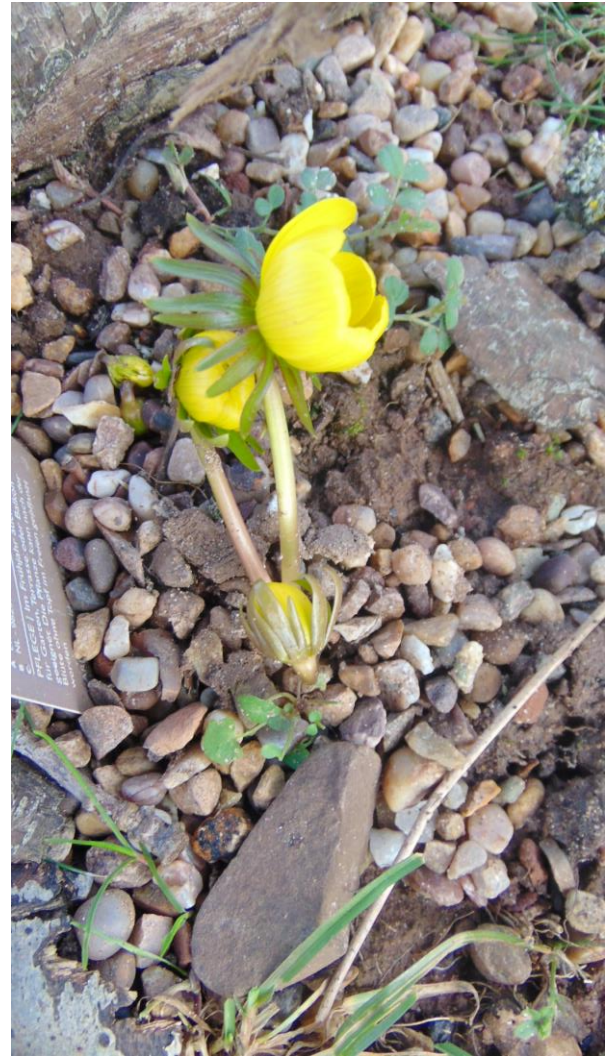


# Mini – Ponds.....



# Colourful bulbs starting to flower.....

Here you can see our winter aconites that have a gorgeous deep yellow colour.



## Blue Muscari starting to flower.....



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## **More snowdrops.....**

The beauty of snowdrops is that they are very tough plants, and that over a period of time will naturalise and spread. Indeed, once they have flowered, the foliage will die back and then the bulbs will almost disappear before returning the next growing season. The snowdrops above have been run over by outside contractors vehicles and walked all over in the summer months but have come back to flower again.....



Here you can see some stunning blue irises that are actually growing in one of our compost heaps..... Needless to say, they will be rescued from there and planted up..

## **Irises**



## **New raised bed being filled up.....**

Rather than spend an absolute fortune on filling up big, deep raised beds with fresh compost, we are using the hügelkultur method of filling the raised bed with a mixture of different materials including logs, twigs, cardboard, straw, leaves and soil that we are getting from digging out our mini wildlife ponds..... This is a much more economical way of filling our raised beds..... We will top off the raised bed with fresh compost.....



## **Catkins in abundance.....**

Catkins contain the male flowers that are found on hazel trees, they look like long lamb's tails containing lots of powdery yellow pollen. Pollination is wind assisted with the female flowers being much smaller, almost bud like with red tendrils which are the pollen tubes which is where the pollen lands.....



## **Hazel Catkins...**



# **Rose Garden has been moved.....**

The rose garden that we set up last year has been moved to a more sheltered area of the garden – the support trellis for one of our climbing roses kept being blown down in the storms that we have experienced just lately, so we have moved the rose garden – we have pruned the roses so that they will make plenty of strong new growth in the spring. Here you can see the trellis set up....



## **Roses**

### **Planted....**

Bring Me Sunshine  
Golden Celebration  
Generous Gardener  
Peace and Tranquility  
Tranquility

## **Roses**



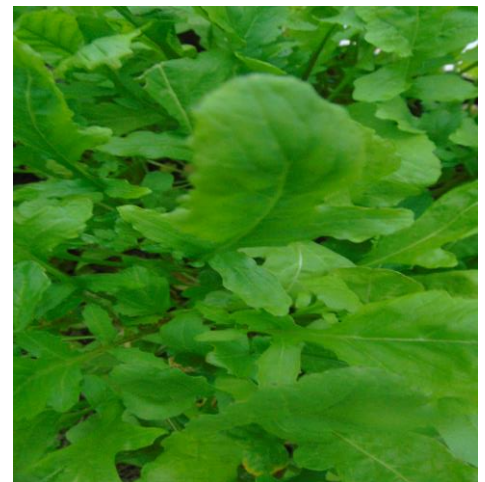
# **Rose Garden.....**



# Poly tunnel greens.....

Outside it maybe dark and grim, but inside the poly tunnel there is plenty of vibrant green growth with Lambs Lettuce, Rocket and Garlic all making great lots of healthy looking growth.....

Here you can see our Lambs Lettuce.....



**Rocket..**

**Lambs Lettuce.....**



**Garlic is growing fast! .....**



**Tulips are pushing through the grass.....**





# Rhubarb is growing fast! .....

Below you can see that our rhubarb plants are growing fast – it is always a heartening sight to see the new growth emerge from the rhubarb crowns..... Also, it is an encouraging sight to see some new growth outdoors in the garden.



# Rhubarb.....



## **Another bug hotel is being set up.....**

We are always striving to provide a very eco-friendly environment within the Echo – Eternal Curriculum Garden. There are so many different ways we can help the wildlife that play an important role in the overall balance of the garden – first and foremost, no pesticides or chemicals are used anywhere within the garden. We are in the process of setting up another bug hotel..... The latest bug hotel is being set up at the front of the garden area – we will add material to this structure as we go along. So far, we have added some twigs and lots of branches, also we have put some big logs from the silver birch trees that were cut down in the summer. Below, you can see the basic set up so far....



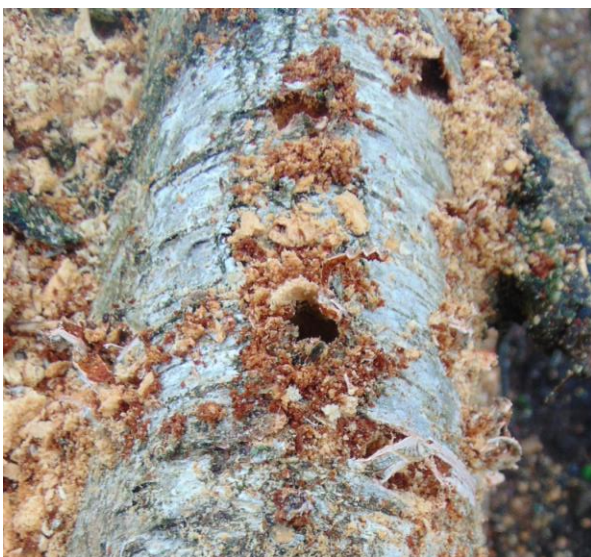
## **BUG HOTEL.....**

## **A HOME FOR NATURE.....**



# Logs are great materials for a bug hotel.....

Here you can see the logs that we have added to the bug hotel, as you can see we have drilled holes into the logs which will create spaces where insects will be able to shelter, indeed, solitary bees might even lay their eggs in the holes...





## **Bird Feeders set up.....**

Here you can see that we have set up some bird feeders in the garden area.....  
These feeders are hopefully squirrel proof because that is one animal that we do not want to encourage. The feeders are stocked with meal worms and sunflower hearts – two types of food favoured by song birds.....







## **Christmas tree and heathers making lots of growth..**

**Below you can see the Christmas tree that was planted in January and is making plenty of new growth as are the heathers at the front of the garden.....**





# Beech and Hazel trees being put to good use.....

Here you can see a row of beech and hazel trees that we have been growing so that we can coppice some of the wood to put to use in other areas of the garden – watch for what we are going to use the wood for.....





# **Natural Materials being put to good use.....**

**After we have cut down the beech and hazel branches, we are now going to put them to good use. The more natural materials and the more re-cycling that you can do in the garden, then so much the better, so we are using the branches that we have cut down to set up a growing area, also a low boundary hedge.....**



**Here you can see that we have created a shape by way of pushing the cut sticks into the ground.....  
The next job is to cut some long willow branches and then we have started to weave them around the shape to create a retaining wall.....**



**We have continued to build up the layers of willow which we are weaving into the structure as we go.....**

**All natural.....  
Beech / Hazel  
Willow.....**



**Here you can see some more layers of willow have been added to increase the height of the natural raised bed.....**

## **Natural Raised Bed.....**



## Low boundary hedge being set – up.....

Here you can see that we have started to build a low boundary line that defines the outer perimeter of the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden and the field.....



## Another raised bed – hot box being built.....



Here we are building a new raised bed that we are going to set up as a hot box to start seeds off early. A layer of thick cardboard has been put on the base, this is covered over with horse manure, then another layer of fresh hot manure will be added to maintain the heat to help the germination process.



# **Crocuses are following the snowdrops.....**

**In terms of the flowering bulbs that come up in the January – February period, usually the snowdrops come first followed by crocuses. So, in the garden we have got snowdrops already in flower with crocuses coming into flower now..... Below you can see the crocuses that are pushing through the grass, they are planted in the grass so that in time they will naturalise and spread to form almost a carpet of colour.....**





## **Wildflower and Flower Zones being set up.....**

**Back in the autumn we set out some wildflower and flower planting zones, this involved covering some areas of the grass with some black weed suppressant membrane which would create some areas which would have the grass weakened so that we could then prepare these areas ready to sow our flower seed in the spring.....**



**Here you can see that we have lifted up a corner to see that the membrane is doing its job – everything is looking good ready to do some more preparation work very soon...**

## **More crocuses naturalising around the trees.....**

**Here you can see some crocuses that are growing in the grass just below one of the big sycamore trees in the school grounds. These flower bulbs are naturalising and spreading in the grass. Indeed, for the most part of the year you would not even know that these flower bulbs were there.....**





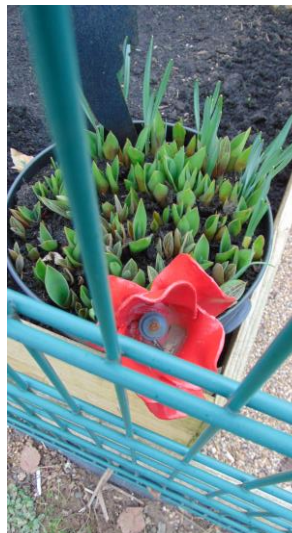
## **Boundary “Dead Hedge” is being built.....**

The boundary hedge we have started to set up has moved forward to setting up a “dead hedge” – this is a hedge using twigs, plant prunings, branches and any other dead plant material. A really easy way to put to use dead material..... As well as creating a natural boundary screen, it will also create a natural habitat for any invertebrates and insects to shelter and live in.....



## **Gorgeous Hellebore planted up.....**

Here you can see a gorgeous hellebore which is called Shooting Star – the subtle colours are stunning.....



Here you can see the hellebore has been planted between the two tubs of spring flowering bulbs that are in the garden area at the garden front entrance.....



# **Pallet top gardens being set – up.....**

**We are setting up some pallet top gardens – we have started by building a wooden frame around the top of the pallet, the next step will be to line the bottom of the pallet with weed suppressant membrane which will hold the compost but will allow drainage so that our pallet top gardens do not become saturated and soggy.....**



**Here you can see that we have cut some liner to line the pallet top planter.....  
When we are ready to add some compost, we will fix the liner securely.....**





## More landscaping work underway.....

Additional landscaping work is continuing as more raised beds are being built with a view to developing more flower gardens. Not only will these raised beds create more growing spaces but at the same time they will take away more of the grassy areas meaning less grass cutting and strimming work.....



## More raised beds built....



# **Lots of colour springing up.....**

**Although spring is officially a few weeks away yet, there are pockets of colour springing up in lots of different areas of the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden.... We have lots of snowdrops, crocuses, irises and muscari all in flower plus now we are starting to see our anemone's showing some beautiful colour.....**





**Aconites are stunning.....**

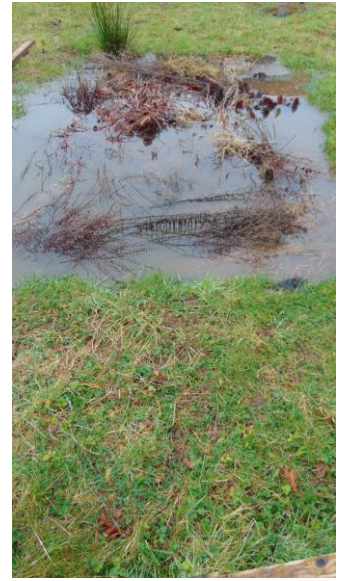
**Here you can see some beautiful aconites that have opened out fully now displaying some stunning yellow colour.....**





# **Ridiculous amounts of rain.....**

**With the water table still very high, further rainfall on Sunday February 23<sup>rd</sup> and overnight into Monday February 24<sup>th</sup> has left some areas of the garden very sodden indeed, flooded in some areas as you will see from the photographs....**



# **Saturated ground.....**



# Another “Dry Area” being created.....

Aside from the raised bed growing spaces, numerous pots and containers, we are continuing to develop new “dry areas and dry pathways” around different parts of the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden. What we mean by a dry pathway are pathways that are accessible to everyone rather than pathways that are covered in gravel or wood chip. The dry pathways make movement easier..... Here you can see the start of this work – the area has been raked to collect up all of the leaves before we lay weed suppressant membrane.....



Here you can see that we have moved one of our water butts..... Essential to growing, water is so necessary to grow our plants..... Rainwater is harvested off the poly tunnel roof into two water butts that we have set up with guttering. Once they are close to being full, we take off some water and transfer this into water butts that we have set up around different parts of the garden.....

## Water Butts..



# Sunshine is bringing the flowering bulbs out.....

The sunshine has certainly brought out the flowering bulbs with some stunning crocuses providing some gorgeous colours, also, more importantly, the increase in the daytime temperature and the sunshine will bring the bees out who will be looking for some nectar after being in the hive all winter..... Here you can see some of the stunning crocuses.....





## **“Old School” Site Crocuses.....**

**Older members of the school community will remember the huge horse chestnut trees and the landscaped garden borders at the main entrance to the original school. Underneath the horse chestnut tree are hundreds of beautiful crocuses that over the years have naturalised and spread to create a real carpet of colour – this is probably one of the lasting memories of the original school grounds. Here you can see some of these beautiful crocuses.....**





# More “Old School” Crocuses.....





## and more “Old School” Crocuses.....

These crocuses really are stunning! .....



## Cold Frame set up.....



On the left you can see that we have set up our cold frame – with seed sowing and planting work ready to start very soon, the cold frame will be put to good use before we can plant out and sow seeds directly.....

## Daffodils are in flower.....





## Bug Hotel Set Up.....



We are in the process of setting up another bug hotel in the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden – as we have stated many times, we are always trying to create a balanced wildlife friendly environment in the garden by providing shelter and habitats that insects and lots of different creatures can use in return for the job that they do in the garden.....

Our pollinators are so, so important, indeed it is calculated that over 75% of our food is down to pollination from bees and other pollinating insects.....

## Daffodil Pots are growing fast.....

Here you can see the 100 daffodil pots that we have planted up to sell to raise money for Myton Hospice.....

An annual event that we have done for 5 years now with the bulbs and the pots all supplied by Jo Wilson from Littlehurst Nursery and Garden Centre.....



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# **Daffodils are providing plenty of colour.....**

**Over the years we have planted thousands of bulbs in lots of different areas of the school site which are providing some spectacular colour as you make your way around the school site. Here you can see some of the daffodils that have been planted at the frontage area in the grass where they are naturalising.....**

