

**April  
2021**



**The Bridge Garden  
Newsletter No 48**

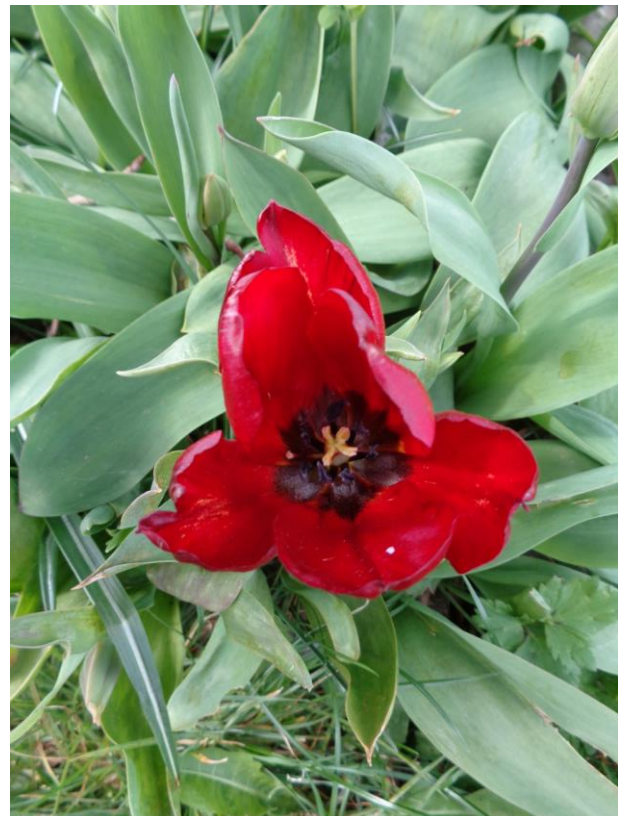
## **A very cold start to April.....**

In what is recognised as the peak time to sow seeds, the start of April is nowhere the time to even think about outdoor sowings – indoors with protection yes, but the first week of April has seen frost and also some snow showers too..... We will err on the side of caution for the time being to see how the weather goes..

## **Tulips are stunning.....**

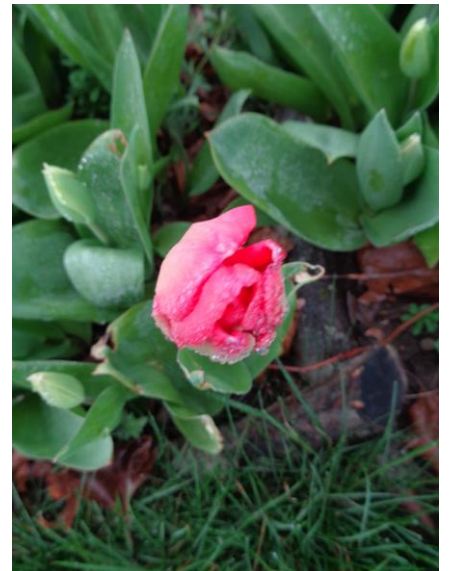
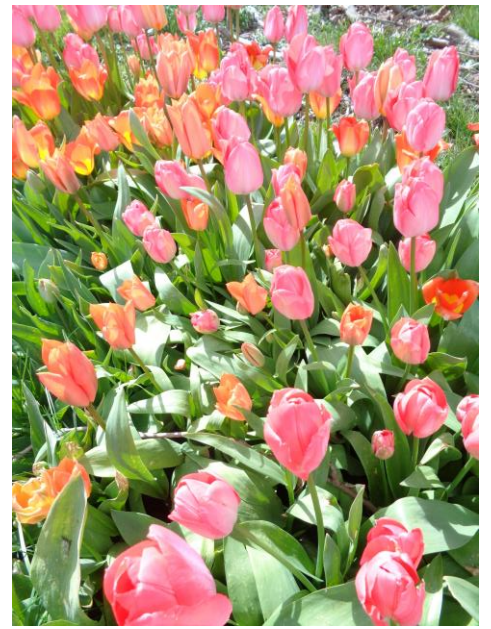
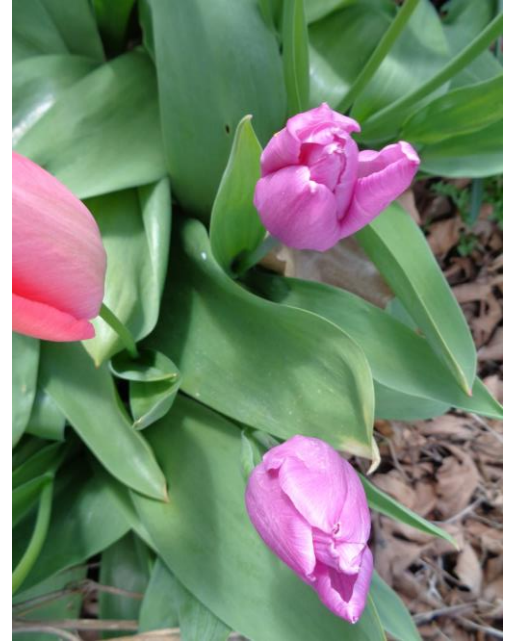
### **Thursday April 1<sup>st</sup> 2021.....**

The tulips that are in flower at the front entrance to The Bridge Garden really are stunning – such vibrant and delicate colours all creating a colourful scene.....



# More wonderful colours.....

The colours of these tulips really are a joy to behold – stunning colours.....



**More stunning tulips.....**

**Tuesday April 6<sup>th</sup> 2021.....**



Here you can see that there are some more stunning tulips that are close to opening..

Looking at the early flush of colour, these tulips look like they are going to provide some really vivid colours.....

**Tulips.....**

**Borage has self - seeded.....**

Borage really is a super herb to have in your garden – loved by the bees, really easy to grow, indeed this plant has self-seeded from last year, plus it has plenty of different uses, the leaves if you can overcome the furry texture actually taste like cucumber, Borage also has some other uses too.....



## **Evidence of the cold temperatures.....**

**Below you can see some visual evidence of the cold weather that we have experienced during the first full week of April. Snow showers and frost as you can see from the snow that has frozen on top of our cold frame.....**



## **Poly tunnel strawberries are looking good.....**



**It might be cold and frosty outside, but inside the poly tunnel with the protective environment that it provides our strawberries are really well advanced as you can see by the flowers that are already on the plants. Hopefully we will be able to enjoy some super sweet fruit soon....**

**Lots of fruit in The Bridge Garden.....**

**Wednesday April 7<sup>th</sup> 2021.....**

**There is most certainly plenty of fruit growing in The Bridge Garden – both fruit trees, fruit bushes and lots and lots of rhubarb too.....**

**Below you can see our blackcurrant bushes really looking lush.....**



**Grape vine looks great.....**



**Spring has to be one of the best seasons simply because it is a time when there are not only lots of colourful flower bulbs in flower but also it is a season when trees and plants start to produce lots of new growth as you can see from both the blackcurrant bushes on the left and the grape vine above.....**

**Subway continue to support our schools growing work**



**Schools growing work**

# Rhubarb is ready for picking.....

Our rhubarb patch has grown very quickly in a matter of weeks to the point where there is plenty ready to be picked plus underneath the black bucket are some super sweet stems that we have forced by depriving the plant of light.....



**Cherry tree blossom is starting to flower.....**



**Cherry blossom.....**

## Free garden resources.....

Friday April 9<sup>th</sup> 2021.....

Anytime you not only look around your garden but also around your own home there are so many different things that you can use in your garden from making different kinds of compost and adding to your soil plus at this time of the year you can use something as simple as cardboard to help to warm the soil.....

### Banana skins.....

Banana skins will add potassium back into your soil.....



### Cardboard placed on the soil...

Cardboard placed on the soil will help the soil to warm up plus the earthworms will love it!



## Comfrey makes a great soil additive.....



Comfrey is another plant that is really easy to grow and will provide an excellent source of fertiliser or it can be used as a mulch around plants. The bees love it too.....

Cut some leaves off the plant, add some water to a bucket with a lid, give it a good stir and then leave it for a week or two, be aware that when you take the lid off the bucket – it stinks!

Comfrey also has plenty of medicinal properties too.....

## **Another free crop that makes fantastic fertiliser.....**

How many times have you brushed past stinging nettles and then “suffered” the consequences as your skin becomes irritated and little red blotches appear on your skin. Well, once you have been stung by stinging nettles you then tend to be a lot more careful when you are around them but stinging nettles have some really amazing properties both from a gardener’s perspective, they also have many medicinal and culinary uses too.....

Now, nettles – *Urtica dioica* to give them their scientific name make amazing compost – nettle tea which contains calcium, iron, magnesium and potassium plus they are high in chlorophyll and Vitamin C.....

When you brush past the leaves they have tiny hairs which contain formic acid and histamine which cause the stinging effect. Aside from being a real friend of the gardener, nettles also have many culinary uses – nettle soup and nettle tea are just two but nettles also have lots of medicinal uses – yes, the humble nettle Below you can see a patch of the nettles that we have growing in The Bridge Garden area which we will be putting to good use to make some nettle compost..



## **Stinging nettles.....**

# Herbs are growing well.....

We have plenty of herb plants that are growing well inside the poly tunnel – lemon balm that has been sown from seed, angelica plants that have come from self – seeded plants and chocolate peppermint that has been split from a “parent” plant.

Again, ways that you can be resourceful in the garden.....



On the left you can see some more of the Angelica plants that we have potted up plus there is the pot of Chocolate Peppermint which really smells absolutely divine.....

Angelica which can grow as tall as eight feet tall with hollow stems has plenty of culinary uses.....

# Herbs...

# Poly tunnel growing boxes being prepared.....

Now that we are into April hopefully the weather will start to warm up – with so many fluctuations in the temperature even the poly tunnel is not guaranteed to provide the perfect seed germination conditions.....



What we can do is prepare everything so that as soon as the weather conditions improve, then we are all set to go. Below you can see the Fyffes growing boxes inside the poly tunnel that have all been topped up with fresh growing compost so we are all set to get busy growing.....



# More Fyffes Growing Box Preparation Work.....

Tuesday April 13<sup>th</sup> 2021.....



Today we have continued our preparation work by preparing the Fyffes Growing Boxes and replenishing the minerals in the soil by adding plenty of REMIN ROCKDUST.....



# Fyffes Growing Boxes.....

All ready for seed sowing and planting.....

## **Broad Beans have plenty of flowers.....**

**Our Broad Bean plants are surviving the up and down nature of the weather right now as they look to hopefully provide us with a healthy crop of tasty beans in a few weeks – time, judging by the numbers of flowers on the plants hopefully we will be able to harvest a bumper crop. We always try to plant this crop early in the autumn so that the crop can be harvested before any problems from black fly which Broad Beans are susceptible too.....**

**Below you can see some of the plants with plenty of flowers on.....**



## Sunflower seeds are starting to germinate.....



Here you can see the pots of sunflowers that we have sown – this is a dwarf variety called “Music Box” which will hopefully produce plenty of bright and attractive flowers.....

These pots have been sown in the poly tunnel and have been covered over with fleece so that the changing temperatures particularly the cold overnight frosts have not caused any problems.....

## Music Box Sunflowers

## More stunning cherry blossom.....



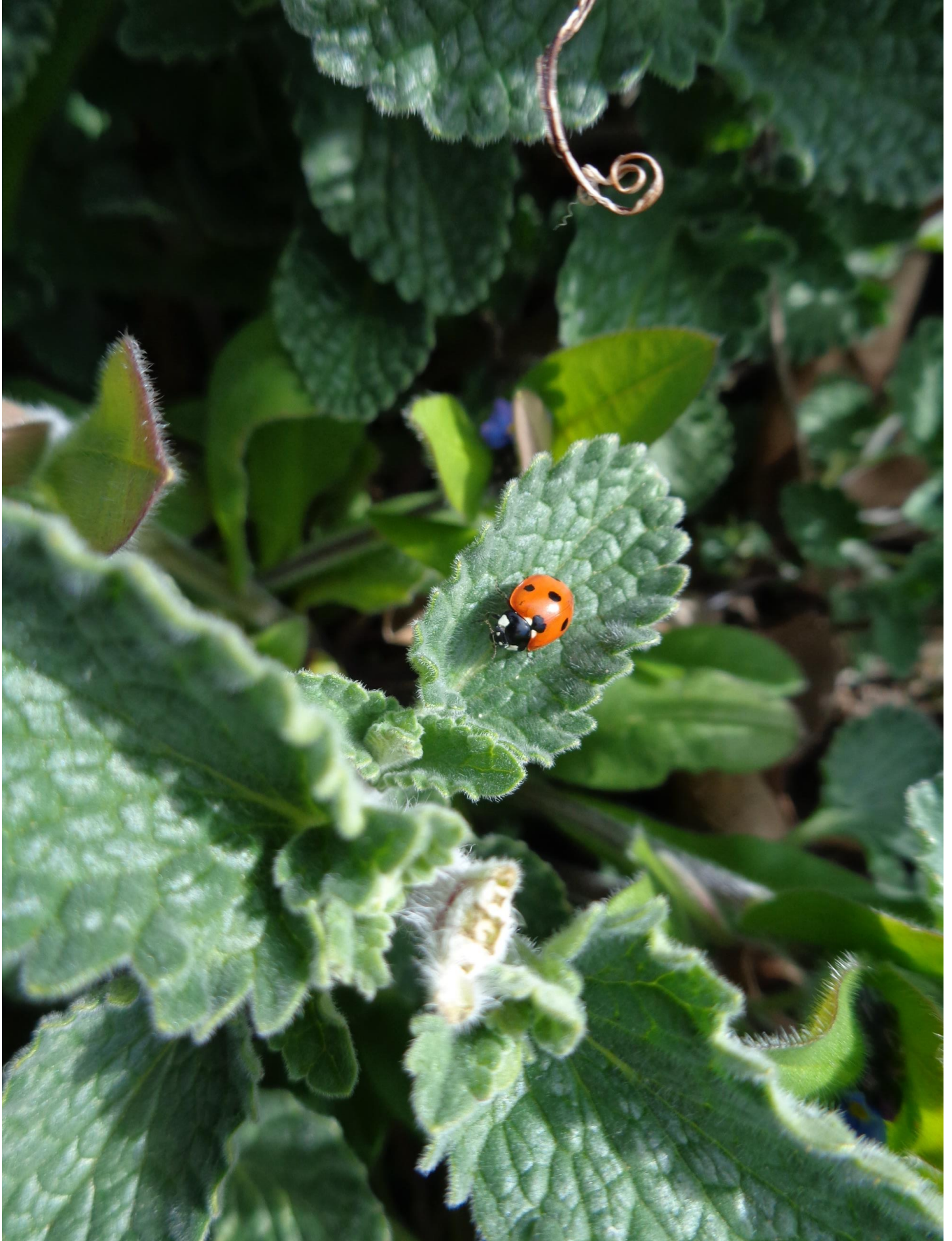
## **Forced rhubarb looks sweet and tender.....**

**When you force rhubarb plants the end result is that you get lots of sweet and tender stems which if you look at the photograph below you can see what we are talking about – so instead of big thick often tough stems you get really pink thin stems.....**



## **Nature enjoying the new green growth.....**

**In and around The Bridge Garden area there are plenty of new green shoots along with lots of early spring flowers too – the perfect habitat to encourage plenty of beneficial insects and pollinators into our garden as you can see below.**



# Appletini apple trees are making plenty of growth.....

The newly planted apple trees which are called Appletini are starting to make plenty of new growth – following the winter dormancy period that trees go through, come the spring it is always heartening to see new growth..... This apple variety is a compact growing tree that once established will produce plenty of bite – size apples.....



## **Striving for a balanced garden area.....**

**Within The Bridge Garden area we are always striving to create a balanced environment that attracts all sorts of wildlife not least essential pollinators plus to create a balance we are always trying to attract some amphibians particularly some frogs and toads who will in turn hopefully reduce the slug population.....**

**We have some small “potted” pond areas in the garden but we really need to finish off the big pond that we have dug out. Around these small pond area’s we have some marginal plants growing – one of these plants is our Marsh Marigold which year after year comes back and produces some stunning yellow flowers.....**

**Here you can see our Marsh Marigold plant.....**



# More stunning tulips.....

Thursday April 15<sup>th</sup> 2021.....

After the cold frosty starts during this week – the daytime sunshine is a joy to behold and it certainly sets off some stunning views with more and more of our spring flowering bulbs coming into flower. Below you can see some more photographs of the flowering bulbs.....



**More stunning colours.....**



**Daffodils in lots of different colours.....**

## Herbs are making lots of fresh growth.....

As the daytime temperatures continue to warm up it is really heartening to see lots of fresh green growth especially from some of our herbs.....

One of the favourite herbs that we have growing in The Bridge Garden is our chocolate mint which smells almost like After Eight Mints – a heavenly smell..... Here you can see a growing box that is full of chocolate mint.....



## Strawberry Mint.....



Here you can see our pot of strawberry mint – note that the pot is wrapped in a blue polythene bag.....

This pot of mint is wrapped to contain the roots within the pot because not only are mint plants very, very invasive plants but if you plant different mint varieties in the same proximity to each other there is a thought that the rhizomes that the plants put out will eventually neutralise each other.....

**Grape Vine is flourishing.....**

**Friday April 16<sup>th</sup> 2021.....**

In a matter of just ten days our grape vine that is planted in the poly tunnel really has flourished – given the relatively warm spring sunshine in the daytime coupled with plenty of water, the vine is really producing lots of growth.....

Below you can see this growth.....



**Fig is making lots of growth too.....**



Our fig plant just like our grape vine is making lots of new vibrant green growth as you can see from the photograph here.....

What we need to think about soon is to re-pot this plant into a bigger pot so that the plant will be able to grow bigger and produce more fruit...

**Fig Brown Turkey.....**

## More stunning spring colours.....

All around The Bridge Garden areas you will find lots of stunning spring flowering bulbs, many of which we have featured in this newsletter, indeed many of these flowers really have some super colours, here you can see the white narcissus with their yellow centres, blue muscari sometimes called grape hyacinths and you can just about see a red tulip in the middle of the pot.....



## More super colours.....



## **Wild garlic is starting to produce some flower buds.....**

**Mention the word garlic and straight away it evokes thoughts of a strong aroma, there is no doubt in this thought, indeed wild garlic with its delicate white flowers has an even stronger smell – without stating the obvious, the flowers really do have a strong distinctive smell of garlic. Also, wild garlic is as tough as it comes as it comes back year after year. Below you can see our wild garlic with the flower buds just forming in the centre of the plant.....**



# **Wild garlic.....**

**Another cold start to the day.....**

**Monday April 19<sup>th</sup> 2021.....**

It is another cold start in The Bridge Garden with a frost covering the garden area, cold overnight temperatures followed by relatively warmer daytime temperatures are creating some significant temperature fluctuations which are not the ideal seed sowing and growing conditions. Below you can see the garden area.....



**Lots of fruit tree blossom.....**



Here you can see some of the fruit trees with blossom – apple blossom on the left and then pear blossom.....

Hopefully now the blossom is starting to flower we do not get too much more frost.....

## More fruit trees have been planted.....

In The Bridge Garden we already have plenty of fruit trees which includes a cherry tree, a pear tree, two Bramley cooking apple trees, two eating apple trees, and two plum trees. Also, this past winter we have added two more apple trees called Appletini and we have also just planted three more fruit trees.....

These three new trees include another plum tree, another pear tree and another eating apple tree. It is unlikely that these three new trees will produce any fruit this year because it is quite late to plant trees but hopefully, they will establish themselves ready for next year.....

Below you can see the preparation work ready to plant these new trees.....



# New fruit trees planted up.....

Here you can see the three new fruit trees all planted up and staked.....

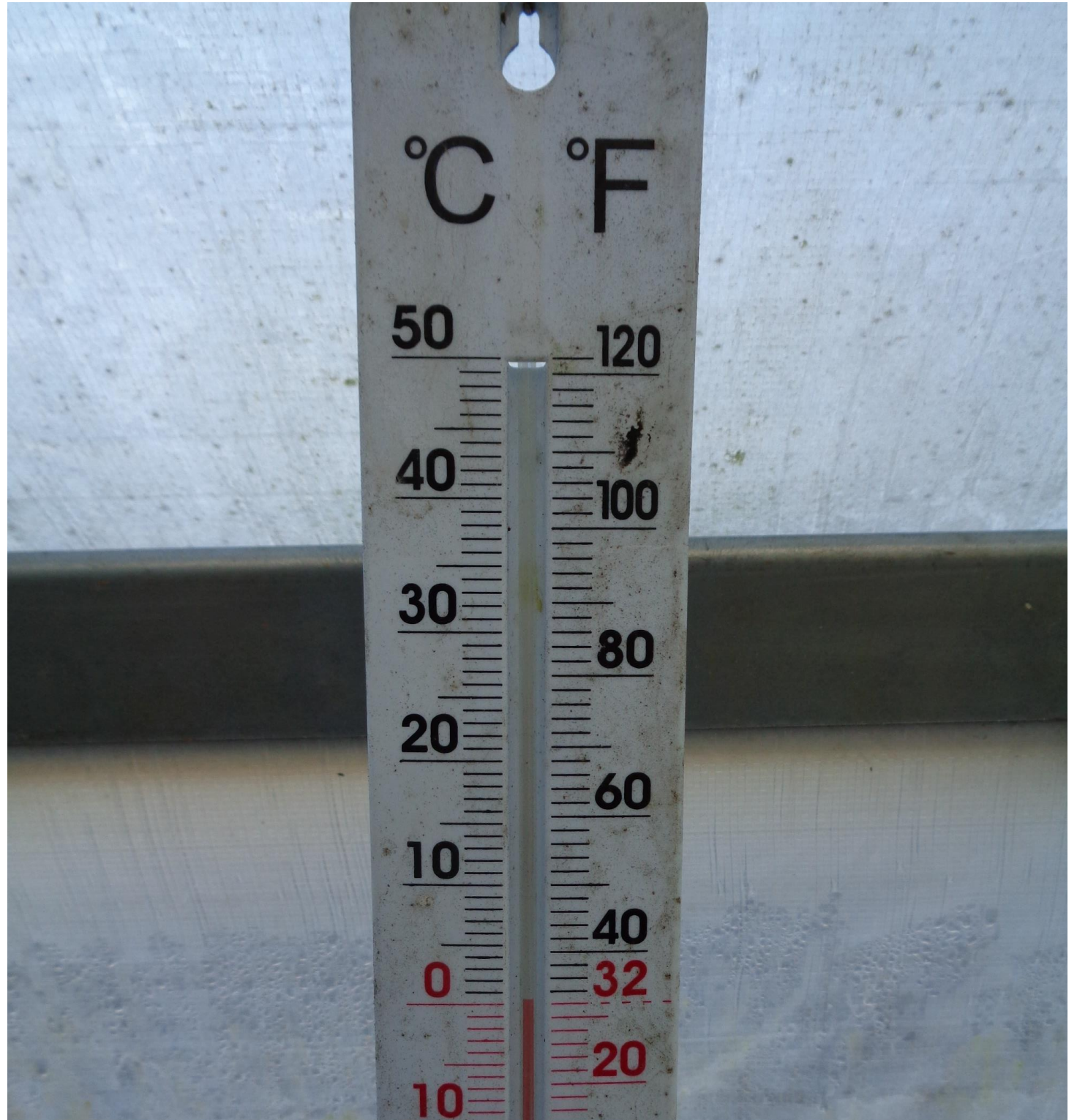


# Cold starts – warm daytime temperatures.....

**Friday April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021.....**

Throughout the whole of this week, indeed probably since Easter we have been experiencing some cold overnight temperatures coupled with frost but then we have enjoyed relatively bright, warm daytime temperatures. If you look around the allotment – garden areas you will see that the ground is almost parched.....

This thermometer reading was taken this morning at 6.30am, bearing in mind that this photograph was taken inside the “protected” environment of the school poly tunnel, so it is possible that the temperature reading outside of the poly tunnel would be even lower, this is almost definitely true judging by the frost.....



## Sunflowers protected by fleece.....



Here you can see the tender sunflower plants that we have growing inside the school poly tunnel – because of the cold overnight frosty conditions we have been protecting these plants with fleece.....



## Frost causing lots of problems.....



Here you can see our Rocket potatoes that we are growing inside the poly tunnel so that can give them a bit of protection from the cold frosty weather but you can still see some of the leaves that are having a problem with the frost as the leaves are either going black or they are damaged.... Hopefully the roots will be fine underneath the ground.....

## **Weather is causing all sorts of problems.....**

Aside from the cold night temperatures, the weather is also causing different problems in the allotment area – during March we had a very dry month along with lots of drying winds. Now we are almost at the end of April, we have had very little rain, certainly no April showers, just a few odd snow showers at the very start of the month which has led to lots of our growing beds looking very dry, indeed some of these growing beds are actually cracking it is so dry! .....  
If you look at this growing bed which has barley growing where you can see the cracks in the ground are visible – now picture this scenario where a farmer is trying to grow a big crop of barley in his fields but the ground is parched and cracked, this shows you how growing crops are always a challenge.....



**Barley is growing.....**

**Ground is parched and cracking.....**

## **Apple blossom is starting to open fully.....**

**At the beginning of the week our apple tree blossom was only just starting to open but just a few days later it is much more evident and is starting to open fully – what we need now is for the pollinators to get to work to help pollination take place and then hopefully we will get a crop of fruit.....**

**Yet another reason that we need to look after our pollinators and stop using nasty insecticides that are killing off the pollinators.....**



# Tulips are stunning in the spring sunshine.....

Here you can see some absolutely stunning mixed tulips that really do look spectacular in the spring sunshine – such vibrant colours.....



**More stunning tulips.....**



## **Perennials are flourishing.....**

Here you can see our Golden Rod which is making some really strong growth, a perennial herb that is as tough as it comes producing masses of yellow flowers that are a real magnet for the bees and many other pollinating insects.....



## **Forget - Me - Nots have self – seeded.....**



Here you can see another perennial that we have growing which is called Nepeta and this is surrounded by Forget-My-Nots which have the tiny blue flowers. Forget-My-Nots are a bi-ennial which if allowed to will readily self – seed and spread across a large area.....

**Golden Rod.....**

**Nepeta.....**

**Forget-My-Nots.....**

## Stinging Nettles being collected.....

**Monday April 26<sup>th</sup> 2021.....**

Today we have collected up a bucket of stinging nettles which we have crushed up and then we have added some water to the bucket – then it is a question of time before the nettles rot down and produce a liquid compost feed.....

Below you can see the bucket of nettles.....



## Tomato plants planted up.....



Here you can see a few micro cherry tomato plants that we have grown from seed – hopefully these plants will survive the colder overnight temperatures inside the poly tunnel and will establish themselves ready for when the warmer weather comes..... It is still relatively early in the growing season.....

# Tomato Micro Cherry

# Sunflowers are growing fast! .....

Just two weeks on from when these sunflower seeds started to germinate, as you can see they are making some very quick growth – these sunflowers are a variety called Music Box which are a dwarf variety that grow up to 70centimetres so they can be either left to grow in these pots probably with some cane supports or they can be transplanted directly into the ground.....

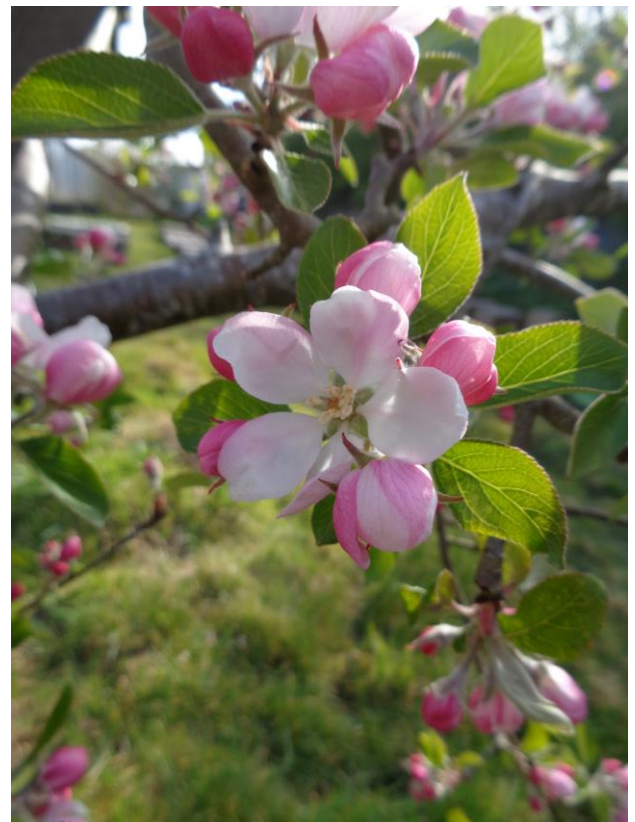


## Herbs are growing fast too.....

Here you can see two of the herbs that we have been growing in the poly tunnel, on the left we have Lemon Balm which we have grown from seed and then we have some pots of Angelica which we have propagated from plants that have grown after self-seeding from a parent plant.....



## Apple blossom is really stunning.....



# More perennials growing.....

**Friday April 30<sup>th</sup> 2021.....**

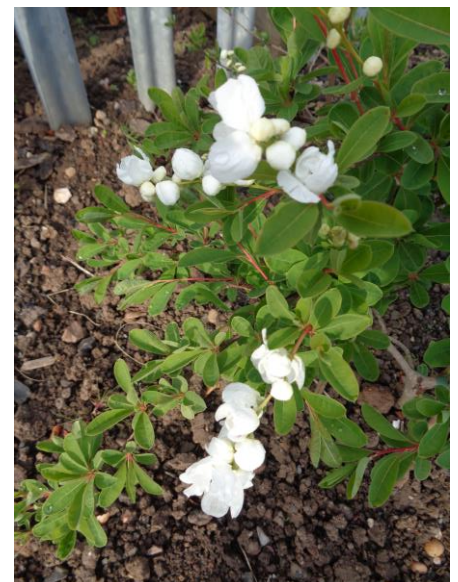
Below you can see some more perennials that are growing in The Bridge Garden. Our Lupins are producing plenty of growth which will hopefully be followed by plenty of colourful flowers – Lupins are perennials but will not last forever but they produce seed pods that will often self-seed so once you have some plants established they will stay in your garden area for a long time.....



**Elder bushes are loaded with lots of flowers so hopefully lots of berries. [On the left]**

**On the right is another perennial shrub that we have growing in The Bridge Garden.....**

**This is called Exochorda.**



## **New fruit trees are producing early growth.....**

**The three new fruit trees that we planted two weeks ago have quickly established themselves as they are already producing some new growth.....**

**Below you can see our Braeburn apple tree.....**



## More stunning tulips.....

Here you can see some more stunning yellow tulips – these are called fringed tulips because of the fringe like structure of the flower.....

Absolutely amazing what a flower bulb can produce.....

