

May
2021



The Bridge Garden
Newsletter No 49

Weather is always a talking point.....

The weather in the United Kingdom is always a talking point particularly from a growing and gardening point of view. A brief summary of the weather for April 2021 is that it proved to be the month with the most frosts for 60 years plus it has been one of the sunniest which has led to extremely dry conditions with virtually no rain, certainly no April showers.....

Frost can cause big problems with fruit blossom.....

Tuesday May 4th 2021.....

Frost can cause big problems with fruit blossom particularly prolonged spells of frost but hopefully our fruit trees have survived any frost damage.

Looking at the amount of blossom on one of our apple trees below, hopefully it has survived any frost damage. It is absolutely loaded with stunning pink blossom.



Nature at work – Seed Dispersal

Below you can see a photograph of strawberry plants complete with flowers that are growing in the pathway that leads to The Bridge Garden – now there is no way that we would plant strawberry plants in the path so they have got there by way of seed dispersal which is a marvel of nature. Seeds from strawberry plants that we have growing in other parts of the garden could potentially have been dispersed in several different ways to produce these “new” plants.....
Dispersal could have taken place by the wind or possibly by birds dropping the seed or by the birds excreting the seeds.....



Salad leaves are growing fast.....

Despite the frosty April, the relatively warm daytime sunshine aided by the protection of the poly tunnel has seen our salad leaf mix make some super quick growth – such a variety of different leaves plus colours too.....



Tasty salad leaves.....

Subway continue to support our schools growing work



Schools growing work

Seed potatoes making lots of growth.....

Our Rocket Seed Potatoes are making lots of healthy looking green growth.....
Planted in big buckets inside the poly tunnel, as soon as the plants emerge through the compost they are covered over again until the plants reach the top of the bucket – this method often leads to an earlier crop especially if the plants are kept protected from frost and given plenty of water.....

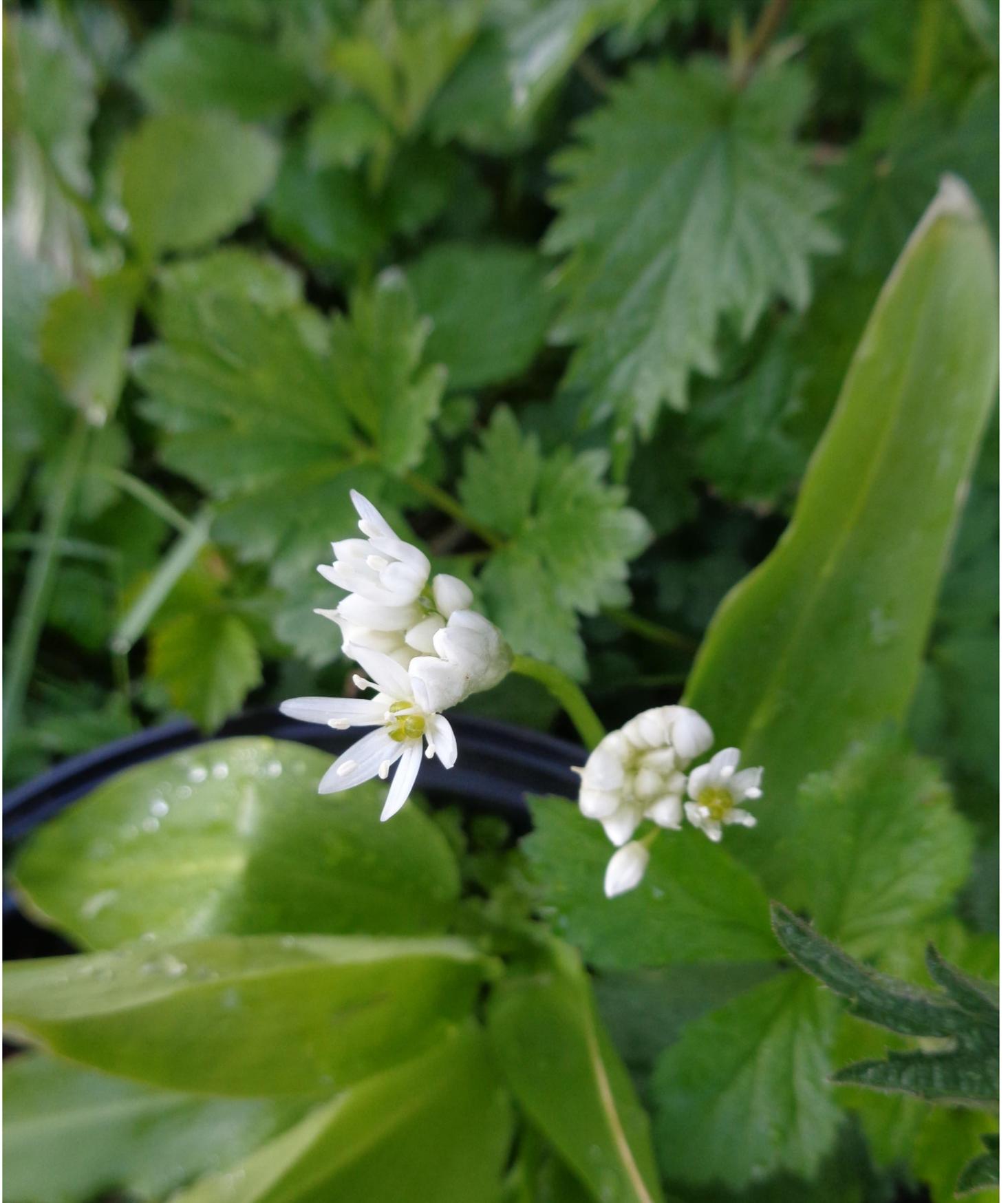


Wild garlic is in flower.....

Friday May 7th 2021.....

Wild garlic is a plant that comes back year after year, usually after flowering the plants die back and then return the next year – before that though they produce some delicate white flowers that have a really strong garlic smell.....

Below you can see some of the wild garlic plants in flower.....



Barley is making some strong growth.....

Following the recent rainfall, our barley crop has really started to make some really strong growth – the level of growth in the last week or so is really evident. Below you can see this growing area where the barley is planted.....



Poly tunnel strawberry plants are loaded with fruit.....

The strawberry plants that we have growing inside the poly tunnel generally produce an early crop of super juicy fruit – this seems like the same this year as the fruits are setting on the plants – below you can see what we mean.....



Grape vine has plenty of fruit forming.....

We have mentioned already that the strawberry plants look like they will be producing a big crop of fruit, the same can be said about our grape vine too.....

Here you can see the vine is producing lots of tiny green flowers that will form the bunches of grapes – again, hopefully we end up with a bumper crop.....



Herb garden is coming alive again.....

We have lots of different herbs growing in The Bridge Garden particularly in our herb and sensory garden – indeed lots of these herbs have both self – seeded and spread even though some of these herbs can become very invasive if they are allowed to spread. Herbs are super plants that have both medicinal and culinary uses, indeed most herbs have properties that many people have no idea what they can be used for, using medicinal herbs is a very highly qualified occupation... Below you can see some of our Lemon Balm and below that you can see our Lime Balm – leaves that are literally identical but they have two distinct aromas.....



Lemon Balm.....

Lime Balm.....

Lemon and Lime..

Restio Quadratus is an interesting plant.....

In the sensory garden we have a plant that is called quadratus – it is aptly named because its stem are shaped as a quad – when you touch the plant stem you can feel the distinct shape of the stem plus it produces a mass of feathery like leaves. Below you can see the stems in what is a very distinct and interesting plant.....



Rocket Seed Potatoes are growing fast!.....

Friday May 7th 2021.....

Once seed potatoes get established and they put some roots down, their rate of growth is fast – the seed potatoes that we covered over on Tuesday May 4th have now grown through the next layer of compost, so once again we have covered them over. Plenty of water is needed now.....

Moroccan Mint is growing fast.....

Most varieties of mint given the space will thrive and grow very, very quickly almost to the point of invading a space – providing you do not mix different varieties of mint, it is not really a problem



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Lots of berries in The Bridge Garden.....

When you have a good look around The Bridge Garden, then you start to realise how much fruit we have growing – not least all of the fruit trees but we also have lots of other fruits growing. We have a huge area of Rhubarb growing plus lots of blackcurrants, gooseberries and raspberries all growing so hopefully we will be able to harvest plenty of fruit at various stages through the summer months.....

Below you can see some of the blackcurrants growing in the allotment – garden..



Gooseberries too.....

One thing you find out very quickly is that gooseberry bushes are extremely prickly so when you are picking the fruit you need to be extra careful.....

Look closely and you can see some of the fruit forming.....



Seed potatoes are growing fast!.....

Monday May 10th 2021.....

After covering over our seed potatoes just three days ago [Friday], look at the photographs below to see how fast they have grown. As you can see, they are above the top of the growing buckets so now they will need lots of water so that the plants can use all of its energy to produce a crop of potatoes for us to enjoy...



More fruit blossom.....

Below you can see blossom that is off our Bramley cooking apple tree, apple blossom is really stunning – let us hope that this blossom helps the pollinators and produces us some cooking apples to enjoy later in the year.....



Asparagus has been planted.....

We have planted out a whole growing bed of asparagus crowns today.....
Now asparagus is a crop that can take between two to three years to fully mature before the crop can be harvested, so there is a process to follow before we can expect to harvest this crop.....



Here you can see the asparagus crowns that we have planted out.....

It will be interesting to see the progress that these plants make over the coming months.....

Asparagus Crowns.....

Strawberries are ripening fast!.....

Friday May 14th 2021.....

The value of a poly tunnel is that the protective environment they produce ripens soft fruit very quickly – below you can see the strawberries are almost ripe and ready to enjoy.....



Lots of late spring growth.....

Following on from the spring flowering bulbs, there is still plenty of colour to come plus lots of green growth – real signs that the weather is getting warmer.... A period of dry warmer weather would not go amiss, the first two weeks of May have felt a bit more like April with some really heavy April like showers, indeed some of these showers have been hail storms. Not the kind of weather that we expect for May but you have to take what comes and work with it..... Here you can see plenty of Forget-Me-Nots and Nepeta providing plenty of green foliage and lots of tiny blue flowers.....



More colour to come in The Bridge Garden.....

Now that the snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils and the tulips have virtually finished flowering, the next group of flowers to provide some colour will be the alliums, now alliums are part of the onion family – there are already some glimpses of the colour that they will provide – there are some white alliums already in flower.....



Lupins will be flowering soon.....



Here you can see our Lupins that are forming some striking flower heads – hopefully some sunshine will accelerate the colour that these plants provide. After flowering the plants produce some big seed pods that will dry and then disperse usually through the wind.....

Indeed, there are some small Lupin plants growing in different areas of the “parent” plants – seed dispersal has been mentioned already in this edition with the strawberry plants that have seeded into the pathway.....

Poppies readily self-seed.....

Once you either sow poppy seed or indeed plant poppies you will have them for a long time – poppy seed is like specks of dust but to think what a delicate and intricate flower that each seed produces really is amazing. Poppy seed heads readily disperse and you will find poppies popping up in all sorts of different places. We have had poppies grow in cracks in concrete and tarmac before now...



Weather is so unpredictable again!.....

Monday May 17th 2021.....

The weather is yet again a talking point!

Indeed, I have been talking to a very experienced Herb grower who I know today and he has told me that the growing patterns, stages of growth are a good month behind, these comments are borne out by the weather that we are experiencing, the frostiest April for 60 years and now we are looking at one of the wettest May periods for a long time. The showers we are getting in May are what we should have been experiencing in April – as you can see from one of the showers we have had today – the volume of the water is terrific, this shower was a mixture of hail stones and rain. The hail stones signify that the air temperature is cold.....

Below, you can see from the photographs the volume of water that comes down!..



Hail stones..



After the short but sharp hail storm which probably lasted no more than ten to fifteen minutes, this is the aftermath with some big puddles.....

**Unpredictable
Weather!**

Pollinators are busy!.....

In the breaks between the showers, the sun has a bit of warmth to it which certainly encourages the pollinators to come out from their shelter and not only seek some food but they are also pollinating our fruit trees – nature at its best.....

Below you can see a pollinating insect at work.....



More seed dispersal evidence.....

If you look at the photograph below you will see a small horse chestnut tree that has appeared – there is no way that we would plant that in one of our growing beds, not least next to the poly tunnel. So, this is more evidence that seed dispersal has taken place probably by an animal, perhaps a squirrel that has buried a conker in this bed. There are some horse chestnut trees in close proximity to The Bridge Garden. Once again this highlights the marvels of nature.



Growing bed preparation continuing.....

We have suggested many times that the key to growing plentiful crops and great tasting crops is all about looking after the soil. You cannot just keep taking out and putting nothing back because ultimately you end up with both poor crop yields and very poor quality soil.....



REMIN ROCK DUST

Appletini apple trees are making strong growth.....



Here you can see one of our new apple trees – a variety called appletini which is a compact growing variety that will produce small bite – size fruits.....

Being a first - year tree it is unlikely that it will fruit this year but certainly next year we will look forward to harvesting plenty of fruit.....

Appletini.....

Hawthorne Blossom looks like snow!.....

Friday May 21st 2021.....

Hawthorne blossom is sometimes referred to as May blossom but there is no doubt that it looks much better on the trees rather than being blown down by the strong winds, so much so that it looks almost like a snowfall.....



More spring colour.....

Here you can see a stunning purple allium – now alliums are part of the onion family and usually flower late spring to keep the stunning colour coming from the flowering bulbs that grace our gardens. Also, alliums are a magnet for the bees as they go searching for pollen and nectar.....



Contrasting colour.....



Here you can see Californian poppies that provide some stunning colours..... A complete contrast to the purple alliums..... Also, Californian poppies will readily self – seed virtually anywhere..... These plants are in the gravel.....

More colour around the garden areas.....

Here you can see some pink geraniums mixed in with the blue forget – me – nots and the nepeta – all hardy, colourful perennials that always provide some late spring colour.....



Beech trees are starting to establish themselves.....

Here you can see some of the copper and green beech trees that are starting to really establish themselves – these trees have been planted for about three, perhaps four years now so they are well established and are starting to make lots of really strong growth.....



Ferns are growing at the side of the poly tunnel.....

Looking around The Bridge Garden – Allotment area, there are always plenty of plants growing, often in places where you often think about how did that plant get there – we have mentioned a lot in this newsletter alone how lots of seeds get dispersed so that they end up growing in the most un-expected places.....

Well, we have some ferns that are growing at the side of the poly tunnel as you can see from the photograph – now ferns do not produce flowers or seeds, they reproduce by producing spores on the underside of their leaves which are then dispersed to produce new plants – plant science is absolutely fascinating!.....



Fyffes Growing Boxes being prepared..... Monday May 24th 2021.....



Here you can see some of the very, very important preparation work that we are doing to prepare our Fyffes Growing Boxes and some of our growing beds so that they are ready to sow seeds and plant out plants that we have been growing under protection.....

This preparation work is all important as the quality of the soil will not only improve the crop yield but more importantly the overall taste of the crop.....

We have added plenty of REMIN ROCK DUST to give the soil a boost ready for seed sowing and planting work.....



Home - made compost – soil additives.....

Below you can see some home – made compost and soil additives which we can make from plants that are growing in The Bridge Garden. Comfrey is in flower, we need to pick the leaves and then crush them up and let them rot down.....



More nettles.....



We certainly have lots of plant material in the allotment area which we can use to make some compost – free too!.....

In the bucket above you can see some nettle tea compost that we are making.....

Trust me, the bucket of nettles absolutely STINKS!!.....

It really does SMELL but we hope that it will do a good job for us, the fact that it is free will make the smell that comes with it, bearable.....

Nettle Tea.....

Moroccan mint is looking lush!.....

Our bed of Moroccan mint looks absolutely lush with its vibrant green colour plus it is growing at a rate of knots too. A plant that makes great tasting tea plus it is so easy to grow. Sometimes you need to be careful that it does not take over because mint can be very, very invasive!.....
Below you can see our Moroccan mint growing bed.....



Strawberries look ripe and juicy.....

Friday May 28th 2021.....



**Home grown...
Freshly picked
No air miles!
No pesticides!
Sunshine!.....
and Water.....
Great taste!!**

Lemon Verbena is growing back again.....



Another herb that we have growing in The Bridge Garden, both outside and inside the poly tunnel is Lemon Verbena..... This is another herb that grows quickly and has a gorgeous smell, something a bit like lemon sherbet but just like the Moroccan Mint it also makes great tea plus it also has some culinary uses too.....

Herbal Tea

Absolutely stunning detail – Victoria Cross Poppies.....

These are poppies that have self – seeded but look at the stunning detail, these poppies were bred especially, to help the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

The detail within the flower is amazing considering poppy seed resembles dust!



Ladybirds are welcome visitors in the garden.....

You can probably bracket earthworms, bees and ladybirds as three of the most important creatures in the garden. All three of these creatures play major parts in the balance required within a garden or growing space.....

Ladybirds will eat 5,000 aphids in their short lifetime – amazing when you really think about that statistic, yes, that is one ladybird!



Ladybirds are needed here.....

Monday May 31st 2021.....

In and around the garden area there are some plants that unfortunately attract black fly not least the elder that we have growing in the garden – another plant that unfortunately attracts black fly are broad beans.....

Below you can see the elder bushes that are covered with black fly!.....



Herbs are enjoying the late spring warmth.....

Finally some late spring sunshine has arrived which our herbs will most certainly enjoy, added to the recent rainfall, this mix of water and sunshine is the perfect combination for herbs to thrive – below you can see our sage and garden mint....



Common Sage.....

Garden Mint.....



Most varieties of mint are easy to grow, sometimes to the point where if you allow them to they will take over a space very quickly.....

On the left you can see our garden mint that again like most mint varieties has a gorgeous smell to it plus it is also a great variety to cook with.....

Blackcurrant bushes are loaded with fruit.....

Looking at the blackcurrant bushes in The Bridge Garden, there is plenty of fruit on the bushes – if the crop is anything like last summer, then we are in for another bumper crop. You cannot beat fresh fruit.....

