

Japanese Garden Project Report

1. Members will be aware that the contractors TWS finished on site at the end of August. We found them very good to work with, and we are well satisfied with the results of the hard landscaping construction which completes phase two of the project in the garden. We also need to put on record the extremely valuable voluntary work by members of the Japanese Garden Society from the North West area and our own area, who gave us at least 7 full days of work with up to six volunteers working at any one time. They have spent the time arranging rocks along the watercourse and creating the freestanding rock arrangements.
2. **Phase three** is back to the gardening volunteers, the task is to get as much of the planting done as possible before the winter. A detailed planting plan has been drawn up by the designer with the help of the project team. An order is ready for the wholesalers, it will be ordered by HBC, should be delivered during October, and stored up at the HBC Nursery for collection on gardening days. We are going to have Treesaw back for a day to tidy up one or two more areas, removing out of reach dead branches on our specimen trees, taking out two more self-sown seedlings which are interfering with a Wellingtonia, two large Cornus shrubs where we wish to plant Japanese species, and stump grinding a large willow which was removed during phase one but is shooting again strongly.
3. **Saturday sessions** In addition to the regular Tuesday sessions we are starting a monthly Saturday morning volunteer group led by Peter Smith, a trained Horticulturalist working full time in the Knaresborough area with an interest in Japanese garden design, who has volunteered his time at a weekend. We have had interest from a few other people and the first session is on Saturday October 7th at 10.00am. Simon Collier and Kate Dawson have both been consulted on this and are in agreement, as we all feel this is a good way to bring younger volunteers into the garden who hopefully will stay with us into the future.
4. **Visitors** to the garden are, without exception, very enthusiastic about the project. We have had a donation of plants from a local Japanese resident, and an offer of plants from another elderly resident from the Adelphi. Even the local teens seem to be treating it with respect on the whole, and young families enjoy exploring the garden creating various circuits.
5. **Evaluation** Andrew Jordan is kindly helping with evaluation data in the garden gathering information on visitor numbers and feedback for the evaluation which is required by HLF at the close of the project in 2019, without which we cannot claim the last 10% of the grant.
6. **Community involvement:**
 1. Rossett School: We have made contact through the Head of Art, and a new Graphic Arts teacher Lisa Bullivant is going to work with first year GCSE students on the skills necessary to design our information board and leaflets this term.

2. Harrogate High School has had the promised workshop and visit from Graham Hardman, and we have given them some Chinese brushes and special paper for the production of final pieces for their GCSE exams. The students have embraced the new techniques, and are already producing some good work which is displayed in the triangular information board in the garden.
3. Grove Academy have worked well both in the garden before the contractors came on site, and during the summer term to propagate plants for us. In their hands 25 Ophiopogon Japanese Mondo Grass plants became 162 plants, most of which were planted into the garden last week. The project to create a Time Out garden for the school has now got under way, this will take a while to achieve as the size of garden they are hoping to create at the school will cost more than the amount of money we have budgeted for, Harrogate Soroptomists are going to become involved but we are going to look for additional sponsors when the design details and costings are worked out. It is hoped that the students will be very much involved, but at present the current students are proving very challenging, and the activities they can be trusted to do are somewhat limited.

7. Japanese Garden Society Exhibition

An exhibition titled 'Visions of Paradise' arranged by the JGS will be set up at Harlow Carr Bath House for six weeks from January 8th 2017. The management of this is being done by the JGS through Andy Bolton the Yorkshire and Humberside area representative. In addition there will be new material covering our project, displays from the schools, and the opportunity to promote the Friends Of Valley Gardens. We are organizing activities and pop up exhibitions of related subjects at the weekends. So far we have the local Bonsai Group and Harrogate and Nidderdale Art Group. I have written to the Huddersfield Chapter of the Ikebana Society and am awaiting a response. In addition the Japanese Shop in Harrogate is mounting a pop up store and they will be there every day, they are also planning family activities for half term week. We welcome any help from members during this period to set up and to be there for the weekends to talk to visitors and promote our garden.

8. **Garden usage:** One of the strong themes at the JGS conference I have recently attended was how we should be using our public gardens, and what the Japanese inspired garden is most suitable for. With this in mind we are going to talk to the local Wellness Clinic to see how we can work together, gardens in America are used for 'Mindfulness' sessions led by a qualified teacher of the technique. We also have ideas for Haiku poetry, perhaps using the woodland walk as a place to put examples of the poems on strong waterproof labels on the trees and encourage the public to add to them. Any thoughts and ideas are welcome.
9. **Finally a name.....** We would like to come up with a name for the garden, an interchange on Twitter with a local resident, Syd Bell, has come up with one suggestion: 'Shijima' the Japanese word for serenity, hush, quiet, stillness. Graham likes this and is checking up on the correct grammar to add the word 'garden' Niwa in Japanese. Other suggestions are welcome.

Apologies for a long report but I felt you would like to be brought up to date. I shall be pleased to answer any questions at the meeting.

Ann Beeby

Volunteer Project Manager