



## The Blundell's Garden 2020—2021



RHS Campaign for School Gardening Level 4 Award

Despite the issues and upset of the last 15 months it really has been an incredible time in the garden. The wildlife has thrived, the vegetables have supplied us with some great produce and the whole area continues to develop into a beautiful space for us all to enjoy. However, most importantly of all we are now far more focused on outside spaces, gardens in particular and the endless benefits that they have for us all.

I hope you enjoy reading this term by term account of the Blundell's Garden over the last year and bit.

Charlie Olive, Director of Community Partnerships, Blundell's School



# **AUTUMN TERM 2020**

## **in The Blundell's Garden.**

The COVID-19 pandemic may well have stopped a lot of things but one area that has truly blossomed is the use of the garden. It has long been known how working with and being surrounded by nature has a hugely positive impact on your wellbeing and mental health and throughout the lockdowns of 2020/21 the importance of gardens and open spaces has really come to the forefront.

The Blundell's Garden is open to everyone. The vision is to create a beautiful space for us all to enjoy with the opportunity to learn horticultural skills, landscaping, learn about wildlife whilst improving biodiversity, understand the importance of sustainability and environmental care and be a place to rest, relax, enjoy each other's company, and focus on life's priorities. The Blundell's Garden will also play a central role in Community Partnerships at Blundell's as space for events and activities available to our wider community of Tiverton.

So much has happened in the garden since school closed on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 that I have split this section into two halves: March to August and then September to December.

### **March to August**

The Wednesday afternoon School House Roots and Wings Garden Team had just finished digging, lining, and filling the pond when everything had to stop as school closed. The pupils left and as Housemaster of Old House and living on site I was left with the garden. I was keen to ensure the pupils returned to a garden full of produce ready to harvest in September so set about filling the beds with seeds throughout the spring and finishing off the pond.

To give a break from online learning and keep pupils active and engaged at home a brilliant Engagement and Enrichment site was produced. I decided to produce a series of 'Grow Your Own' videos that the Blundell's community could follow throughout the coming months. Eight episodes were produced with filming and editing being done by Jack Olive (OH, 2014-2019). They were:

*Grass to veg:* starting from scratch with a patch of grass

*The Greenhouse:* getting crops started in the greenhouse

*Get Growing:* preparing the plot and starting off

*Dig for Victory:* to celebrate VE Day 75 which included information about Blundell's Dig for Victory involvement

*Brassicas and weeds:* planting a range of brassica's and getting weeds under control

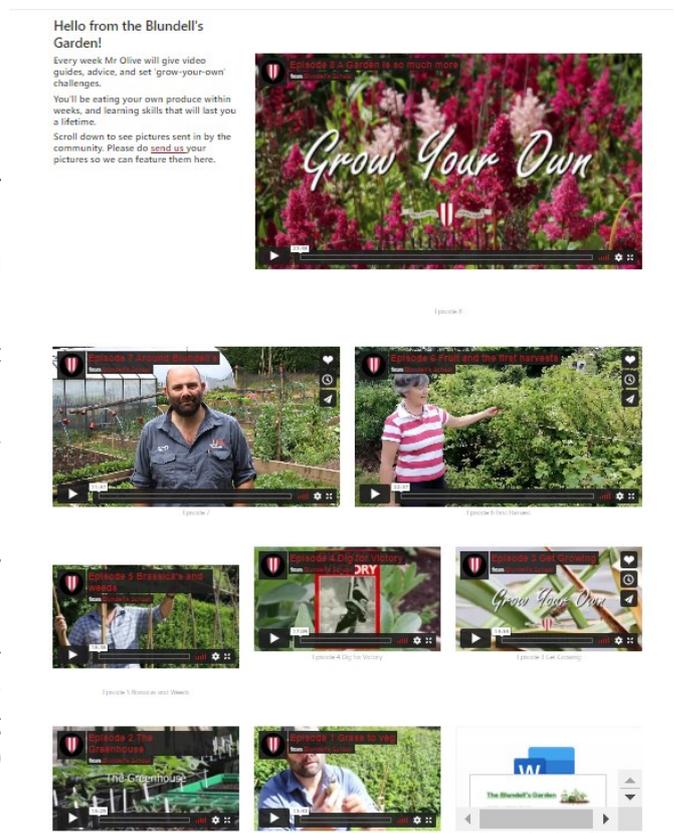
*Fruit and the first harvest:* ensuring a health fruit harvest and the first vegetable pickings

*Around Blundell's:* an episode in which Harry Flower, Blundell's Head Gardener took us on a tour of the campus

*A Garden is so much more:* focusing on the importance of a garden to increase and improve biodiversity, sustainability our environmental responsibility and our mental health.

The series was hugely successful and included guest gardeners from the staff body and contributions from the pupils and parents that were following online and gardening at home. The Grow Your Own page received over a 1000 views.

The site also hosted a seed swap page which allowed me to send seeds in the post to those who needed them.



## ***September to December***

Pupils returned in the Autumn Term to a garden full of produce and I had an army of online followers and existing gardeners from last year enthusiastic to get stuck in. As I have said the garden is open to everyone but there are specific times when pupils can engage fully with garden activities.

### ***AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES***

#### ***Tuesday: Chicken Club***

Last year as part of the Friday Sixth Form Enrichment sessions the old fruit cage was cleared as the fruit within was old, overgrown and had lost its productivity. We are planning a new fruit garden, but the old space has been developed for a number of projects. One of these is to house some chickens in a space that will in the future be developed again into an outdoor stage, performance space and events venue. A group of keen Year 9 have so far dug out the old fence and adapted the fruit cage to support the chicken fencing that will go up next term ready for the chickens to arrive in the spring.



#### ***Wednesday: School House Roots and Wings***

Everyone in Year 8 spent an afternoon in the garden on a rotation harvesting vegetables and then clearing the ground ready for the next year's crop. Once everyone had 'had a go' those keen to continue throughout the year could choose to do so. Virtually the whole year group wanted to continue! With the selected gardeners the focus throughout the year is to manage the vegetable garden along with various projects throughout the year.

Winter crops of leeks, parsnips, cabbage, curly kale and sprouts have been harvested and used by the kitchens and the plots have been given a top dressing of leaf mold. Broad beans, garlic and shallots have been planted and were poking through as we headed off for Christmas.





They have also sown winter lettuce and pak choi in the greenhouse (ready to transplant into the polytunnel next term) and sweet peas. Other projects have included tidying an overgrown holly tree to create a wildlife focused seating area and the creation of a herb bed.

All gardeners like to have a mug of tea and the Year 8 have been developing



the perfect brew on a Wednesday afternoon. In fact hot chocolate is their preferred drink and it was soon clear that the normal sized pot wasn't going to be big enough so this was waiting for them when they returned in January!

### ***Thursday: Pine Lodge***

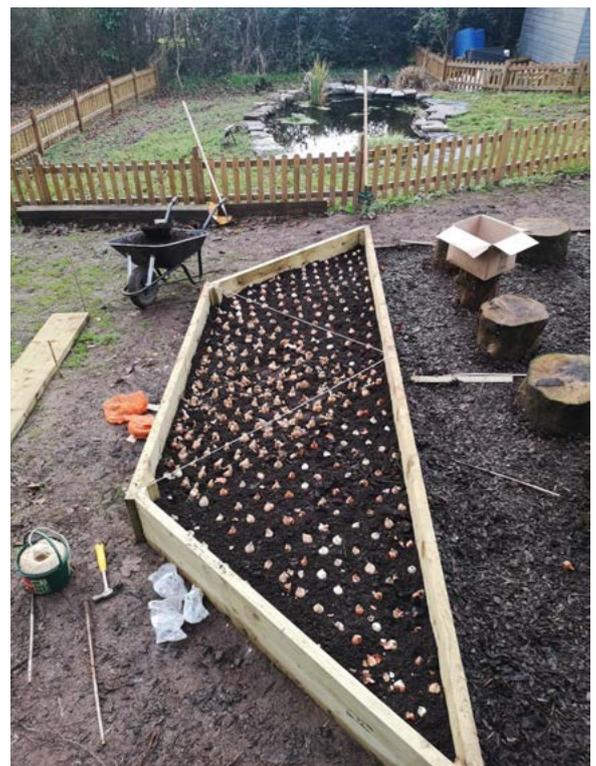
For the last couple of years a group has been volunteering in the garden at Pine Lodge Hospice in Tiverton. During that time we have redeveloped the vegetable garden and carry out general garden tasks. Our work completed in 2019 won a Britain Bloom Youth Award for outstanding work carried out by groups of young people. Obviously working at the Hospice this year has not been possible. We did however manage a few visits in September to tidy up the vegetable garden and the group have been working on various projects in the Blundell's Garden as an alternative since then. They have planted 500 bulbs in our new 'managed wild area' including 100 Wild Garlic, 100 English Bluebells, 100 Tulip clusiana var. Cynthia, 100 Narcissus 'Ice Follies' and 100 Allium 'Art'.



We look forward to returning to Pine Lodge as soon as we are able.

### ***Friday: Garden Club***

This general garden activity is open to anyone who wants to come along and enjoy the garden. The main focus has been to construct two new raised beds near the chicken run. They will be used as School allotments for anyone who wishes to have one. The first two 'allotmenters' are Mariia and Isabel in Year 13 who are going to grow cut flowers for their rooms in Westlake. One bed has been planted with 100 scented Narcissus and 200 mixed tulips.



## **CURRICULUM TIME**

### **Character Education**

A new Character Education Course is being delivered to Year 9 this year which focuses on three core areas of Character, Wellbeing and Social Responsibility.

With COVID-19 restrictions preventing community involvement we have focused our Social Responsibility to environmental awareness by improving biodiversity and sustainability and linking with wellbeing by producing an area in the garden for people to relax bringing benefits to mental health.

**Seating:** Part of the old fruit cage has been turned into a seating area big enough to host a whole class for outdoor lessons.



**Rainwater collection, compost and recycling area:** The aim is for the garden to be carbon neutral so one group is looking at rainwater harvesting from the various rooves in the garden and then storage of that water using the recycled water tanks from the roof in Francis House. The Grounds Team collect up over eighty tons of leaves each year which is all turned into leaf mold and used around the campus. The Gardens organic waste also goes into it but a small composting area for educational purposes is being created, which will hopefully include a wormery. The only mains water is for hand washing and uses this recycled sink unit from the kitchens:



**Improving biodiversity:** we will hopefully make over thirty bird boxes that will either be kept by the pupil who made it, put up round school or sold to raise funds at the Spring Term Garden Open Day. Pupils are following the RSPB plans for making bird boxes for robins, pied wag-tails, wrens, spotted flycatchers, great, marsh, coal and blue tits, tree and house sparrows and nuthatches.

We will also be putting up a bird box with camera that can be accessed by those interested. Details will follow in the spring term.

Here's some of the wildlife caught on camera recently:



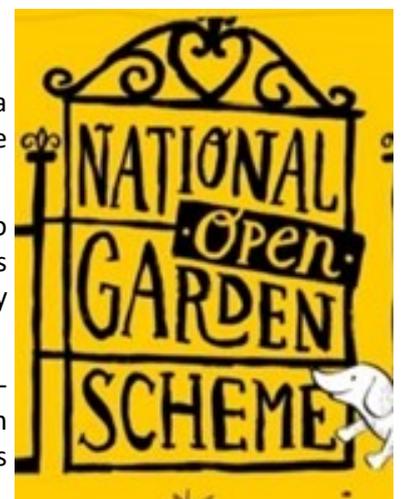
**Webpage:** We plan to open the Blundell's Garden and the Garden of Blundell House as part of next year's National Open Garden Scheme so a group has been producing the material that can be used for this event and to celebrate the garden online.

### **Year 10 and 11 Electives**

Year 10 and 11 now have the opportunity to enrich their compulsory studies with a selection of 'Electives' that can be completed online or physically. Two that have been offered are:

**Wildlife Awareness Course:** an opportunity to work independently or in a group to develop a greater awareness and understanding of local wildlife. Current groups have been looking in to improving the habitats for the Blundell's hedgehogs by building homes for them to hibernate in.

**Volunteering:** an introduction to volunteering, it's importance and to get practically involved in some volunteering of their choice. Again, this has been difficult with current restrictions but Scarlet (Y10GH) has created a series of excellent activities that Prep School groups can carry out when visiting the garden.



## **Garden Café**

The Garden Café opened on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September and the garden quickly filled with pupils and staff who were able to socially distance or sit in their bubbles and enjoy the sunshine. Smoothies and tray bakes were on the menu and everything was run by members of the Blundell's Community Partnership Team supported by the Catering Team. This first opening was a huge success and was followed by a languages themed opening to celebrate European Day of Languages which saw hot chocolate and pain au chocolat added to the menu.



## **Autumn Term Blundell's Garden Open Day, 4<sup>th</sup> November**

Following a successful day last year, we had planned for things to be bigger and better in 2020 by inviting members of the wider community. Again, unfortunately this could not happen, but a great day was still had by all and the event was very successful. The program is shown below:

09.30-10.15: Prep School – Year 1 made fat ball bird feeders and drew different types of apples before eating them to compare the different flavours.

10.30 – 11.00: Garden Café Open for Smoothies at Break

11.00 – 12.00: Community visit – five members of the Tiverton in Bloom Committee visited and spent time looking round the garden and hearing developments planned for the future. (It was a shame that the Britain in Bloom event did not take place this year)



12.00 Lunch: RHS Campaign for School Gardening Big Soup Share – we are part of this RHS initiative and the this year the Garden Café served home grown, homemade soup. Beetroot soup and leek and potato soup were served with crusty bread, garlic butter and a selection of cheese – delicious!

14.15 – 15.30: Roots and Wings – Year 7 and 8 were challenged to use themselves to produce a flower shape to be photographed by a drone. It certainly was a challenge and I don't think it will win any competitions but it was great fun and the later photo taken which simply said 'Heart NHS' was a far more important message.



15.30 – 16.30: Apple juicing and Café open for all – Killerton House had very kindly lent us a couple of apple presses and using donated apples from various staff trees and those round campus a delicious mixed apple juice was produced and enjoyed by all. The day ended with another garden full of happy customers from the Garden Café.

Planning for the Blundell's Garden Spring Term Open Day is already underway!

### ***Pre-Prep School visits***

On June 3 Year 1 who were back in school after the first lockdown visited the garden to sow some seeds in a raised bed. Great excitement was had as the seeds went in the ground, but this was nothing compared to a return visit on 2 October when they saw the jungle of vegetables that had grown! It is always great to have the youngest Blundellians visit and very rewarding to see the overwhelming levels of excitement.



### ***National Open Gardens***

Its early days with this idea but the plan is to be part of the National Open Garden Scheme in 2021 and to open the Blundell's Garden and the garden of Blundell House to the public for one or two fundraising days in the late spring/ early summer next year. Details to follow.



# Blundell's Garden Autumn Open Day

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> November

## Garden Café

*Open to all at break and 3.30pm*  
Smoothies (£1.50), hot chocolate (£2.00) and cakes (50p)

*Open to all at lunchtime for  
homegrown, homemade soups (free)*  
PLEASE COME TO THE GARDEN AT YOUR USUAL BUBBLE LUNCHTIME

*Find the Blundell's Garden behind Biology/History.*  
Year 1 activities, visiting community groups, apple juicing, conker  
battles, SH activities and time to relax throughout the day.

Contactless and cash payment accepted



## ***Feelgood Friday***

On Fridays towards the second half of term all staff have been able to enjoy the benefits of 'Feelgood Friday'. We have had doughnuts, playlists, mince pies and Book Clubs to join amongst other things to help raise our spirits in what has been an incredibly difficult but none the less successful term in the circumstances. Growing something is hugely rewarding for all sorts of reasons so staff were given a pot, some compost, a label, and some coriander seeds to sow and grow. With any luck there should be some fresh coriander to sprinkle on that leftover turkey curry after Christmas.



## ***SPRING TERM 2021 in The Blundell's Garden.***

Although there was a good number of full boarders at school the rest of us weren't lucky enough to come back in January as another lockdown began and schools closed. We were back to learning online.

Having said that a number of events were able to take place in the last three weeks of term after we had returned on 8th March.



Every three months pupils prepare and then deliver a regular report at a meeting of the Tiverton Town Council. Here is an extract from March 22nd 2021:

*'Most of the more direct community links have been on hold of course but congratulations must go to a number of Blundellians in the 14 – 16 age group of the Schools Art Competition sponsored by Sustainable Tiverton. Evie was placed First with Isobel finishing Joint Runner Up. Georgia, Bella, Flo, Hattie and Jinny were all Commended. Their work is displayed below.'*



Bella, Green high street



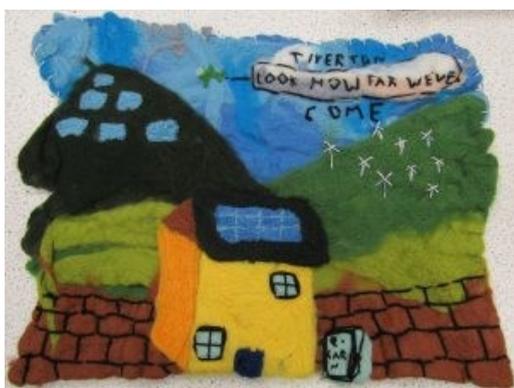
Flo, Sustainable homes of the future



Evie, A better future for us all



Hattie, Rolling hills of Devon



Isobel, Look how far we have come



Jinny, Fast track future

As last term the Garden has been a real source of enjoyment for staff and pupils and although the Spring Term Garden Open Day could not go ahead the Garde Café was opened and proved very popular again as these photos show.



The SH Roots and Wings Gardeners have been busy getting the plots ready for another productive year after clearing the remaining winter harvest of leeks, parsnips and curly kale. They have also planted the herb bed which borders the seating area, built in the autumn and now a popular spot to enjoy those smoothies!



*Raspberry smoothie*

*Forest fruits and banana smoothie*

*Hot chocolate with cream, marshmallows, and a flake*

*Cakes*

*Parsnip and leek soup*

*Carrot and sweet potato soup*

*Soup served with chunky bread.*





## ***SUMMER TERM 2021 in The Blundell's Garden.***

After another long stretch with just the full boarders at school during the spring lockdown it was great to be back at the end of the spring term for a brief three weeks stint and then a full return in the Summer.

Unfortunately, with so many of the pandemic restrictions still in place it made community involvement very difficult. We were unable to meet with other schools or get involved properly with community groups. In fact even developing partnerships has been difficult as understandably people have been prioritising the basics and keeping things on track as best as they can rather than setting up new projects. I therefore look forward to 'restarting' the Community Partnerships programme in September.

Having said that it has still been a busy term.



A key arrival this term has been our 'Bee Villa' and almost 100 native British bumble bees. It has been set up near the pond which is surrounded by pollinator friendly planting. It wasn't long before they were buzzing round the garden!



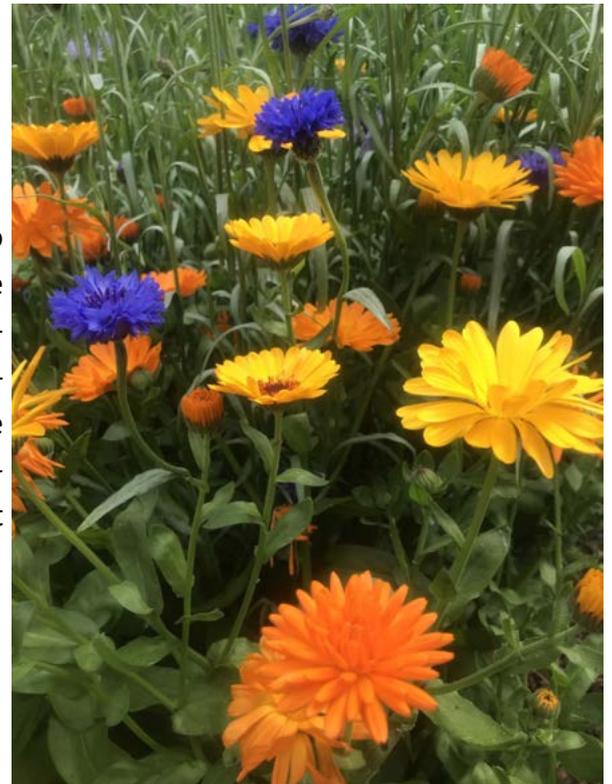
We have been lucky again to have the Blundell's Garden as it is an area that offers a whole range of activities and opportunities that can continue with less of an impact from the restrictions.

## Britain in Bloom

We have again entered the 'In Your Neighborhood' section of Tiverton's entry of Britain in Bloom. Despite the ridiculous weather which has thrown everything at us from late frosts, heavy persistent rain to glorious hot sunny days we are pleased with the what we have completed. The veg beds are growing well, the pond has developed into a real haven for biodiversity and the wild flower beds are in full production. We look forward to welcoming the judges shortly after we have broken up in early July.

## Pine Lodge Hospiscare Garden

It has been great after a year away, to be able to return to the gardens at Pine Lodge where we have picked up we we left off before the first lockdown. It has been a bit of a challenge getting the veg patch back on track but we will hopefully be ready for the judges visit for Britain in Bloom. We also have a group arranged to paint and refurbish the Summer House during the multi activity days arranged in the last week of term



## National Open Garden Scheme

We had planned to open the Blundell's Garden and the Blundell House Garden as part of the NOGS but due to the impact of the school closure we didn't feel ready to show them of at their best so have postponed until next summer.

## Blundell's Garden Café

We have been able to open the Garden Café on a number occasions this term for pupils and staff at school and in the future we are hopping for this to be a community venue at various times throughout the year.

The first event was a Cocktail Evening for the Year 13 girls, some of who have been growing the cut flowers in the beds built for this purpose earlier in the year. We were lucky with the weather and had a great couple of hours enjoying a drink and delicious BBQ and most importantly time to sit together and chat after the disruption of previous months.



The Garden Café also opened on a number of days to serve the new Summer Menu:

### SUMMER MENU

Lunchtime BBQ, £4.00 (£5.00 with a glass of Pimm's)

Strawberry milkshake, £3.00. (milk, strawberry ice cream, cream, sprinkles, strawberries)

Chocolate milkshake, £3.00. (milk, chocolate ice cream, cream sprinkles and a flake)

Banana milkshake, £3.00. (milk, banana ice cream, cream, sprinkles and banana slices)

Hot chocolate, £2.00. (with cream, marshmallows, and a flake)

Cakes, 50p. (Victoria sponge or Lemon Drizzle)

Tropical fruit juice, £1.00. (with fresh tropical fruits)

Mixed berries fruit juice, £1.00. (with mixed berries)

Ice creams, £1.00. (vanilla, strawberry, chocolate, banana, with a flake)

Magnum, £1.50.

Fab and other Lollies, £1.20.



The menu was a great success and sold out on each occasion. On May 26 the Café provided much needed refreshment to the Year 7 English classes who were performing Shakespeare in the Garden

## Summer Term Garden Open Day

**Friday 11 June**



The day started with a group of very excited Year 1's from the Pre-Prep who whizzed round the garden completing a hedgehog activity and then buzzed around learning about bumble bees. Both activities were led by Year 9 pupils who had planned the activities as part of their Character Education lessons this term. The fun finished off with a lolly before they headed back up the road.

The Café was open to all after break and then a BBQ was put on over lunch to which former members of staff were invited to enjoy the garden and food with a glass of Pimm's.



After lunch it was excellent to be able to welcome the new Mayor of Tiverton and 10 Town Councillors for a Cream Tea and informal chat. We are hugely grateful for their support and it gave us an opportunity to meet again after the previous Zoom meetings we have had to attend recently.

The Blundell's Association visited next with a tour of the school grounds with Head Gardener, Mr Harry Flower before a couple of Year 8 Gardeners showed them what we have been up to in the Blundell's Garden this term.

Another delicious evening BBQ was laid on by our amazing catering team and enjoyed by Year 10 musicians and parents before a brilliant Year 10 Concert in the Blundell House Garden just through the hedge!

It was another great day and we look forward to when we can open it up to become more of the whole community event that we would like.



### ***Future events***

At this stage it is still difficult to plan ahead because of the remaining restrictions and uncertainty of when the last ones will be lifted. However we are looking forward to:

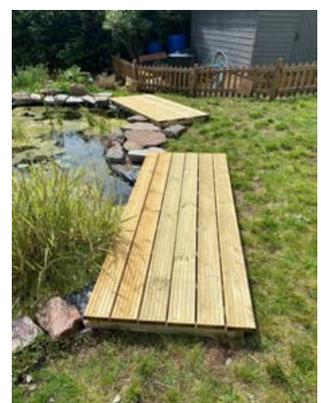
- Thursday September 9th: Parent Coffee Morning in the Blundell's Garden, 08.30-09.00.
- Friday October 8th (tbc): Tidcombe Primary School Year 5 Activity Day and Garden visit.
- Wednesday October 13th (tbc): Autumn Term Garden Open Day and RHS Campaign for School Gardening Big Soup Event.
- Monday November 1st: Parent Coffee Morning in the Blundell's Garden, 08.30-09.00.

As soon as we are allowed the Blundell's Garden will host a range of events for the wider Tiverton Community.

## ***Multi Activity Days, 28—30/6 21***

During the last week of term a wide range of activities were put on for those in Years 10 to 13. These included some horticulturally themed days:

- **Pine Lodge, Hospiscare Garden: Summer House refurbishment.**
- **Blundell's Garden: building decking for a safe pond edge for pond dipping and close work.**
- **Blundell's Garden: Macrame workshop, lead by Lizzie in Year 11.**
- **Blundell's Garden: stepping stones and garden art**





***If you would like to know more or get involved in some way please get touch.***

**Charlie Olive**

**Director of Community Partnerships**

**Blundell's School**

**[community@blundells.org](mailto:community@blundells.org)**