



## **FRIENDS OF PORTSWOOD REC**

### **AGM GARDENING REPORT FOR 2025/26**

It's been another productive year on the gardening front. We have about 18 members on our WhatsApp group, most regularly attend our weekly sessions. We mainly garden from March through to November, with occasional winter sessions which included the Big Park Tidy in December and some ad hoc bulb planting. Working closely with the SCC Team, we aim to maintain an attractive park for our users, alongside creating as much habitat as possible for local wildlife. Amid the regular routine tasks, we have been involved in some other activities, working with groups such as the local scouts (29th Immaculata), Good Gym and the Hampshire and IOW. Trust's Team Wilder. We are indebted to our working volunteers, our Friends Group, the SCC Team and others for their encouragement and support. We are keen to reach out and we hosted two guided visits to the Rec to showcase our achievements including for Southampton Green Network and Highfield Residents Association members, with a further visit for U3A scheduled in March. We continue to produce our monthly Nature Notes and we have a dedicated Facebook page 'Noticing Nature at the Rec'

We started the gardening year in March when we helped Les to plant a native hedgerow at the Kitchener Road entrance. The whips were kindly donated by the Council for the Protection of Rural England as part of the Hampshire Hedge Project. These included hawthorn and other species. The whips survived the drought thanks to help from one Kitchener Rd resident who provided help with watering.

In April, Bob and Rob from our Friends Group created the framework for our dead hedge, another important wildlife habitat. Since then, the hedge has been filled with branches, twigs and brash, again with the help of some enthusiastic children. As this rots down this will provide a refuge for lots of wee critters!!

During May we participated in Urban Wild, a week of events promoting wildlife in the City organised by Southampton National Park City. Our contribution was to hold our own 'Wild Wonders - Bee's, Bugs and Beasties' children's event at the Rec, which was very well attended despite the poor weather. Fortunately, most activities could continue in the Scout Hut, but 'Puppet Back Up', Les and Lizzie's puppet theatre, sadly had to finish early because of the rain. Thank you to all who contributed including the SCC Ranger Team and Ruth from Southampton Park City. Refreshments were kindly funded by Swaythling Southern Co-Operative.

On a number of summer Saturdays, Tony Ridley, our Children's Activity Coordinator ran some nature themed drop-in sessions for young children. The many nature based activities included making hoverfly lagoons for the garden. These provide the wet, nutrient rich environment in which a number of hoverfly species lay their eggs.



Autumn was a busy time, as the scouts and other children joined us again to plant some native bluebell bulbs in the grass strip behind the tennis courts. In Spring they came back again to plant snowdrops. The bulbs, a water bowser, compost bins and planters, were all purchased using money from a generous grant from West Solent Solar Co-operative. An additional grant from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund has also enabled us to purchase a gazebo. New high vis vests and hats, and to send three working volunteers on a first aid course. We are indebted to these organisations for their generosity.

In October we were thrilled to be 'Highly Commend' by the Hants and IOW Wildlife Trust in recognition of the work that we've been doing to encourage and promote wildlife. Garth and Denise attended the Wilder Conference to receive the award on behalf of all the gardeners. Well done to everyone!!

Over the year we have struggled with both wet and drought conditions. Our plants and trees suffered and some didn't survive. Some mature trees had to be removed on safety grounds. In November, the SCC Tree Team planted 9 new trees throughout the park. These are mainly native species and we just hope they will survive the deluge there's been since then.

In January Dawn Bannantyne, SCC Lead Ranger worked with FoPR volunteers to remove two large patches of bramble encroaching on the dog walking area. The hope is that eventually the brambles will weaken and we can plant wildflower plugs there. We also visited Aldermoor City Farm to look at best practice for composting.

Although we would want to thank all our working volunteers we would like in particular to say a really big thank you to Frank and Frieda for their tireless efforts behind the scenes, in helping to keep the Rec free of litter. They do a weekly litter pick and I know that we'd notice a big difference if it wasn't for their contribution. Thanks also to Lizzie and Les who regularly scythe our meadows; an essential task to maintain the variety of wildflowers and insects. We are always in need of more gardeners so please come and join our team.

Denise Long Gardening Coordinator

Feb 22 2026