

Forres is Blooming Bonnie

By Aimee Riddell, Emily Brown and Helena Young

The main aim for Forres in Bloom has always been: “To make our ‘bonny’ town even more beautiful for the residents and visitors” and as the group approach their 25th anniversary we look at what they have achieved over the years. In 1990 a local group of gardeners decided to meet and support the council in their entry to Entente Florale and were awarded 2nd place. Their work continued to pay dividends, with the town picking up multiple awards in the Beautiful Scotland in Bloom and the RHS Britain in Bloom competitions and a Gold Medal in Entente Florale Europe 2009. It goes without saying that this group have been instrumental in putting Forres well and truly on the tourist map.

They also work closely with local schools with all four of the town schools participating in Keep Scotland Beautiful ECO Schools Campaign. Some of the projects schools are encouraged to do are: recycle materials, grow their own vegetables and create wildlife areas as part of the John Muir Conservation Award. One of the most active groups is Forres in Bloom’s junior section the Wee FIBees (the Wee Forres in Bloom bees). They have their own wee FIBees garden near Grant Park and meet weekly where they carry out activities such as: flower and vegetable seed and bulb planting, mending and painting fences and encouraging wildlife. They also take part in the annual Forres Flower Show where they can proudly display the fruits of their labour. It’s not only the Wee FIBees who benefit from this garden but the adults who attend the Tower View Centre have their own area which they tend and visit.

Recent Council budget cuts threw a spanner in the works and they were faced with a monumental challenge but the group refuse to be beaten. Instead they rallied the troops, donned their gardening gloves and dug out the spades. They got busy rebuilding the signature displays in the Grant Park, made sure the High Street was its usual blaze of colour with hanging baskets and 2014 saw the town looking as bonnie as ever. They decided to put entries into competitions on hold for a year but they hope to be back on that winning podium in the future.

‘Forres in Bloom’ is a registered charity and many donations come in to help but the ones that mean the most are those from within the community. Not only do they receive money donations for the baskets and boxes which decorate shop fronts they also have sponsors and a team of volunteers who help with some of the heavy clearing. Recently they received a bowser from The Budge Trust for watering the flower baskets and boxes which adorn the High Street and (more importantly) a volunteer to water them. They have just been successful in being granted over £12 000 from the Berry Burn Wind Farm Community Trust which will buy a new greenhouse.

The group are always looking for new members and sponsors and would welcome anyone who would be interested to help out in any way to get in touch with any of their members. All help is greatly appreciated. They are also looking to introduce a new scheme where members ‘adopt a job’ which would mean that they would take responsibility for a particular task and do it when it suited them.

Sandra MacLennan, who chaired the group for many years and is Vice Chair stressed that what the group really need is time and money. Without their group of dedicated people to help out and adequate funds for materials it would be impossible to make Forres look the bonnie place we have come to expect. She said: “the most important thing with ‘Forres in Bloom’ is the people”.

So as you stop to appreciate the displays in the Grant Park and sunken gardens or next time you look down the High Street and admire the array of colourful hanging baskets which adorn the shop fronts spare a thought for all the hard work and dedication which goes on all year round to keep ‘oor toon’ looking bonnie.

Further information and contact details can be found on the Forres in Bloom website: www.forresinbloom.co.uk