

North Berwick in Bloom's pallet success

NBIB's reputation for these one metre square mini gardens in the Pallet Garden Competition organised by the Scottish Gardeners Forum, led to the BBC's Beechgrove Garden filming in the town again in May 2018. Presenter George Anderson and a camera crew visited Law Primary School and North Berwick in Bloom as they prepared their one metre square pallet gardens for Scotland's national gardening show at Ingliston showground at the end of May.



(The original idea of pallet gardens was for a wooden pallet to be planted up by gardening groups and schools then brought these to the show ground, but you need a forklift to do this so a black plastic square outline is now supplied and you plant it up on site).



NBiB has entered the show every year, winning 11 gold medals. The group has also encouraged Law Primary School and, in 2017 the school's bee friendly garden won the 'schools section' as well as the public vote for the people's favourite pallet garden. For 2018, NBiB chair Rosie Oberlander has been working with Primary 6B and their teacher Ailsa Kellagher on a mini garden to demonstrate the children's concern about the harmful effect of plastic waste in the Firth of Forth and other seas. The Beechgrove team were impressed by the children's ingenuity in creating a range of sea creatures from plastic trash which they then planted up using plants that grow by the seaside.

Stan da Prato explained how a winning pallet needs to combine a strong story line with good horticulture. NBiB's pallet for the 'groups section' celebrates 70 years of the National Health Service and the connections between medicine and plants. The pallet has examples of wild plants people used to pick - some nowadays thought of as weeds - such as nettles to ease the pain of rheumatism, dandelions for bladder problems and yarrow for stopping bleeding. From these developed physic gardens with collections of medicinal herbs (Edinburgh Botanics started in 1670 like this) and a wider range of imported plants - rosemary for pain relief, sage for sore stomachs, mints for bowel problems. Not all these plants were beneficial – tobacco was once described as the holy herb and some doctors still recommended it as late as the 19th century!

Moving to the present day, group member Doctor Libby Morris explained that many plants are still the basis of important drugs such as willow for aspirin, foxglove for heart disease; even

opium poppy is grown under licence in the UK to make painkillers. Daffodils are now grown for galanthamine which can help Alzheimer's patients, while Madagascar periwinkle is now used in the treatment of leukaemia.

The group created a novel way for the show visitors to interact with the pallet by ringing a bell for a pint of artificial blood and, more seriously, show their appreciation of our NHS and the need to give it more resources. By the end of the three day show over 26,000 people had shown their support, a figure which has been forwarded to the Scottish Government. Both pallets won gold medals while the school's 'Plastic free it has to be' pallet was the judges best school entry.



The two pallets are now on show in the town's High Street where they will be all summer and will feature in the judging route for our Beautiful Scotland judges in August.

