

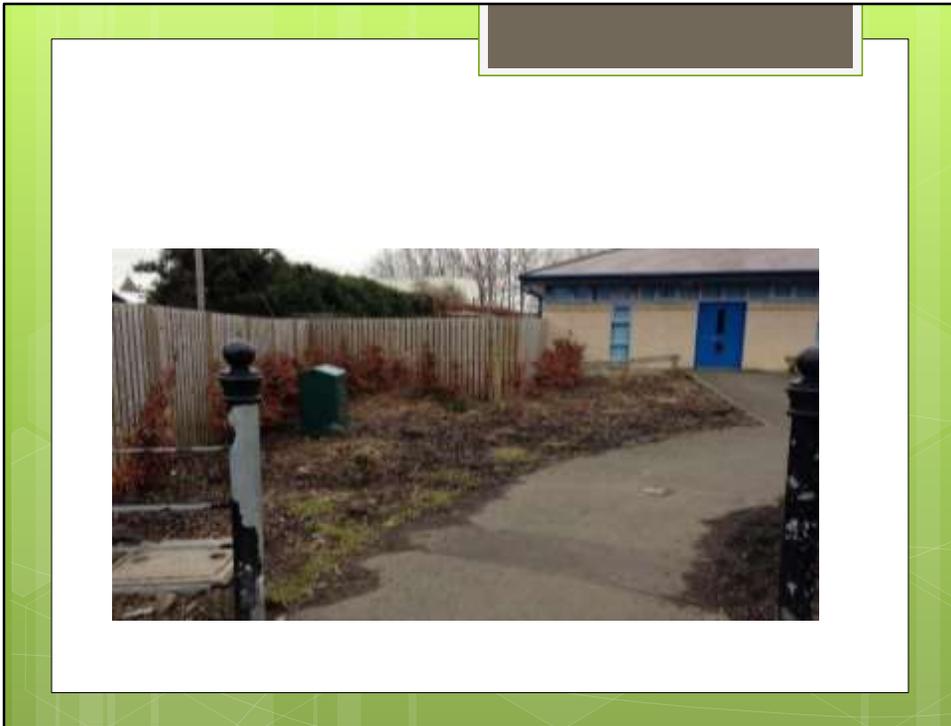
Pollinator
Patches @ the
Park



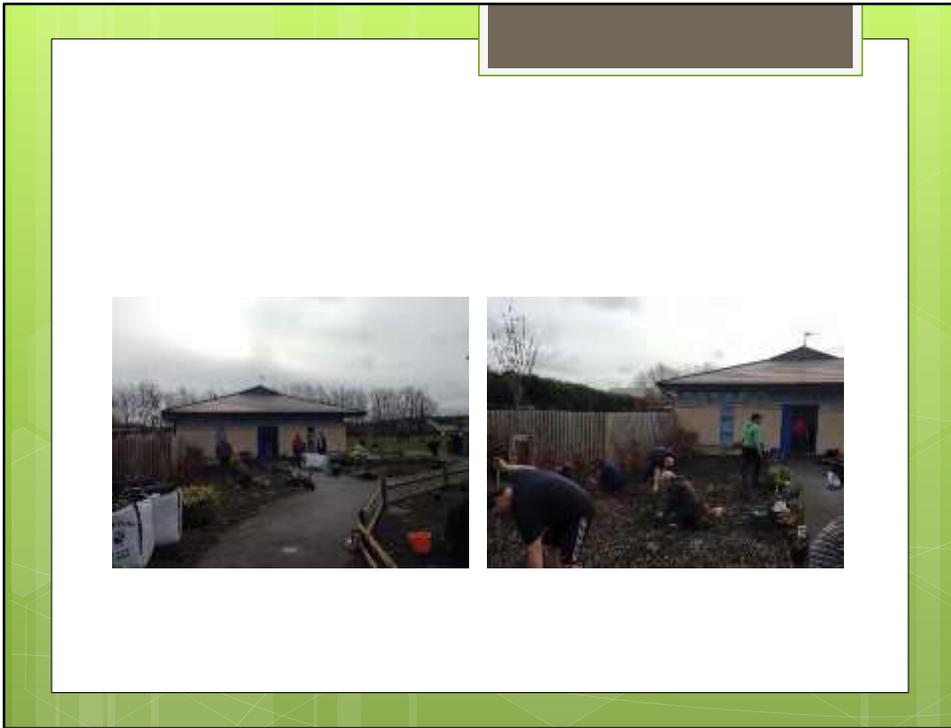
In the beginning...



When our new Sports Pavilion and play park were built 7 years ago the landscaping around it left a little to be desired. There was no budget to maintain the area and it was left to become an eyesore. It was an unloved and uninspiring space next to our lovely new park and near our new school. It was crying out for a bit of TLC. 2 years later Lauder in Bloom began...



Needless to say everyone complained about the state of this area. However we were told by several people not to bother to try to do anything about it as it would just get vandalised and would be a waste of our time. We ignored them and approached our local council to ask if we could start to garden these areas. We describe ourselves as have-a-go-gardeners and we knew that whatever we did we surely couldn't make it any worse than it already was! Perhaps unsurprisingly the council replied to the effect of 'knock yourself out'!



We held a community workday and had our largest turnout ever. We cleared the weeds, pulled up some of the ripped membrane and started to plant.



And yes we did use cake as a bribe...



The curving paths were lovely but understandably everyone just took the shortest route across the beds. Fortunately our local council were then able to supply the materials for us to put up a low fence enabling us to garden the whole of the area. We grandly called our newly adopted beds our Pollinators Patches @ The Park but we had no idea how they would actually turn out.

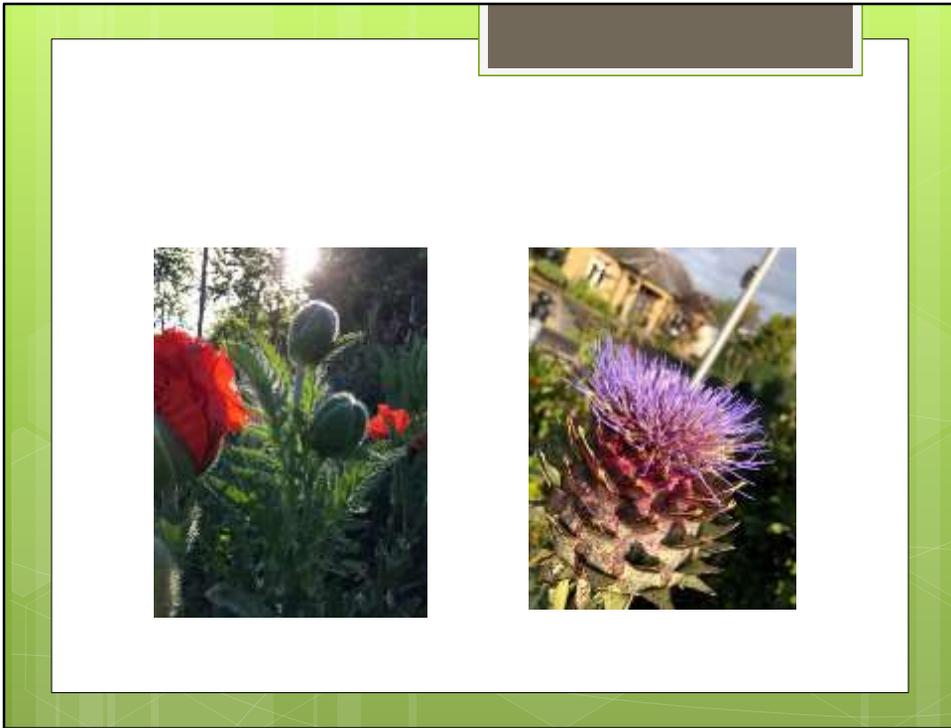
Plant choices



Plants – we didn't have any budget for plants so the vast majority of the plants in our Pollinators Patches were divisions from our own gardens, donations from locals and inexpensive seeds. Luckily for us most of these were pollinator-friendly.



As well as being free these locally sourced plants had the added benefit of us knowing that we were less likely to kill them off as they were already growing well in our area and so suited to our conditions.
We had no planting plan but it has grown to be a pleasing riot of blooms.



Over the years we have gradually added and thinned where needed and we now have plants in flower for most months of the year. In terms of vandalism we initially had a few plants pulled up and apart from the expected bits of litter there are only usually a few squashed plants from stray footballs or over-jolly folk after our town's annual festivities.

Attracting the wildlife



It wasn't long before the wildlife started to arrive.....including the lesser-spotted Beautiful Scotland judges!

Community sessions



Community Sessions – We have run sessions at our Pollinator Patches with our local Brownies & Guides planting bulbs as well as taking part in the Friends of the Earth Great British Bee Count and the Earthworm Watch survey.

The School Gardening Club helped us to make a big bug hotel made from an old pallet which is now in pride of place in the centre of one of our beds.

Bee towers

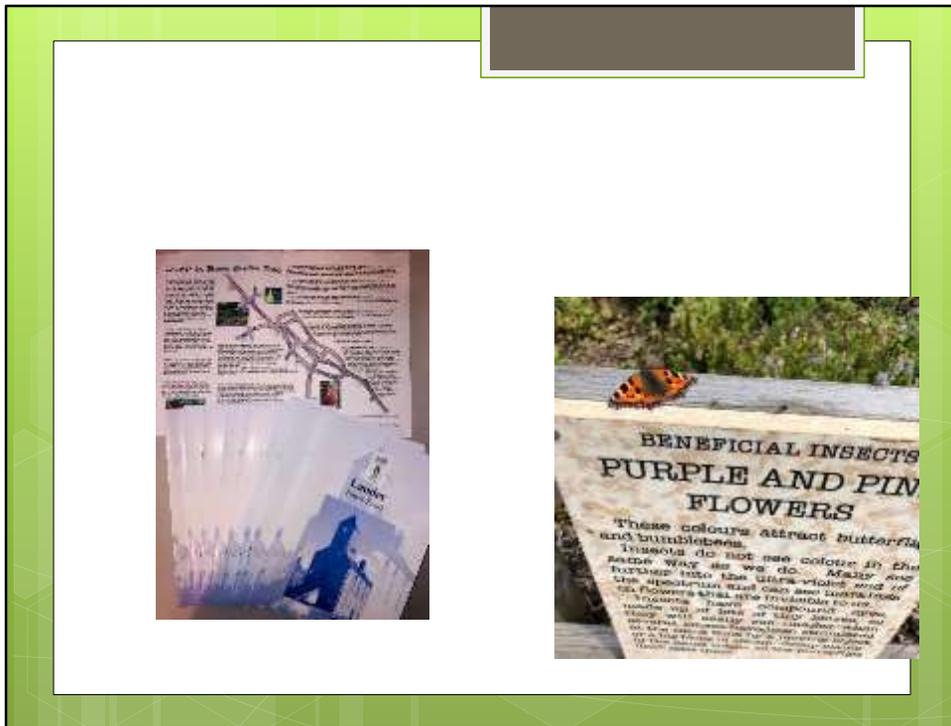


We also made Bee Towers for solitary bees during one of our community events. These towers have different sized holes for different species of bee. We were delighted when quite quickly we had residents with some of the cells being plugged with mud and others with leaves and petals from the surrounding flower beds. We put up an accompanying sign letting people know how the towers are used and what to look out for. We also ran a workshop here on basic pond building highlighting that even a small inexpensive pond, in our case an old baby bath, can still be beneficial to wildlife.

Information signs



Signs – Many locals were interested in the wildlife which was being attracted to our Pollinator Patches and they would often stop to watch on their way to and from school or the park. With permission from Friends of the Earth we put up their Bee Spotter Guide encouraging locals to take part in the Great British Bee Count. We also worked with Butterfly Conservation Scotland who very kindly helped us to create a butterfly id sign showing the 12 most likely found species in our area along with information on where they can record their sightings.



Inspired by Blooming Haddington and to highlight our Pollinator Patches, along with our other pocket gardens dotted around Lauder, we created a Garden Trail leaflet to encourage non-locals to explore beyond our high street.

Fortunately for us a local wildlife garden was closing down and had thrown their signs into a skip. The signs highlighted the types and colours of flowers which were most beneficial to pollinators so perfect for our beds. The manager very kindly looked the other way whilst I climbed into the skip, much to my daughter's embarrassment!

The future



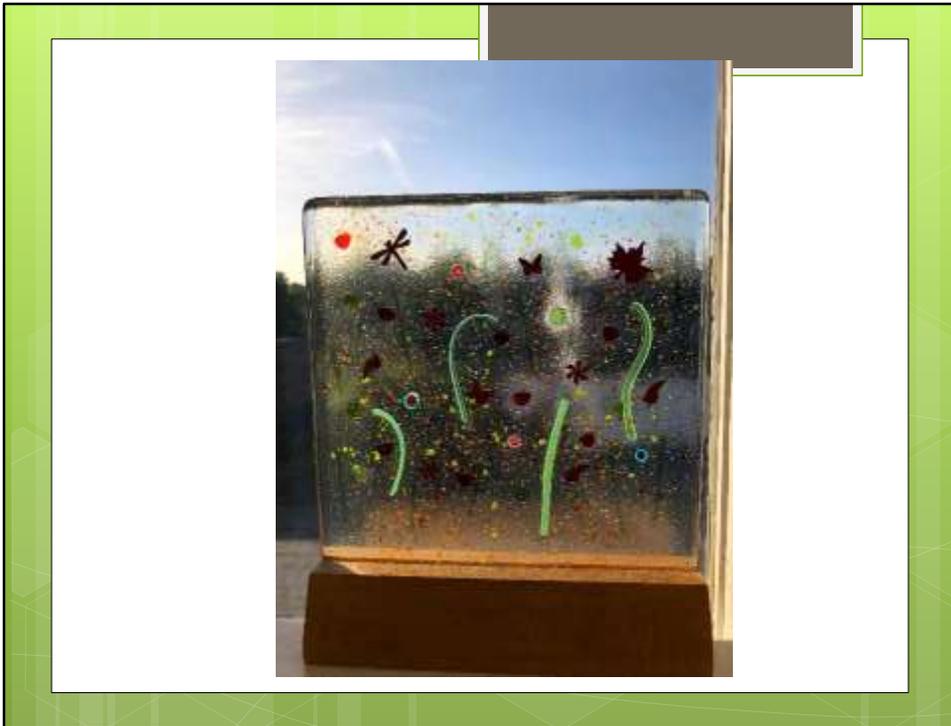
Next Steps – as with any garden our Pollinators Patches are constantly, gently evolving. We are learning how to maintain our Bee Towers and now know that any bee homes shouldn't simply just be put up and left.

I think next year we'll have a look at moths and add some suitable plants for those insects who are out and about at dusk and in keeping with our low-budget home-spun methods we'll probably have a go at some moth surveying involving a low-tech white bed sheet & torch.

Conclusion



Conclusion – 4 years on and our Pollinator Patches @ The Park are, thankfully, living up to their name and are much admired by locals and visitors alike. It's definitely one of my favourite places to garden. We're very proud of what our community has achieved and I think we've proved that if you have a little patience and time then projects like this don't need to be expensive and yet they can transform an area of your town and engage your community.



We were over the moon to have been awarded this Garden for Life Biodiversity Award and although we'll be very sad to have to pass on this beautiful award we really encourage other Groups to champion wildlife in their home towns – it really can encourage the locals and the beasties. We've got a stand at lunchtime today so if anyone's interested in finding out more you're very welcome to come and chat to us. Thanks for listening.