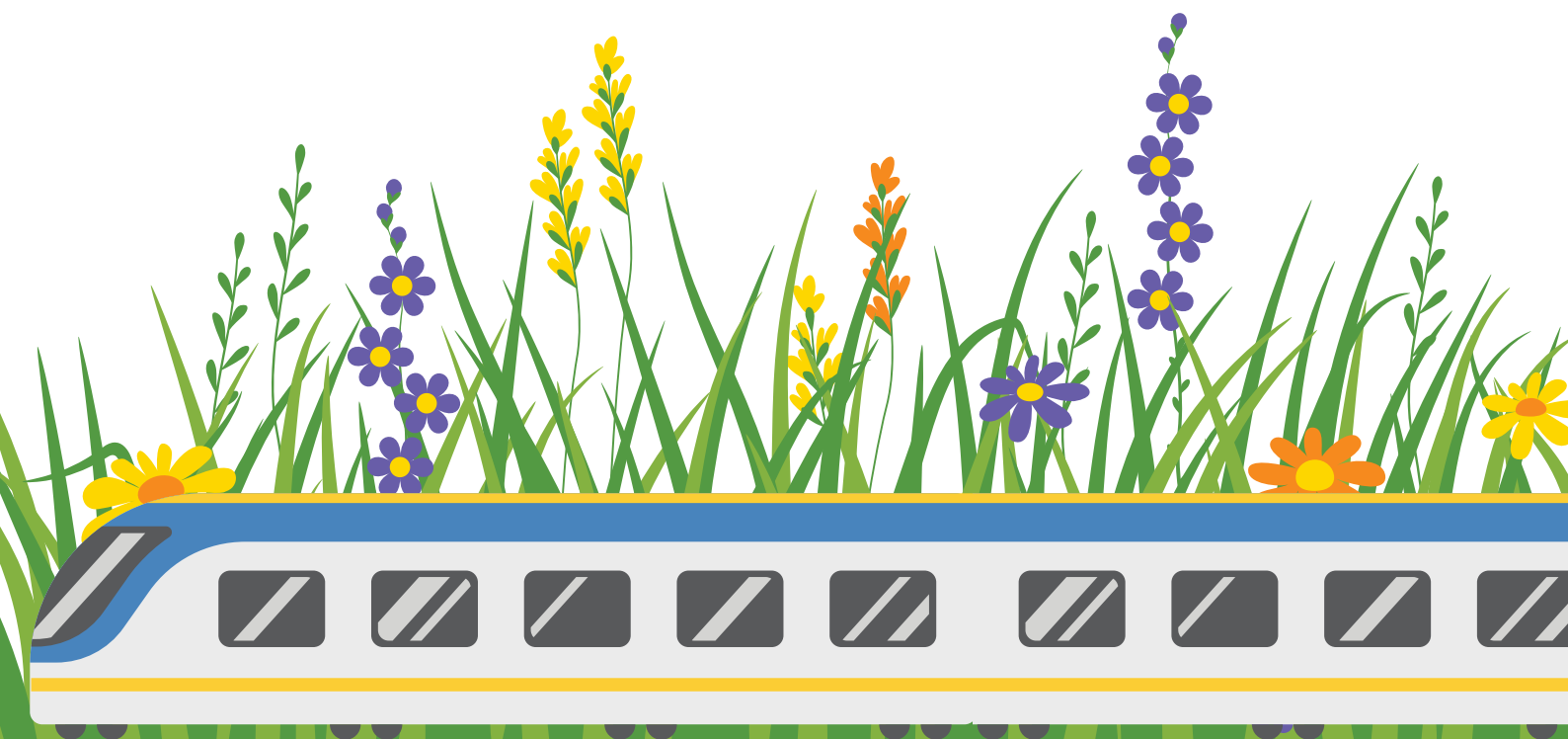




ACCRINGTON ECO STATION COMMUNITY GARDEN MANAGEMENT PLAN



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INTRO

The current ticket office at Accrington Station, built in 2012, was the first station in the UK to be termed an ‘Eco Station’. Its foundations were built from reused stone, it has solar panels, harvests rainwater to flush toilets, and has a small garden to grow local food and provide habitat for local wildlife. Accrington station is operated by Northern and used by over 465,000 people per year.

The aim is to maintain the garden as a sustainable space that benefits both people and nature, and can be used to grow food. The management plan also covers flowers, to help make the platform planters look welcoming, although vegetables could also be used for this!.

This plan aims to suggest what can be done in each month, specifically for the Accrington Eco garden and station planters. These are only suggestions, so please just take from them what you like!



Garden in April 2025

KIT AND TOOLS

Accrington Stations of Welcome group already own an array of tools, which are stored in the storage room of the Bunker at Accrington Station. These include:

- 1 wheelbarrow
- 1 bag plant pots
- 1 electric lawnmower
- 3 watering cans
- 4 hand forks
- 4 hand trowels
- 2 secateurs
- 4 marker pens
- 11 pairs of gloves
- Plant label markers
- Watering hose and tap attachment
- 1 pair of pliers
- 2 electric trimmers
- 1 outdoor sweeping brush
- 7 shovels
- 1 black matting roll
- 1 leaf rake
- 9 bamboo canes
- 3 hayforks
- 1 rake
- 1 roll frost-fleece
- Box of gardening gubbins, including attachment clips, etc.

Other items which would be useful to have include:

- 5 more adult high vis jackets
- Cold frame or mini-greenhouse to start growing plants before they can be planted outside.
- Or some large trays that can be used to keep germinating plant pots inside, potentially in the ticket office once the weather warms up?



PERENNIAL FLOWERS AND HERBS FOR PLATFORM PLANTERS

Having perennial shrubs, flowers, and herbs in the platform planters gives them height all year round and means less maintenance and plating in the spring. It also saves money as perennial plants last a few years. Hardy perennial plants are the best as they survive outside over winter and so don't need to be moved.

In June 2025, lavender plants were planted in the station planters. Other hardy perennial plants include salvias, asters, some verbenas, geums, and Lady's Mantle, as well as:



Euphorbia mini martini variety only grows to around 60cm tall.



'Gallery' dwarf lupins only grow to 50cm tall.



Periwinkle is an evergreen ground cover plant with flowers all summer.



Dwarf alstroemeria grow to 30cm tall and come in many colours.



Rosemary can be pruned into a small bush, is edible, and has flowers.



Lemonbalm forms a small bush and is edible. It has white flowers in summer.



Chives are edible and have lovely flowers. Other ornamental alliums are taller.



Blue fescue grass grows to a 15-30cm diameter ball.

WHAT TO DO IN JANUARY

Edibles

- **Winter-prune apple trees** to remove any dead, damaged, diseased, and crossing branches (instructions in Appendix 1)
- Buy and **plant new bare-root fruit bushes** (e.g. blueberries, raspberries, and gooseberries) if the ground isn't frozen. These bushes are sold without soil around the roots and are cheaper than potted ones. To plant, dig a hole the size of the roots and firmly fill around the plant with compost and soil.
- **Plant a rhubarb crown** in a place where it won't need to be moved in the future.
- Feed spring cabbages with high-nitrogen feed to encourage the leaves to grow.
- **Plan what to grow** this year and which beds to put them in. Try to put plants in beds that they weren't in last year (check page Appendix 2 for crop rotation information).
- **Order seed** potatoes, onions, shallots, and other seeds for planting in the spring.



Start by removing all dead and diseased branches, then think about the apple tree shape.



Rhubarb crowns need one year to establish, so don't pick any stems in the first year.

Flowers

- Plant or move any small ornamental bushes or roses.

Maintenance

- Look through seeds from last year to see what you've still got.
- Check netting is in place over brassicas, such as kale, Brussels sprouts, and cabbage, to keep the pigeons out.
- **Sort through and clean pots** to stop plant disease from being passed on. This can be done in warm, soapy water with a scrubbing brush. Remove any broken pots, too.
- Put out seed or fat balls for the birds, and keep topping up water for them.
- **Avoid tidying winter stems too soon**, to provide shelter for wildlife. Solitary bees, for example, overwinter in tall grass stems.
- Keep feeding the birds.

WHAT TO DO IN FEBRUARY

Edibles

- **Sow broad beans**, beetroot, lettuces, radish, spinach, and chard in pots or trays indoors and let them grow. Maybe trays could be covered and left on the floor in the ticket office to germinate?
- **Plant out shallots** and garlic, if none were planted in autumn.
- **Chit early seed potatoes** by putting them in an egg carton or similar and sitting them on a sunny window sill for a few weeks. This helps the shoots grow stronger once they are planted. Early potato varieties are planted in March and harvested in July.
- **Buy woodchip mulch** to put around the bottom of the apple tree in a doughnut shape (not touching the tree trunk).
- **Feed spring cabbages** with homemade nettle fertiliser. To make nettle fertiliser, pick nettles and soak them in a bucket of water for 4 weeks, then dilute by 1:10 to feed plants. Protect cabbages from pigeons using netting.
- Plant a rhubarb crown, if you haven't already.



Buy seed potatoes and chit them on a window ledge.



Doughnut mulch trees. If woodchip touches the bark it can cause infection.

Flowers

- Remove any faded or yellowing leaves from overwintering plants to prevent fungal diseases.

Maintenance

- Last chance to move the raspberries and **prune the apple trees** and redcurrants. Can still plant trees and bushes.
- **Check seeds from old packets** by putting a few on damp kitchen paper to see if they germinate.
- Buy or make a **cold frame** to help harden off plant in the spring (or use the ticket office).
- **Keep feeding the birds** as this is their toughest time of year.



Mustard and cress seeds can also be grown on the window ledge to provide some early microgreens.

WHAT TO DO IN MARCH

Edibles

- Plant potted soft fruit bushes such as currants, gooseberries, and raspberries from now onwards (not bareroot).
- **Plant onions**, shallots, and garlic sets. Sow parsnips as soon as the soil starts to warm up, as they need a long growing season.
- **Chit maincrop potatoes**, or plant out any that have already chitted if it is warm.
- **Protect the brassicas** from pigeons using netting.
- Pot on any seedlings sown last month into small individual pots and keep them inside. Broad beans can be planted outside if it's mild, and covered with frost-fleece.
- **Harvest purple sprouting broccoli** just before it starts flowering. Wait until the main head has fully formed.

Flowers

- **Divide** clumps of herbaceous (non-woody) perennial plants, such as grasses, lupins, and alstroemeria, by digging them up and splitting the roots.
- **Sow annual flowers**, such as cosmos, lobelia, dahlias, and nasturtiums, in pots indoors and keep them warm to help them germinate.
- Deadhead (take off the dead flower heads) the daffodils in the platform planters so that they don't waste energy setting seed.

Maintenance

- Prepare vegetable beds for sowing by weeding them thoroughly, then cover with a thick layer of garden compost (especially the former raspberry/mint bed). Also, mulch the raspberries with compost and top up the platform planters.



Support the netting for spring cabbages and the purple sprouting broccoli with hoops or bent branches. Cover broad beans with frost-fleece this way too.



Broad beans are short bean plants so only need a bamboo cane for support. They are frost-resistant so can be planted out early.

In Lancashire, frosts can occur until mid-May, so anything tender that is planted out needs to be protected.

WHAT TO DO IN APRIL

Edibles

- **Plant out chitted potatoes**. Make a small trench, place potatoes 30cm apart, and pile earth on top of them to create rows.
- **Harvest the side shoots** of the purple sprouting broccoli.
- **Harvest spring cabbages** once they've grown large enough.
- Put cardboard collars around the stems of cabbages to stop the cabbage root fly from laying their eggs
- Pinch out leaves of broad beans if they're covered in aphids, or **spray shoots** with soap or garlic-based solution (Appendix 3).
- Divide clumps of hardy herbs, such as lemon balm and chives, then replant.
- Plant out the young rocket and salad plants outside.
- **Sow outside:** beetroot, carrots, Swiss chard, summer cauliflower, kohlrabi, lettuce, leeks, radish, turnip, spring onions, peas, and perpetual spinach. Herb seeds can be sown in pots outside too.
- Sow peas where they are going to stay: around an obelisk, or with bamboo canes and string as support.
- **Sow inside:** runner beans, French beans, courgettes, pumpkins and in pots to help them germinate.
- Plant tomato seedlings and pot them on when they have true leaves (their second set of leaves). Keep them inside.



Potatoes are planted in rows under the raised mounds in the soil. This is to provide soft earth for the potatoes to grow.



Peas generally grow to about a metre tall, so need support to climb up. Hazel branches with many twigs work well, as they provide more structure for the plants.



Tomato plants can be pricked out when they reach this stage. They have one set of true leaves (serrated tomato-style leaves) as well as their seed leaves, which look very similar in leafy vegetables.



WHAT TO DO IN APRIL

Flowers

- To encourage wildflowers, **sow wildflower seeds** around the edges of the garden where the grass is usually long. Seed mixes with yellow rattle are good to establish the patch as it parasitises the grasses and weakens them, making space for wildflowers.
- Continue to **deadhead daffodils** on the platform, but leave the leaves to die back naturally so that they can feed the bulb for next year.
- **Sow sweet peas** at the base of obelisk plant supports, or at the back of platform planters, so that they can climb up the fence.
- **Sow sunflowers in small pots indoors.** The sunflower Microsun Yellow (*Helianthus annuus*) grows to 30 to 40cm and has traditional sunflower-yellow petals.
- Lightly clip over the lavender bushes to help them keep their shape.
- Prick out small flower plants into small individual pots once they have their first set of true leaves, to give them more space. Keep them inside.
- **Plant out new perennials** while the ground is warm and damp.

Maintenance

- **Start mowing the grass** around the garden beds once it starts to grow.
- Use fresh nettles to **make nettle fertiliser**. Collect a bucket full of nettle leaves, cover with water, and leave to stand for 4 weeks. Then dilute to feed plants. The fertiliser will be high in nitrogen, which is used by plants to grow leaves.
- Keep putting food out for the birds, as they start to raise their young.
- Take gardening gloves home to wash when they become too dirty through use.



Put the stinging nettle fertiliser in a corner of the garden to seep as it will smell awful.

Sunflower Ruby Passion (*Helianthus annuus*) grows up to 1m tall but could go at the back of planters.



WHAT TO DO IN MAY

Edibles

- **Start harvesting rhubarb stems**, but not in the first year of the plants' growth. This allows it to fully establish. Water rhubarb plants with nettle liquid fertiliser.
- **Plant out** runner bean, French bean, courgette, and pumpkin plants into the garden. Try to bring the plants outside every so often before planting to 'harden them off' to outside temperatures, which will increase their survival rates. French and runner beans can be sown straight into the ground too. Protect them with fleece if there is a cold snap.
- **Move tomato seedlings** into larger pots and feed them with nettle feed or tomato feed (which gives them the phosphates that they need to produce flowers and fruit). Keep them well watered, and move outside when it is warm overnight.
- **Earth up the potatoes**, covering the stems and shoots with soil as they appear. This increases the length of the stem underground so that the plant can grow more potatoes.
- **Sow salad leaf** seeds in gaps in the beds.
- Weed around the vegetables and keep seedlings well watered.

Flowers

- After hardening off, **plant out the cosmos, dahlia, nasturtium, and sunflower plants** that have been growing inside, or sow seeds straight into the soil. Plant the sunflowers on Platform 1, where it is sunnier.
- **Lift and divide overcrowded clumps of daffodils** from the station planters.



Pumpkins need a lot of nutrients so it is best to plant them in a heap of compost. They can grow to 5m long so it is best to plant them in the corner of a planter on the edge of the garden (maybe near the big apple tree?)

Maintenance

- **Tidy the garden** ready for Community Rail Week! Mow paths around the beds and picnic benches, but please leave some areas unmown for insects.
- **Check plants for pests**, especially on shoot tips and the underside of leaves. These can be treated with garlic or soap solution deterrent spray (see Appendix 3).

WHAT TO DO IN JUNE

Edibles

- **Harvest** new potatoes, lettuce, radish, and peas.
- **Pinch out the side shoots of tomatoes**, so they put more energy into the fruit. Side shoots grow from the joint between the leaf and stem at a 45-degree angle.
- **Check for woolly aphids** on the apple trees, and use soap-based spray if needed.
- To increase the yield, **feed fruiting vegetable plants** (tomatoes, courgettes, and pumpkins) with tomato food.
- Start harvesting the summer fruiting raspberries and strawberries. Put straw around the strawberries to stop them from touching the soil and growing mould.

Flowers

- Put **supporting bamboo stakes** in place for tall plants such as sunflowers, dahlias, and cosmos.
- **Weed the platform planters** to keep them looking good. Some self-seeded plants might add to the display and provide nectar and pollen for insects.
- Buy and plant any extra annual flowers to fill up the beds.
- **Deadhead flowers** to encourage new growth.

Maintenance

- **Water beds and planters** (especially the vertical planter), and hand-weed round vegetables to help them establish.
- To stop the plants from wilting between watering, **mulch around the beans and courgettes** to keep water in the soil.



Keeping a low ground cover of salad leaves around other vegetables in the beds also reduces water loss and stops the soil drying out as much.

Removing the side shoots (those at a 45 degree angle) of tomato plants also reduces their water loss.



WHAT TO DO IN JULY

Edibles

- **Stop harvesting rhubarb** to let it collect enough energy for winter hibernation.
- Continue harvesting the summer fruiting raspberries and strawberries.
- **Harvest courgettes**, French and runner beans, peas, larger potatoes, and hopefully start picking ripe tomatoes.
- Put fine netting or fleece over brassicas to stop butterflies laying their eggs on them and protect them from caterpillars.
- **Sow a last batch of peas**, which can be harvested in the autumn.
- Cut the broad bean stems after the last harvest, but leave the roots in the soil to release nitrogen as they decompose.



Harvest courgettes before they grow into marrows.



Horsetail is native to the UK but can grow up to 2m deep underground and spreads using rhizomes, meaning that it can easily take over large areas.

Flowers

- **Deadhead flowers** to encourage new growth.
- weed around the platform planters every few weeks. Look out for coltsfoot, bindweed, and horsetail, which take over.
- **Remove seed pods from sweet peas** to keep them flowering for longer.

Maintenance

- Water plants in the morning or evening. Avoid the hottest part of the day to reduce the water lost by evaporation.
- **Add a bird bath** to the garden (this could be an old plate) for birds to drink from.
- If it is dry, the lawn probably won't need mowing.



By adding a few stones to the bird bath, it means that small insects, like bees, can drink from it too.

WHAT TO DO IN AUGUST

Edibles

- **Keep harvesting** courgettes, beans and peas, tomatoes, etc., as they become ready.
- **Sow rocket seeds** in seed trays. It grows quickly, so can be planted out and harvested before the end of the year.
- Harvest onions, shallots, and garlic once their stems have wilted and folded over. This shows that they have stopped growing.
- Once all raspberries have fruited, use secateurs to **cut out the old woody canes** that bore fruit this year. This leaves this year's fresh green growth, which will bear fruit next year.
- **Remove the top shoots of tomatoes** to stop more growing, and remove the lower leaves to help the fruit ripen.
- Let some lettuce and radish plants grow taller and 'bolt' so that the seeds can be harvested to use next year.
- **Sow spring cabbage** in pots to plant out in autumn.

Flowers

- Continue deadheading plants in the platform planters to extend flowering.
- Start to **collect seeds** from annual flowers to save and re-sow next year, but also leave some for the birds. Store them in a paper bag or envelope to help them dry.

Maintenance

- Continue to water the beds if it is dry, and mow as needed.
- **Turn compost** in the compost bin to aerate it and speed up decomposition. The best way to do this may be to lift the plastic bin off the compost pile and shovel the compost back into it.



Cut the old raspberry canes right to the ground. Don't put these in the compost bin as they're too woody and won't break down. The pile in the corner of the garden is perfect for this!

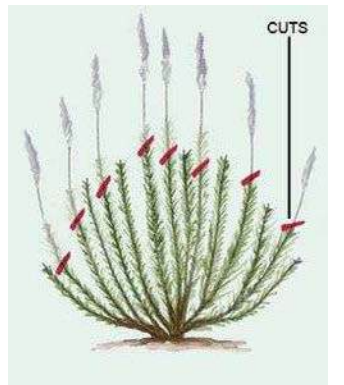
WHAT TO DO IN SEPTEMBER

Edibles

- **Harvest apples** and any remaining potatoes.
- **Cut off vines of unripe tomatoes** and take them home to ripen indoors. Maybe use green tomatoes to make tomato chutney.
- Sow kale for winter picking.
- **Move herbs into pots** to take indoors.
- Cut away any leaves covering pumpkins and marrows to let the skins ripen in the sun.
- **Summer prune the apple trees** to encourage them to fruit more (see Appendix 1).

Flowers

- **Prune** the long, flowering stalks of lavender plants back to the first leaf. This stops them from becoming woody and leggy too fast.
- **Collect ripe seeds** from some annual flowers to save and resow next year, and store them in a paper bag or envelope to help them dry. For example, sweet peas, marigolds, cosmos, dahlias, rudbeckia, etc. Leave sunflower seedheads for birds to feed on.
- **Sow seeds of hardy annuals**, like scabiosa and cornflowers, in the planters, which will flower early next summer.
- **Plant new perennials** this month to let them establish before the first frosts in October.
- **Plant spring bulbs**, including crocuses, daffodils, hyacinths, English bluebells, and snake's-head fritillaries in the platform planters.



Prune the lavender plant back into a ball shape by only removing the flowering stems.

Maintenance

- **Cut long grass around the edges of the garden** and rake off the cut material. Wildflowers grow best on soil with low nutrients so taking as much plant matter off the soil as possible helps to keep the nutrients low. Choose some less accessible areas to leave the grass long, to provide shelter for overwintering insects and amphibians.

WHAT TO DO IN OCTOBER

Edibles

- **Sow hardy broad beans** for early crops next year.
- **Sow green manure**, such as clover, brown mustard, or tillage radish, onto empty beds to protect the soil from winter rain. The plants can then be turned back into the soil in the spring to fertilise it.
- Harvest the last of the salad plants before the first frost.
- **Finish picking runner beans** and French beans, but leave a few pods to ripen fully, to save the seeds.
- **Plant garlic cloves**, 15cm apart, with their tips 5cm below the surface. These can be harvested next year. Shop-bought garlic cloves work well. Onions can also be planted and overwintered under fleece.
- Raise pumpkins and marrows to ripen, and harvest near the end of the month, once the stalk has completely died off.
- Plant out spring cabbages for next year and cover with netting to deter pigeons.

Flowers

- **Buy and plant winter flowers** such as winter-flowering heather, cyclamen, winter pansies, and hellebores.

Maintenance

- **Make a leaf mould bin** out of four posts and some chicken wire. Collect leaves and put them into the bin, where they will break down to be used as compost later.
- Stop mowing the lawn until next spring, or raise the height of the blades.



Leaf mould is great for plants than need drainage and can be added to compost to pot on plants.

Clover is a nitrogen fixator so makes nitrogen available in the soil for other plants to use.



WHAT TO DO IN NOVEMBER

Edibles

- **Dig the raspberry canes out of the vegetable bed** as they become dormant, and relocate them along the edges of the garden. Move as many roots as possible, and plant the canes in a deep trench.
- **Harvest leeks** once they are large enough and look like they have stopped growing.
- **Cover the strawberry plants** in the vertical pallet planter with frost fleece to protect them from the cold. Or repot them and move them indoors.
- **Cover purple sprouting broccoli** with netting to deter pigeons from pecking at it.



Harvest leeks before they start flowering.

Flowers

- **Plant tulip bulbs** in the station planters for next spring, if wanted.
- **Clear away sweet peas** and take their supports down to use next year.



Hawthorn and raspberries can be moved from November to February, while they are dormant, but it is best to move them earlier so that their roots have time to establish.

Maintenance

- When clearing the bed of raspberries, **transplant the small hawthorn tree** that is growing alongside them into the hawthorn hedge to the far end of the garden (closest to the platforms). Dig a hole the size of the roots and fill in around the tree, compacting the soil so that there are no air gaps.
- **Continue collecting fallen leaves** for the leaf mould pile.
- **Start feeding the birds** in the colder months.

WHAT TO DO IN DECEMBER

Edibles

- **Prune redcurrants in the platform planters** by cutting the side shoots back to one or two buds from the main branch (see Appendix 4).
- Lift and divide large clumps of rhubarb (at least 4 years old). Replant the outer sections into holes filled with soil and compost.
- **Keep cabbage, kale, and purple sprouting broccoli covered** in net to protect them from hungry pigeons. Remove yellow leaves.
- Harvest any remaining leeks and some kale. Leave the purple sprouting broccoli and spring cabbage to grow till next year.

Flowers

- Look over the station planters to make sure they're all tidy.

Maintenance

- Continue feeding birds and collecting leaves.
- **Keep filling up the bird bath** with water and break any ice on it to let the birds drink.



CRAFTS AND ACTIVITIES MONTH BY MONTH

January

- Take part in the **RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch** in the garden by watching and recording birds for an hour. The RSPB has an ID sheet to record bird species, and the results can be submitted to them to help track how birds in the UK are faring.
- **Hang bird feeders** on the apple tree to attract birds to it, encouraging them to eat the aphids on the tree.



February

- Use twigs blown down by winter winds to **make string weavings** to decorate the garden. Tie the sticks together in an X shape, then loop the string around each stick in turn, working in a circle. Search for Mexican Gods Eyes for more info on this craft.



March

- Make **wildflower seed bombs** to plant in March and April. Mix a teaspoon of wildflower seeds with 2 tablespoons of sand and knead it into a golf-ball-sized lump of clay (try to use potters clay as airdrying clay has nylon in it). Then split it into small marble-sized balls to dry. To use, throw the seed bombs at hard ground so that they smash or crumble in your hand before distributing.



April

- **Forage for young edible plants** to make a salad, with fresh salad leaves from the garden. Try some hawthorn leaves from the hedge, or bramble leaves to make tea. Or walk along the old railway line to Woodnook Vale and collect wild garlic to blend into pesto, or use it instead of spinach in curries.



CRAFTS AND ACTIVITIES BY MONTH

May

- Try out **nature journaling**, within in the station garden or somewhere else. Take some time to write or draw in response to something natural that takes your interest. You could start by looking at an area as a whole and then zoom in on a specific object, shape or colour, for example. Focus on capturing the shapes and colours rather than how realistic the drawing looks.
- Harvest rhubarb at least a year after it has been planted and make a **rhubarb crumble** or compote.



June

- Boil and peel harvested broad beans, and mash with soft cheese, lemon juice, and mint to **make broad bean dip**. Try it alongside other dips and have a picnic in the garden

July

- Take part in the **UK Big Butterfly Count** by recording butterflies you see in the garden for 20 minutes. Search the Big Butterfly Count for ID sheets, or contact Prospects Foundation, who may be able to join in to help with identification. The results of the survey feed into a national database to show how the UK's butterflies are faring.

August

- **Repaint the pallet planters** to add more colour to the garden. The two pallet planters were made by the St Christopher's Eco Group in 2024 and need repainting to protect their wood. Rightway Home of DIY on Blackburn Road has a good selection of small outdoor wood paint colour pots. Paint during a dry spell, or use a whole pallet to build another vertical planter.



CRAFTS AND ACTIVITIES BY MONTH

September

- Use the apples from the apple trees to make **apple crumble**!
- Cut **bundles of herbs** before they die back. Leave them upside down to dry out and hang around the house for fragrance and decoration. Lavender flowers can be collected when pruning the lavender bushes.
- Collect some flowers from the station planters and press them.



Use pressed flowers to decorate cards and gift tags.

October

- Use pumpkins from the garden to **make pumpkin pie or soup**, or to add to vegetable dishes. Eating pumpkins are a different variety to carving pumpkins, so they taste a lot richer.
- **Make rosehip chutney**. Collect 200g of rosehips from the garden and surrounding area, then cut each one open and rinse the inside to remove the seeds and hairs. Add 1 chopped apple, 1 chopped red onion, 2 garlic cloves, 50g sugar, 50ml apple cider or balsamic vinegar, 200ml water, and some seasoning, and simmer for around 45 minutes until everything is cooked through.

November

- **Make a mini pond** in the garden by digging a washing-up bowl into the ground and putting stones in the bottom to create a slope out of the bowl to let animals escape from it. Let rainwater fill the pond, and add a pond plant such as starwort or miniature waterlily. More information here: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-create-mini-pond>



December

- **Make a pinecone bird feeder**. Collect pinecones, and tie a piece of string to the top of each pinecone to hang the feeder with. Mix birdseed and cheese with peanut butter or coconut oil and press the mixture around the pinecone to make a ball.



WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY GARDENING

Pollinator-friendly planting

Pollinators include bees, wasps, butterflies, flies, and moths. 88% of all flowering plant species depend on pollinators for reproduction, including 75% of all crop species (Nature Communications (1018), 2019). They also provide a food source for birds, bats, and spiders, forming the foundation for our ecosystem. Pollinators need frequent nectar sources to keep flying, so, in urban spaces, they rely on pockets of flowers.

Wildflowers and traditional 'weeds' are the best for pollinators, as they have simple flowers and pollinators can access the nectar in the centre of the flower. Specially bred double-petaled flowers are too full to allow access to their centre, so are useless as a nectar source. Creating a mini wildflower meadow or leaving grass long is therefore the best way to support them. Cumbria Wildflowers is a great (relatively) local provider of wildflower seeds. They only use native plants, which are best for our native pollinators. For station planters, ornamental pollinator-friendly flowers include:



Hardy geranium



Lavender



Helenium



Verbena
bonariensis



Heather

Winter food plants

Fruit-bearing trees, including hawthorn, blackthorn, and crab apple, are brilliant for birds. All of these are present in the station garden - the young hawthorn and blackthorn plants in hedgerows, and two mature crab apple trees. Garden flowers that also provide winter food are teasel, asters, and sunflowers, as the birds can peck at the seed heads. Climbing plants like honeysuckle and ivy also provide shelter.

Ponds

The best areas for wildlife provide a mosaic of habitats - such as short grass, long grass, and scrub - and a pond adds a whole new dynamic by providing water. The November 'crafts and activity' explains how to build a mini pond.

CLIMATE-RESISTANT GARDENING

As climate change continues to affect the planet, the North West of England is already experiencing wetter winters, higher overall temperatures, and lower summer rainfall. Extreme events such as summer droughts and winter storms are forecast to become more frequent and severe (Greater Manchester Climate Change Risk Assessment, Oct. 2024). Therefore, changing our planting and gardening practices is imperative.

Drought-resistant gardening

Reducing the gardens' dependence on water is key.

- Add a water butt to the runoff drainage on the ticket office and/or platform shelters to use for watering.
- Plant drought-tolerant flowers such as echinacea, nepeta, and verbena. Perennials are also less vulnerable as they don't need to establish each year.
- Cover all bare soil to reduce water loss. Sow nasturtium, creeping thyme, or clover to grow around flowers in the platform planters, and salads around vegetables in the garden beds.
- Let the lawn grow longer in summer so that it can retain more moisture in dry spells.



Some stations have information signs for rail users to read while they wait, to explain planting choices and educate people on drought- or pollinator-friendly planting.

Winter rain-resistant gardening

Bare soil is very vulnerable during winter storms, as nutrients are likely to leak out of it due to heavy rainfall. Beds can either be covered by plastic or by sowing cover crops such as crimson clover, brown mustard, tillage radish, or hairy vetch. These protect the soil from erosion, loosen the soil with their roots, and can also be dug into the soil in the spring to improve fertility (especially clover, as it adds nitrogen to the soil).

Compost

Creating your own compost recycles nutrients in the garden. Make two separate heaps, one for food waste and the other for garden waste, and turn the compost every few months to increase airflow. Then add it to beds before planting. Woody material can be collected in a pile in the corner of the garden to provide habitat for invertebrates. If you do buy compost, please check that it is peat-free, and therefore not contributing to the degradation of peat bogs, which are one of our most important carbon sinks.

APPENDIX 1

PRUNING APPLE TREES

Pruning helps to regulate the growth of the tree, prevent apple tree diseases, and encourage more fruit to grow.

When to prune

Any time from November to early March, while the tree is dormant and before it starts to grow. Don't prune if it will be frosty or very wet in the next few days, as the tree will not heal as well.

How to make a cut

Use sharp secateurs or loppers and a pruning saw for larger branches. Prune as close to the main branch as possible, without damaging the branch. Cutting further away will leave a 'snag' which is likely to become infected and spread the infection to the rest of the tree. If the cut is facing upwards, cut it at a 45-degree angle so that rain water can run off it.

Pruning

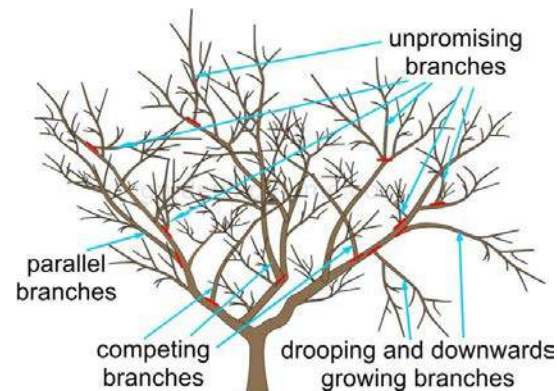
Start by looking at the tree to decide which branches to take off. These can be marked using a piece of string if you're not cutting straight away. Start by taking the dead, diseased, and damaged branches off. Then follow these steps:

1. Take off branches that are crossing other branches, causing rubbing.
2. Remove larger side branches growing inwards. The aim is to create an open-centred, goblet-shaped crown to increase airflow. There should be 50-60cm space between the main branches (halfway up the branch).
3. Prune downward-growing branches back to a more upward-growing branch, or to the main stem.
4. If the tree is too tall or wide, shorten larger branches by up to a third. Prune to a strong outward- and upward-facing side-branch that's at least one-third of the diameter of the branch being pruned

Never cut more than a fifth of the branches in one year. While pruning, step back regularly to make sure you really want to remove particular branches.

There is a very good apple tree pruning video on the RHS website:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/fruit/apples/pruning-made-easy>



APPENDIX 2

CROP ROTATION

Crop rotation is used when growing vegetables to stop the soil from being depleted in specific nutrients that individual vegetable groups require. It also helps reduce the build-up of plant-specific pests and diseases in the soil.

Crop rotation has 3 main groups, so once all three beds have been cleared, this will be achievable in the garden.

Group 1: Potato family

Potatoes and tomatoes

Group 2: Legumes, Onions, and Roots

Peas and all types of beans, onion, garlic, shallot, leek, beetroot, carrot, and celery

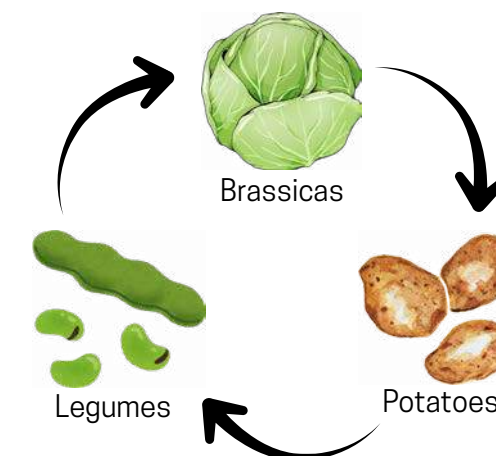
Group 3: Brassicas

Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi, oriental greens such as pak choi, and radish

Each year, swap which bed that group is grown in, so that brassicas follow legumes, legumes follow potatoes, and potatoes follow brassicas.

Some plants can grow anywhere

Courgettes, pumpkins, cucumbers, peppers, aubergine, and salads (lettuce and rocket) can be grown wherever there is space, such as in the potato bed or between brassicas.



APPENDIX 3

DETECTING PESTS AND DISEASES

- When choosing potato and tomato varieties, pick ones that are resistant to blight. (Such as 'Sarpo Mira' and 'Orla' for potatoes, and 'Crimson Cherry F1' and 'Merrygold F1' for tomatoes.)
- Check young plants for infections often and remove leaves with large numbers of eggs on them.
- Remove slugs and caterpillars by hand and wash off large aphid colonies using a hose. Spraying garlic water (boil garlic cloves in water and let it cool) onto leaves also helps deter slugs.
- When growing carrots, plant the seeds apart so that they don't need to be thinned while they grow. If carrots are disturbed during growing, they will attract carrot flies, which will destroy the carrots. Carrot flies can also be deterred by covering carrots in very fine mesh or growing them in raised beds, as carrot flies only fly near the ground.



Long grass supports the entire ecosystem.



Simple marigold varieties allow pollinators to reach their nectar.

- Attract natural predators such as ladybirds, lacewings, and hoverflies to eat aphids. Hoverflies have short tongues, so need open flowers like daisies, dandelions, and cow parsley, which have easily accessible pollen and nectar. Leaving grass on the edges of the garden long is a great way to encourage these wildflowers.
- Try adding a tiny pond to the garden (look at the seasonal activities for more info) to attract birds, toads, and frogs and hedgehogs to the garden, which feed on slugs and snails.
- Grow companion plants alongside vegetables. Basil, marigold, mint, and lavender repel pests with their strong scents and attract pollinators.
- Weed around plants and give them enough space to create good airflow, which reduces the risk of leaf mould and disease.
- Change the location of crops you plant each year to disrupt pest and disease cycles in the soil.

APPENDIX 4

PRUNING REDCURRANT BUSHES

Pruning helps to keep the plant healthy and encourages more fruit to grow in the next year. Removing side shoots also stops the branches from becoming overcrowded, which prevents pests and diseases.

When pruning, you're aiming to make an open-centred bush shape, with eight to ten well-spaced main branches radiating from a short trunk. Each of these branches will carry short side-shoots, which is where the fruit will grow next year.

When to prune

It's best to prune redcurrants in the winter (between December and March) while they are dormant, and before the first shoots start to appear. Avoid pruning if it's likely to be frosty in the next few days, as this can damage the plant, although currants are generally hardy.

Steps of pruning:

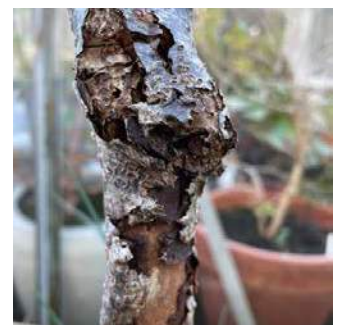
- Using secateurs, remove any dead or damaged branches.
- Remove any low-growing branches that are getting in the way of other plants.
- Choose strong side shoots to replace old branches and cut the old branches down to these shoots. Remove one or two of the older branches per year in this way, to encourage regeneration.
- Prune back all other side shoots growing from the main branches to one or two buds.

For more information on this, visit the RHS website:

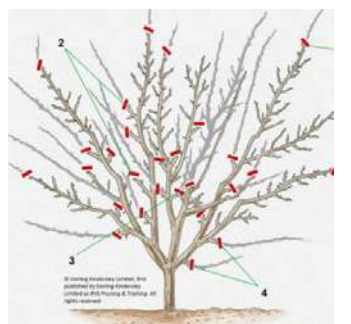
<https://www.rhs.org.uk/fruit/redcurrants/redcurrant-pruning-and-training>



The aim of winter pruning is to remove dead, diseased and damaged wood, and open up the bush.



Dark bark patches, scars, and flaking bark show dead and diseased wood.



Only remove up to a third of the plant to allow it to recover.



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