

Houghton Hall Park

October 2022 Newsletter

The Houghton Hall Park Renaissance and Renewal Project is being managed by Central Bedfordshire Council in partnership with Houghton Regis Town Council and is supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund.



October is well under way, this week has been lovely and mild, perfect for walking to the park and getting lost amongst the autumn leaves. Autumn is the theme for our workshops this weekend, there are still spaces available to make an Autumn wreath or harvest table centre on Saturday. Jenny, who is leading the workshops, tells us she has grown some mini gourds and decorative sweetcorn to use which will be really different to anything we have used before, there's still some spaces left if that's tempted you! It's recycling week and if you walk past the kitchen gardens you will see a lot of items have been recycled for the latest display on music,

Simon Cowell has even paid a visit, go take a look and see if your kids know what vinyl is! Talking of recycling we have an activity on in the Visitors Centre next week during half term, children can join Big Sculpture Art and make a butterfly out of recycled materials to display in the park, for more information on how to book read our What's on pages. The produce sales in the kitchen garden are now over for another year, read Sue's update to find out what she and the volunteers have been doing to prepare for bumper crops next year. Eleanor, our Park Ranger, has been busy with our volunteers in the wider park, her update this month describes how they have been preventing epicormic growth, don't know what that is? Have a read and find out! Volunteer Mark has written a very interesting article on Magpies this month, Irene tells us all about the Sedum for plant of the month and she also provided us with a tasty recipe made with aubergines. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter, see you in November!



A great place to live and work.

What's On

Autumnal Wreath Workshop

When: Saturday 22nd October

Time: 10am to 12.30pm

Cost: £30

Join us this autumn and rustle up the perfect autumnal wreath, bringing the warm shades of the season straight to your door.

Combine fresh foliage, dried flowers and natural elements to craft your own unique autumn wreath.

The workshop costs £30 which includes expert instruction & wreath materials, you'll leave with a bountiful door decor for your autumn doorstep



Harvest Table Centre Workshop

When: Saturday 22nd October

Time: 1pm to 4pm

Cost: £30

Join us on Saturday 22nd October and rustle up a harvest themed table centre, bringing the stunning shades of the season into your home.

With a candle at its centre, combine fresh foliage, dried flowers and natural elements to craft your own unique table centre.

The workshop costs £30 which includes expert instruction & table centre materials, you'll leave with a bountiful decoration for your home.

For both workshops we provide all the decorations and equipment you need, you take away the design you have made during the workshop.

You don't need any experience arranging flowers as all our workshops are suitable for beginners, don't worry if you're not artistic as we show you the basic techniques and leave you to create your own unique design

For more information and to book visit our website:

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/autumnal-wreath-workshop>

Big Sculpture Art



When: Thursday 27th October

Time: Hourly sessions at 10am, 11.30am & 1.30pm

Cost: £1.50 per child

Come along and get creative with our fabulous BIG SCULPTURE WORKSHOP this half term!

Using recycled materials (provided) our workshop leader will be on hand to help you make a beautiful butterfly sculpture that will be put on display in the park afterwards, you can then decorate a small animal or insect to take

home, fantastic fun for all the family!

To book go to: <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/big-sculpture-art>

Festive Wreaths at Home

Collection: 2nd & 3rd December

Time: 10am to 3pm

Cost: £22

Our ever-popular festive wreath kits will be available to purchase again this year!

Enjoy making a festive wreath in the comfort of your own home at a day/time that suits you, why not make a day of it with some friends? Grab the mince pies and mulled wine and get creative!

Each kit will include:

Circular oasis base, fresh foliage, ribbons/bows, wires, ornaments/decorations and full instructions on paper and video to make the design.

You will need to provide your own scissors/secateurs.

Visit our website for further information and to book:

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/festive-wreaths-at-home>



Deluxe Wreath Workshops



When: Wednesday 30th November 6pm to 8pm
Saturday 3rd December 11am to 1pm

Cost: £45

After a two year pause we are back with in-house deluxe festive wreath workshops!

Join us in the Visitors Centre on Wednesday 30th November and Saturday 3rd December for a masterclass on how to make a gorgeous wreath for your door, these workshops are great value for money all equipment, decorations and fresh foliage is provided along with expert tuition from Jenny Osborne, your wreath will last all through the festive season and beyond.

We have four colour schemes you can choose from with a limited number of each, the wreath rings are also bigger than our standard wreath kits, if you have had a kit or attended a workshop with us before you know whichever you pick they are all going to be beautiful!

Visit our website for more information and to book:

<https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/deluxe-festive-wreath-workshop>

Buggy Exercise



When: Every Wednesday during term time

Time: 10am outside the Visitors Centre

Cost: £2

This is the perfect class if you have a baby, would like to meet other parents and get fit in the process! The park is a great sensory experience for your baby, just getting out in the fresh air and nature is proven to boost your mood and increase energy.

The class starts with a gentle jog/walk/stretch around the park followed by a circuit and sometimes boxing which is a great stress reliever!

To book on visit our website: <https://www.houghtonhallpark.org/events/buggy-exercise>

Parkrun & Junior Parkrun



When: Parkrun every Saturday and Junior Parkrun every Sunday

Time: 9am

Cost: Free!

A free, weekly, timed 5k/2k walk/jog/run at 9am every Saturday & Sunday. Open to all ages and abilities. Organised entirely by volunteers. Friendly and fun.

If you would like to take part but have not run before you will need to register at www.parkrun.org.uk

Monthly Photography Themes

We welcome photographers of all abilities to get creative, use your imagination and enter our monthly theme.

October's theme is: 'Autumn Leaves at Houghton Hall Park', there is an array of different colours in the park at the moment, we are looking forward to seeing what you can capture. Please send your submissions to hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

The images must be taken between 1st – 31st October 2022 and each person can submit up to 5 entries. We will not accept any overly photoshopped images that do not represent the reality of the subject in the photo. Some images will be featured on our website, social media platforms, notice boards around the visitor centre and in our monthly newsletter.

Please see our website for the full terms & conditions before you submit your work:

www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography

Last month's theme was 'dogs' thank you to everyone for sending in these wonderful photos.

Art & Culture Event

great lifestyles

October's Photography Theme

'Autumn Leaves' at Houghton Hall Park

We look forward to seeing what you capture:

- Up to 5 entries per person
- Images must be taken in October
- Some images will be featured on our website, social media platforms and in our monthly newsletter
- Send them to us at: hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Deadline 31st October
- Full terms & conditions at our website

Find out more online at www.houghtonhallpark.org

LOTTERY FUNDED



By Martine C

By Sarah Rose



By Mary Riding



By Mary Riding

By Martine C

By David Riding

Community Park Ranger Update

Words and photographs by Eleanor Evans, Community Park Ranger.

Just like that summer seems to have disappeared and we are fully into Autumn. This month has been a whirlwind, we've been helping in the gardens making things nice and tidy before the end of the season. This has been a lot of deadheading and weeding to make sure that we get a great last flush of flowers.

Finally, after having to cancel the last few monthly volunteer tasks due to the hot weather, we managed to get together on the third Sunday of the month and do some epicormic growth maintenance.



Epicormic growth is a plants response to damage or stress. This is where new shoots grow from epicormic buds. These buds are normally suppressed by hormones from shoots higher up the tree however if the tree is damaged, attacked by insects, affected by drought or fire or even has work done it can cause the epicormic response.

If we don't cut this growth back every couple of years it will grow too large and can obstruct paths and walk ways as well as looking a little messy.

The volunteers did a great job using saws, secateurs, and loppers to clear the epicormic growth. What they didn't get finished was finished by a group from Weatherfield Academy later in the week.

Epicormic growth at the base of the tree



If you would like to volunteer in the park or want to find out more please feel free to email me:

Eleanor.evans@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Have a safe month, make sure you look after yourselves with the changing weather and I'm sure I'll see you round the park soon.

Thanks!
Eleanor

Nature Notes

Words by Mark Bolan, Houghton Hall Park Volunteer.



Magpies on the bird table

Seeing their iridescent plumage changing colour with the light, makes magpies (*Pica pica*) one of my favourite garden birds. These black and white birds are members of the crow family, a group known as corvidae and live for around five years. They are not quite as big as they might look, as their tail feathers make up a little over their body length. But apart from the flashes of blue, purple and green iridescence, as the light reflects off them, it's their inquisitive nature that I find fascinating to watch. They are highly intelligent birds capable of working out a problem. Unlike many birds

that take more of a hit and miss approach, if you watch them feeding, they will first look at it before deciding the best way of tackling it, sometimes moving their position before picking the food up. They have also been known to use twigs to prize food from an otherwise inaccessible place. This intelligence may be one of the reasons, their numbers have increased four-fold over the last thirty-five years.

There are many folklore tales associated with magpies, probably more than any other species of bird. In the past they have been linked to witches, death, impending doom, superstition and premonitions



The iridescent colours

and as a result have gained a bad press. In more enlightened times they are still seen

as predatory birds, although no more so than many other species and generally only when raising young. Their winter diet is mostly vegetarian and in summertime they look for invertebrates and worms. Any meat they eat comes mostly from carrion or roadkill.



Tail is half the bodies length

Magpies are very social birds and normally mate for life. The young stay with the parents for a year before leaving to find a mate, but usually stay within five or six miles of where they were raised.

Interesting fact: The counting rhyme One for sorrow one for joy, is about magpies.

One for sorrow, two for joy,
 Three for a girl, four for a boy,
 Five for silver, six for gold,
 Seven for a secret, never to be told!
 Eight for a wish, nine for a kiss,
 Ten for a bird, you must not miss.

A couple of explanations:

It was said if you saw only one magpie something bad would happen. Although of the many superstitious beliefs there are, one is that any impending doom can be countered by making a left-handed salute whilst saying “Good morning Mr Magpie how’s the wife?”

During pregnancy the number of magpies you saw, supposedly predicted the sex of the baby.

Whilst in England magpies aren’t always seen positively, in Asia they are associated good luck and are the national bird of Korea.

This month on Sunday October 30th we change the clocks back to Greenwich Mean Time. Although we will gain an hour, it is also a sign we are heading into winter and hours of daylight will be much shorter. For birds and animals that don’t hibernate, it means there is less time available for foraging. So, if you can I would encourage you to give such wildlife a helping hand and perhaps look at magpies in a different way.

Until next time

Mark

Volunteer at Houghton Hall Park and Gardens

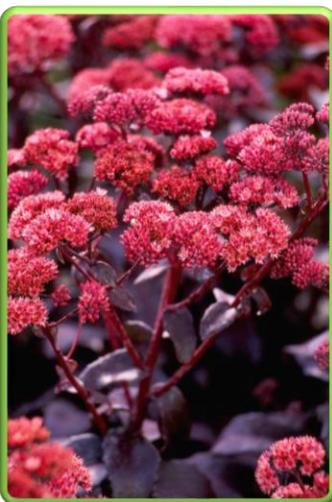


A good view of wing and tail feathers



Magpies are very inquisitive birds

Plant of the Month – Sedum



Sedums are succulent plants with fleshy leaves and flat, nectar-rich flowerheads that are loved by bees and other pollinators. Easy to grow, these sun-loving perennials are a striking feature in late summer. The flowers, which range from white, yellow, pink and red, are tiny and star-like. As they sit so close to each other, a broad, gently domed head is formed that allow butterflies and bees to feed.

The flower stems carry equally attractive leaves adding much to the plant, especially if they come in red shades. Fat and succulent, the leaves look as though they are filled with water. This is because they are designed to live in arid parts of the world, and although this makes Sedums ideal for dry gardens, they are just happy in any soil as long as it is not permanently wet. The one thing they do command, however, is as much sun as possible.

Irene Copperwheat
Houghton Hall Park Volunteer

What's the latest in the Gardens?

By Sue Beard, Houghton Hall Park Community Gardener

This month has slowly seen the summer fading and Autumn beginning to arrive. But most days have still been bright and sunny, confusing the wildlife and plants in the gardens.

While reluctant to say goodbye to the summer, we have begun our winter preparation of tidying, cutting back and preparing the flower and vegetable beds ready for the winter months ahead.



Our compost mulch arrived this week ready for hours of wheelbarrowing and raking onto the beds on both the kitchen garden and in the formal garden.

We are already discussing and making plans for 2023, ensuring that we plan for the correct crop rotation and where we will grow the selection of vegetables, flowers, and herbs!

Thanks to the glorious sunshine and heat of the sun we have had a great variety of crops this year and hope that next year's weather will be as nice and helpful (with maybe a little bit more rain on occasions!)

The team have been working hard preparing the new bed display along a music theme with several hidden song titles. After much hard work the display went up with a nostalgic feel including old LPs and 45s!

The volunteers have already started planning and preparing for this year's Christmas display bed and what needs to be built, sewn and made ready to go!



As usual in the Kitchen garden each day has been a busy one with everyone helping to harvest the final crops, cut back the finished plants, seed sowing, potting on, painting and creating ready for the next season.

Until next time, happy gardening!

Sue

Community Gardener



Houghton Hall Park

Kitchen Garden Recipe

To use from - The Garden:
Aubergine, Tomatoes & Garlic



Aubergine Stew with Couscous

Ingredients:

1 large aubergine
olive oil
½ teaspoon dried oregano
1 small red onion
1 clove garlic
½ bunch flat-leaf parsley
2 large tomatoes, ripe
1 tablespoon baby capers
8 green olives, stone in
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
150g wholewheat couscous
1 tablespoon flaked almonds
extra virgin olive oil

Method:

1. Trim and cut the aubergine into large chunks. Heat a little of olive oil in a large pan over a medium heat, add the aubergine, oregano and a little sea salt, then toss to coat. Turn the heat up to high and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, giving the pan a shake every now and then.
2. Peel and finely chop the onion, garlic and the parsley leaves. Finely chop the stalks, then roughly chop the tomatoes.
3. When the aubergine is golden all over, add the onion, garlic and parsley stalks, cook for a further 2 minutes, add a little more oil if necessary.
4. Drain and add the capers, destone and add the olives, then drizzle over the vinegar.
5. When all the vinegar has evaporated, add the tomatoes and simmer for around 15 minutes, or until the aubergine is tender.
6. In a bowl, put the couscous, a pinch of salt and just cover with boiling water, then pop a plate on top and leave to fluff up.
7. Lightly toast the almonds over a medium heat for 1 to 2 minutes, or until golden, keeping them moving. Use a fork to fluff up the couscous and stir through half the chopped parsley. Season the stew to taste, then drizzle with extra virgin olive oil. Sprinkle over the almonds and remaining Parsley.

Irene Copperwheat – Houghton Hall Volunteer

Keep in touch

Facebook

HoughtonHallPark

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Twitter

@BedsCountryside

Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Current Opening Times

Mon – Sun 9am to 4pm



Become a volunteer at Houghton Hall Park

Thinking of giving something back to your local community? Then get in touch with us to see what you can do to get involved. Here are some ideas below:

- Observational Surveys
- Community engagement
- Weeding and clearing
- Cleaning
- Watering
- Growing food and encourage healthy eating
- Teach younger generations (if you have a skill or qualification, let us know!)
- Become a community leader
- Support other volunteers
- Contribute to the annual park events calendar
- Volunteering assistant at events running at the park
- Curate local history talks at visitor centre
- Habitat enhancement work in the woodland and meadow

There are many opportunities to take part. If you would like to volunteer and join the Volunteers of Houghton Hall Park, please email hhp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



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LOTTERY FUNDED