

## **Moseley, still in Bloom**

### **Virtual Open Gardens event - nearly there !**

As you now know Moseley gardens will be shown on a dedicated YouTube channel on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June and for some time afterwards. We won't have the usual tea and cakes but there is no reason not to eat cake and drink tea or even drink Prosecco or Pimms while you view. It doesn't matter if it's raining. You can still see it. Remember to pass the message on to friends and family all over the world. This could be Moseley's big moment. For information on how to visit our Open Gardens this year, see [www.MoseleyInBloom.org.uk/open-gardens](http://www.MoseleyInBloom.org.uk/open-gardens)

*Kate Stocks, Jonathan Smith and the Open Gardens 2020 team*

### **Open Gardens - a growing institution**

We first did Open Gardens in 2005 in conjunction with Moseley Festival , with seven participating gardens. But then the Moseley Tornado hit at the end of July 2005 and so nothing happened in 2006. We started again in 2007 and 2008. Since then it has grown and developed and is now a major event in our community diary. We are sometimes asked 'when is Moseley in Bloom?', suggesting that for some people, Open Gardens **is** Moseley in Bloom. We try to tell them that we are so much more but we realise that the Open Gardens weekend is significant. That is why it would have been unacceptable to do nothing this year and so we will be Virtual.

It is never easy early in the new year to persuade people to open their gardens for the event. It's difficult to imagine a Summer garden in the depths of Winter but that is what has to happen. The core Open Gardens group of around six to eight people starts work recruiting openers until they can be confident that there will be enough to go ahead. These days 'enough' is usually 20+ gardens across the weekend. Persuading is often based on convincing people that their garden can be large or small and certainly does not have to be 'designer'. There are of course designer gardens in Moseley and we all love to see them but we also like to see the personalities stamped on gardens, the quirky features and the loving care that many put into their spaces. We also all like to look at what is behind the houses in Moseley. As well as private gardens we always like to include other



green spaces and over the years we have been joined by allotment sites, the Moor Green Centre at Moseley Hall Hospital, the Dovecote, two care homes, Moseley Park and Pool, Moseley Tennis Club and St Mary's Church.

We also have to ensure that we can make a manageable and realistic garden trail, that is more or less walkable. Occasionally, a garden is offered that is too far out for people to get to. However, in recent years, the amazing Moseley in Bloom Bus has been introduced and after initial glitches, it now makes the journey round the gardens possible for everyone.

In addition to the Open Gardens group of about eight people, a band of around 40 volunteers is mustered to sell entrance tickets, teas, prize draw tickets and sometimes act as additional helpers to garden openers. A complex schedule of shifts for these people is a considerable feat of organisation for the Volunteer Coordinator.

Music, art and other entertainments have become a feature in the gardens, showing off the considerable talent in Moseley. From individual instrumentalists and singers, sculptors, painters and even, one year, the Border Morris Dancers, the variety has been impressive.

And of course, there are the Teas - and the Cakes! Initially, these were organised on quite a small scale but we began to realise that they had



become an important and popular feature. We decided that all cakes should be home made and we appointed a volunteer to be solely in charge of cake organisation. What a revelation was the talent of Moseley cake makers! So talented that we assembled a selection of their recipes into a book, *Blooming Marvellous Cakes*. This has surely become a collector's item.

A few years ago, someone decided that as well as cakes, we should offer Prosecco and Pimms, always desirable in a Summer garden. This meant organising licenses for the sale of alcohol and carefully controlling where it could be sold.

It should be clear by now that Open Gardens is a considerable and complex organisational affair - all run by volunteers. Recently, we have considered the environmental impact of the event. We moved from tickets to wristbands last year, from plastic to bamboo cutlery and we would have abandoned balloons this year in favour of more reusable signs for the gardens. Open Gardens has raised important funds each year for Moseley in Bloom. The money makes the main contribution to our income and is largely used to fund the floral displays in the village. This year, donations will be voluntary and our environmental impact much less but we do hope to be back live when conditions permit.

It would be great to hear of your memories of Moseley in Bloom Open Gardens, perhaps as a garden opener, a volunteer or a visitor. We would also love to know what you think of our Virtual Open Gardens this year. Please send these comments in to our Newsletter.



If you have any horticultural or environmental stories or news to tell, please send to Carol Miller [doctorcarolmiller@gmail.com](mailto:doctorcarolmiller@gmail.com) If sending photos, please send them in the largest size possible, rather than reduced, in order to give a good quality image.