

'Alice Park Wildlife Garden'

6th February 2019

Objective: To create a self-sustaining wildlife area in and around the ponds of Alice Park

Introduction

The ponds in Alice Park were originally created as a lily pond to commemorate the brother in law of Alice, Colonel W.B. Ritchie who was a decorated officer who served in World War One and beyond.

Overview

The pond area of Alice Park has the potential, with minimal effort, to become a healthy and thriving self-sustaining ecosystem that will harbour a broad and diverse selection of species and provide a tranquil area for park users.

The ponds and surrounding hedging already harbour much wildlife even though minimal efforts have been made to sustain them. The ponds themselves have suffered from a period of neglect, in part due to many people thinking that they were leaking whereas they are not.

Frogs and herons, buzzards and many other species are regularly seen and by harnessing and nurturing some of the goodwill to Alice Park there is an opportunity, with minimal effort, to reclaim the pond area of Alice Park and to transform it into a wildlife area for the benefit of all park users.

In essence, by erecting gated fencing (running from the conifer tree to the right hand side of the bench) the grass can be planted with meadow flowers and the ponds can be planted with native pond species which will very quickly attract wildlife.

Low key signage can be placed on the gates which states that "this is a wildlife area for everyone to enjoy so we would be grateful if you would be kind enough to help us by keeping dogs on leads and both children and dogs out of the pond!".

Actions Overview

The Royal Horticultural Society recommends that certain times are best for undertaking work on wildlife ponds once the water has started to warm a little and plants have commenced growth so work needs to start in March.

Therefore, if we are to create an Alice Park Wildlife Pond, decisions need to be taken now so that certain things can happen immediately. Recommended actions are:

1. Dredge the pond. Completed;
2. Install new pump equipment to manage pond flow. Completed;
3. Hardscape the pond to allow for a range of submerged, marginal and emergent native plants to be planted. Partially completed;
4. Introduce tree trunks as a means of natural seating;
5. Plant pond with indigenous non-invasive species;
6. Plant surrounding area with meadow plants
7. Install fencing and two gates using volunteer labour and materials at cost;
8. Produce signage;
9. Agree a mowing plan with B&NES.

More detail on a number of these actions is detailed overleaf.

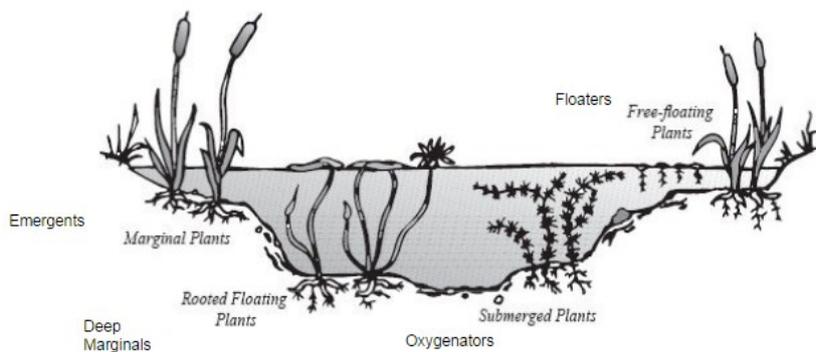
Specific Actions

Action 3: Hardscape the Pond

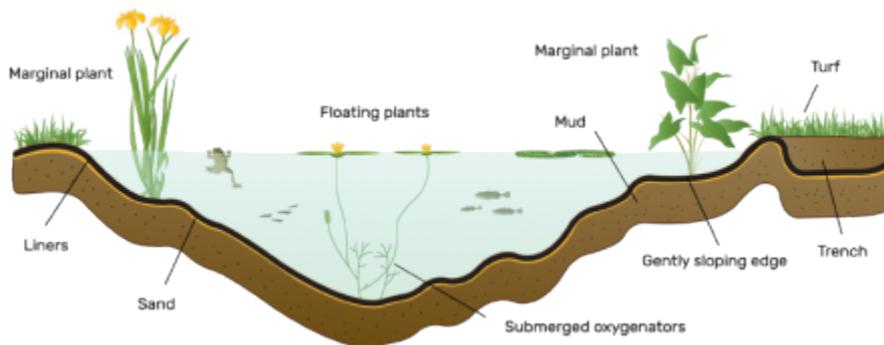
To ensure that a diversity of plants and wildlife thrive the ponds need a stepped profile as indicated in the following two diagrams. The profile at the moment is straight sided so two – three hardscaped areas are to be introduced.

This is to be done using donated materials and labour.

Four Categories of Water Plants



Source: Permaculture Research Institute



Source: Surrey Wildlife Trust

Action 4: Introduce tree trunks as natural seating

Steve Soward Tree Surgeons of Christian Malford have kindly said they will donate trunks as seating when suitable ones become available.

Action 5: Plant pond with indigenous non invasive species

Once the hardscaping is completed in March / April planting of the pond and surrounds needs to be undertaken.

Where appropriate plants will be planted in pond baskets to stop spread.

In the top or small pond the idea is to plant this with narrow or small reed mace so that the top pond acts as a natural filtration system for the bottom two ponds. An additional benefit is that the mace will provide the fish already in the pond with somewhere to hide from the herons!)

In the lower two ponds planting will comprise of plants such as:

Floating Native Plants

These sit on the water surface and keep the water cool and algae growth down.

- Frogbit
- Water soldier
- Marsh marigold

Submerged Native Plants

These are great oxygenators and provide valuable cover for underwater creatures.

- Spiked water-milfoil
- Common spike rush
- Willow moss
- Water crowfoot

Emergent Native Plants

- Yellow iris or versicolour ray Elliot
- Purple loosestrife
- Water forget me not

In addition to planting in the pond the margins of the pond will benefit from planting and it is suggested that a mixture of carex, ferns, buddleia etc etc.

The surrounding grass will be sown with meadow flower seed.

It is requested that the Alice Park Trust contribute £300 to the cost of the purchase of plants. Labour is voluntary.

Action 7: Install Fencing

For this idea to work it is recommended that the wildlife area is fenced off to create a separate and distinct area.

This is not intended as a hard barrier up to the boundary of the park as this would entail removing hedging and plant life which rather defeats the point of creating a wildlife area.

Fencing can go up to the hedging – the natural fencing – and the gates can have signs that state “this is a wildlife area for everyone to enjoy so we would be grateful if you would be kind enough to help us by keeping dogs on leads and both children and dogs out of the pond !”.

This work needs to be undertaken in March/April.

The overall fencing length is approximately 41.5m and there are two fencing options:

- Picket and rail, 900mm high pickets (1m overall height) 75mm round top pickets with 100mm spacing

Mounted on two 50x75 eased rails, fixed to 100x100 square posts, sloping tops, postcreted 600 into ground with gravel for drainage at the bottom of the hole, spaced at 2.1m. 2 x picket gate 1200 wide, galvanised T hinges, auto latch catch, self-closing spring. Rails mounted to posts with 100mm Timberfast screws, 4 deck screws per picket mounted to rails

Materials cost: £1,375, including VAT. Labour for installation: Free !!

- Mesh and rail, the same as surrounding the play areas.

Based on a 50mm 900 high mesh which mimics the mesh around the playground, with a couple of straining wires, and with only a top rail and a fence height of 1,000mm height

Top rail: 50x75 eased rails, fixed to 100x100 square posts, sloping tops, postcreted 600 into ground with gravel for drainage at the bottom of the hole, spaced at 2.1m. 2 x picket gate 1200 wide, galvanised T hinges, auto latch catch, self-closing spring.

Rails mounted to posts with 100mm Timberfast screws, 4 deck screws per picket mounted to rails. All timber fully tanalised, end cuts treated, rails and pickets smooth planed. This amounts to a high spec long lasting fence, safe and solid.

Materials cost: £1,050, including VAT. Labour for installation: Free !!

The request is therefore that Alice Park Trust pick an option and pay for the materials and £75 for refreshments for the volunteers.

These costs are subject to variation as the costs of the materials fluctuates on a weekly basis. The intention though is to press the supplier for a discount as this is a voluntary project and in return, they will be able to place a sign on the fencing that says “fencing supplied by.....”