

Community Gardens and Orchards in BS3



September 2020

What is a Community Garden or Orchard?

It is quite difficult to define a community garden or a community orchard, but essentially it will be a small piece of land that is being tended by people who don't own it and who are working as volunteers. Often the land belongs to a large organisation (such as Bristol City Council or a commercial company) that has virtually abandoned it. Some community gardens are linked to, or are within, larger spaces, but many are situated on streets. Sometimes planting will be directly into the ground, but at other times, it will be in some form of container. Recent discussions about the establishment of Liveable Neighbourhoods (aka Healthy or Low-traffic Neighbourhoods) have enhanced the relevance of these small-scale interventions

Gardeners' motivation is often linked to a desire to make neighbourhoods more attractive to walkers and shoppers, for example, and also to promote wildlife. Less declared objectives include the establishment of circles of friends united by the shared and enjoyable experience of planting things and watching them grow. Community gardeners sometimes add seating, art work and other improvements.

Many of the community gardens and orchards in BS3 are linked to the *Blooming Bedminster* network (see www.bloomingbedminster.tumblr.com) which also includes groups such as Secret Gardens, Front Garden Award, Bedminster Patchwork, BS3 Wildlife Group and several park support organisations.

A major contribution to greenery, pedestrian pleasure and wildlife in our streets is the *Front Garden Award* which each year celebrates the efforts of several thousand local people who make their front gardens, window cills and house walls a riot of colour. This award had been going for nearly twenty years, is very popular and was first conceived as a project to encourage walking rather than taking a car on short journeys.

The first version of this audit appeared in November 2019. This second version seeks to update an evolving situation and fill in some of the gaps. The following pages comprise an alphabetic listing of known community gardens and orchards in BS3; a map showing their locations can be found at the end of this report.



ACTA Community Garden

This is next to South Street Park and is maintained by volunteers as a peaceful space for sitting and relaxing. There are wild plants here with some native plants – particularly a screen of dogwood, hawthorn, wayfaring trees, birch and ivy as well as native annuals such as forget-me-not, ox-eye daisy and perennials. Garden plants include spindle, buddleia, hebe and many others and there is a box hedge along half the boundary. There was a lot of mature ivy, but this crashed down recently and will need to be removed. The apple trees drop a lot of apples.

Ashton Drive Community Garden

This is by the railway arch on Ashton Drive. Originally a notice board was installed and later some daffodil bulbs were planted around it. A local resident admired the daffodils and said how nice it would be to sit down when coming back from shopping. This led to volunteers clearing the site of blackberry bushes, to be followed by a £615 grant from Greater Bedminster Community Partnership for a bench, plants and the material for two planters, whilst a concrete base was put in by Balfour Beatty Construction at no cost. Later further planters each



Ashton Drive Community Garden after clearing

side of a wooden bench were put together by an *Ashton Vale Together* volunteer. Locals and the *Secret Gardens* have donated small sums and plants.

Ashton Gate Triangle

Two small spaces at Toll House Court were cleared a few years ago, planted and maintained by residents of nearby Frayne and Clift Roads.

Ashton Vale Church grounds

No information supplied.

Ashton Vale Community Centre

This garden is tended by volunteers from the Community Centre in Risdale Road.

Ashton Vale Youth Club

No information supplied, but presumably this is tended by the young people who attend the club. The garden is at the front of their building and so is visible to passers by.

Bartlett's Road Railway Bridge

See Parson Street Station below.

Bedminster Business Improvement District

The BBID has supported and, along with individual traders, helps to maintain planters and hanging baskets in Bedminster's high streets.

Bedminster Station Garden Group

The group meets on the first Sunday of the month between 9.30 and 11ish for weeding and a tidy up or for new planting. No particular gardening experience is needed by volunteers and some tools are supplied. It has taken on the planting at the entrances to Bedminster Station and Victoria Park. These spaces have been transformed from mattress, needle and

bottle dumps to attractive areas to walk past or to stop and enjoy. Birds, bats, butterflies and bees seem to enjoy it all too.

Contact: phil.cass@blueyonder.co.uk

Berry Maze

The Berry Maze is a community garden situated in Brixham Road Open Space. It was established in 2017 and, as the name suggests, it is made up of many different types of berry bush including blackberries, loganberries and boysenberries. The Berry Maze is looked after by members of the nearby community.

Contact: malagocommunity@gmail.com

or visit: www.facebook.com/TheBerryMaze2017



Buttock's Rest (Ashton Vale)

Buttock's Rest, aptly named for its hillside position was a piece of waste ground full of brambles and, for some, a convenient place to discard cans and the like. Two members of *Ashton Vale Together* sought permission to tidy up this space, plant bulbs and flowers and to donate from themselves a white plastic bench with a planter fixed to each end. A few



neighbours also help to keep the weeds at bay and also pick up the odd can. At times, whilst working on the garden, passing motorists shout positive remarks from their cars. We know that passing dog walkers use it and that workers sometimes take a lunch break on the seat. We also think that this corner patch looks very much better than it did and that it is a success.

*"If up the hill you don't make it,
A rest on this seat you may take it,
You can stay for a bit, on this seat you may sit
But, remember me, I did make it."*

(A poem by Derek Woodland affixed to Buttock's Rest)



Cherry Tree Garden

This is two small patches on Philip Street that are looked after by the Patchwork Group and local residents. It is a mixture of trees, shrubs and flowers.

Contact: bemmi PATCHWORK@gmail.com

Clifton Street Patch

This is one of Patchwork's gardens created in November 2010 and situated off West Street down the side and behind the Pronto Glass building. There are shrubs, bulbs, a herb area and other perennials, and is still a work in progress.

Contact: bemmi PATCHWORK@gmail.com

Church Road Pocket Park

This is a turning off East Street. The Bedminster Business Improvement District has secured funding to establish a pocket park here, their third. Work on this started in mid-2020.

Churchlands Community Garden

This garden was created by Churchlands Road Residents in 2010 from a barren patch of tarmac with a dead rowan tree owned by the South Bristol Christian Centre. Fundraising events and donations from local traders bought shrubs and trees, a large amount of topsoil and so the tarmac was pick-axed, and the planting began. Since then, the trees have grown and get lit for Christmas and a pond has been added by enthusiastic younger members of the community. The garden is deliberately quite overgrown to encourage bees and other wildlife and the pond now has newts and other inhabitants. More recently, a 'memory' bench has been installed and dedicated to Geoffrey Tavener, a long-time community activist and Churchlands resident. The group organises clearing and weeding events usually rewarded by food and drink.



Churchlands Community Garden

Dame Emily Park Community Garden

This is a vegetable garden started in Dame Emily Park a few years ago. It is tended by members of the Dame Emily Park Project and contains seating and a table for table tennis.

Contact: dameemilypark@gmail.com

Dean Lane Patch

This was the first patch adopted by the Bedminster Patchwork Group over fifteen years ago and contains a telephone box, a bench and mosaics made by children at Holy Cross School.

Contact: bemmi PATCHWORK@gmail.com



Dean Lane Community Orchard

Started in November 2015 by Patchwork. Despite poor soil, fruit trees have flourished, along with soft fruit and flowers. Planters were added in 2017.

Contact: bemmiepatchwork@gmail.com



Starting work on Dean Lane Community Orchard

Ebenezer Gate Pocket Park

This forgotten and derelict space at 48 North Street was transformed into a 'community pocket park' in April 2016. UWE School of Architecture, Bedminster Business Improvement District, Hands On Bristol and local residents have created this space for the whole community to enjoy. The park is maintained by a team of volunteers ('Ebenezer Angels') and includes planters made from reclaimed wood constructed by Ashton Park School students and Lloyds Bank volunteers.

We have included a range of wildlife-friendly plants (some of which were donated by Riverside Garden Centre and local residents) which attract bees, butterflies and other insects – a scarlet tiger moth was spotted this summer and we have added a laminated butterfly guide for visitors to identify any butterflies that they spot. Another recent addition is a

community herb bed from which visitors can harvest herbs for their recipes at home. The park has a resident robin and a pair of breeding blackbirds nested in the elder tree this year. We have regular visits from an urban fox and have hung bird feeders in the trees. We have plans to introduce bug hotels and bird nesting boxes in the coming months.

Contact: carmelferguson@aol.com



Ebenezer Gate Pocket Park

Enterprise Allotments (BS3 5NN)

This is one of the smallest of the council-run allotment sites. The site is bordered by trees and hedges, supporting a thriving bird population, lots of insect life and native plants. We also find slow worms

and grass snakes in compost heaps and under covers. Although chemicals are not banned, tenants are encouraged to be as green and sympathetic to nature as possible.

Greville Road Boxes

In 2008, Greville Road neighbours got together to look at how they could improve the feel and 'liveability' of their street, both as a residential space and a busy thoroughfare for pedestrians. It was agreed that the main aims would be to slow or reduce car traffic and to make the street feel safer, greener and more people-friendly. With help from *Sustrans*, an ambitious plan was put together to re-design the street in a low-cost, 'DIY' way, including changing the parking layout and adding planters and seating. The group quickly found out that it was VERY difficult to make any big changes to the street but it did manage to get council permission to put in some big planters at the 'wide' end of the street onto Upton Road as a way of creating a welcoming entrance to the street, stopping traffic from speeding around the wide bend and making it safer and easier for pedestrians to cross the road. We managed to get £1000 funding from the Co-op and another £1000 from the Neighbourhood Partnership to pay for a local carpenter to build the planters and we then all got together to fill them with soil and begin planting. They have made a real difference to the street and the group has just about managed to keep them looking nice over the years. It is hoped to be able to do more to make the street greener and less of a rat-run in the future!

Hollidge Gardens Triangle

This space was cleared around ten years ago and a low wall was built. Some art work was added. However, it seems no longer to have a support group.



Marksbury Road Community Garden

This large community garden (also known as Malago Vale Community Garden) sits between Martock Road and Somermead with its entrance on the latter. It is supported by local residents and is also a focus for other community issues. See

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Malagovalegarden/>

Marksbury Road Library Community Space

The *Friends of Marksbury Road Library* would like to transform the grassed area outside the library to make it more attractive for sitting and for play. If you would like to be involved, please contact the *Friends* via the library.

Myrtle Street Community Orchard

This is Patchwork's first community orchard and was planted in March 2011 but has reduced in size as a result of the development of the new school. There is a variety of very productive fruit trees.

Contact: bemmiepatchwork@gmail.com



Myrtle Street Community Orchard

North Street Green Strip

This is a narrow strip in front of an advertising hoarding and linked to North Street Green. It is tended by the Bedminster Patchwork Group.

Contact: bemmiepatchwork@gmail.com

Mill Square Pocket Park

The Bedminster Business Improvement District funded and maintains this area and includes plant boxes, seating and art work.

Parson Street Station/Bartlett's Road Railway Bridge

Members and supporters of the *Friends of Parson Street Railway Station* manage the planting on the station platforms and roadside area, as well as the planters leading to the steps down to the nearby Bartlett's Road railway footbridge. They also litter-pick at both sites and attempt to keep graffiti at bay on the bridge. Funds for plants and tools are annually supported by the *Severn Rail Community Partnership* and a recent grant from *Bedminster Secret Gardens* was used to start an inter-generational project with a local school and retirement village. Unfortunately, the pandemic prevented the completion of this project, but it is hoped to repeat it next year.

One of the greatest challenges is that of access to water to keep plants alive during the increasingly hot summers. A generous supporter near the station gives access to water, but a chain of community water butts could make a world of difference.



Planter on Parson Street Station

South Street Patch

Created by *Patchwork* in January 2008 at the junction of South Street and North Street. It was previously covered in brambles and now has plenty of edibles – fruit trees and soft fruit as well as shrubs. It is a colourful patch that attracts wildlife.

Contact: bemmiepatchwork@gmail.com



South Street Patch

St Aldhelms Garden

There have been rumours about developing the garden around the church but it is unclear if this will actually happen.

St John's Community Orchard

Planning for this began in 2010 and the first planting was during the winter of 2010-11. There are now apples, plums, pears, quince and medlar, whilst walnuts and various fruit bushes have been added in the hedgerow. There are also woodland wildflowers. The orchard is supported by noticeboards and some seating. Regular events are held each year; children plant bulbs and the orchard is featured each year in *Art on the Hill*. Of course, additional volunteers are welcome.

Contact: Nicholas.Porter@ramboll.co.uk

or h.k.adshead@gmail.com



St Paul's Churchyard

Plans for improving this space for wildlife and as a community garden were developed in early 2020 with the aid of UWE students. However, the pandemic seems to have frustrated these developments, at least for a while.

Stackpool Road Home Zone

The home zone in Stackpool Road was created in 2006 and *Patchwork* maintains some of the beds that were included in the design. A major planting effort was made in November 2014 and is now well established.

Contact: bemmiepatchwork@gmail.com



Stackpool Road Home Zone

Upton Road Plant Boxes

As a protection to children moving across the road between the Upton Road annexe of Ashton Gate Primary School and its playground, several plant boxes that are looked after by the school have been introduced. These allow for the free movement of pedestrians and cyclists along that stretch of Upton Road, but exclude cars and lorries.

Upper Perry Hill Boxes

Plant boxes and a seat were added to Upper Perry Hill at the junction with Edgeware Road in 2015. The boxes are tended by local residents.

Victoria Park Bee Garden

Volunteers working with *Buglife*, local schools and community groups have created several pollinator beds and a flower garden within Victoria Park. The pollinator beds support bees and many other invertebrates and, less directly, predators such as birds, bats and hedgehogs. Especially in the pollinator beds, planting is restricted to native wild, mainly meadow, flowers rather than exotics. This much better meets the needs of native pollinators and has the advantage of not needing watering or weeding.

West Street Boxes and Tree Planting

Way Out West, the West Street neighbourhood group, has been working for some years to make West Street greener. With a combination of grants from the Bristol Green Capital year and the Bedminster Business Improvement District – plus a sponsored tree from Tesco – it has been possible to add four trees and several wooden planters.

Unfortunately, inconsiderate builders damaged three trees on Victor Road (the route from West Street to South Street Park), but they are soon to be replaced as a consequence of grant funding. Each planter is cared for by a local resident, and West Street traders *Jefferson Studios* and *Bristol Beds* make sure that they are watered. The Black Cat pub took on responsibility for watering the lavender which was planted by Goodgym in 2018 along the front of the Job Centre, and volunteers planted bulbs on the green at the Harptree Grove junction.



Can anybody tell us where this picture was taken?

There are a number of known community gardens in the BS3 area for which we have not been successful in getting information, despite some of these already being supporters of the **My Wild Bedminster** and **Let's Walk Bedminster** projects. We are certain that other pockets of similar activity have flown completely under our radar and that new projects will get off the ground in coming months.

Please email mywildbedminster@virginmedia.com if you can help us to fill in these gaps and also if you are able to provide details about significant changes to any of the spaces recorded here so that all these can be incorporated into the next update which is likely to be during 2021; additional pictures are especially welcome.

Thanks are due to those of you who have supplied information and photos for this 'small space directory'. Please get in touch if you would you like to help with the **My Wild Bedminster** or **Let's Walk Bedminster** projects or if you would simply like more information. This audit has been collated by Ben Barker and digitally created by Glenn Taylor.

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