

PORTISHEAD IN BLOOM OPEN GARDENS EVENT HELD ON 11TH/12TH JUNE 2011

This year was the ninth time that we have opened up the gardens of Portishead for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. Each year the event seems to gain a little more momentum and this year we were amazed at all the young families that visited the fifteen gardens. It was delightful to see and talk to so many children about gardening as well as welcoming babies in pushchairs and dogs with their owners! We were as always, in the lap of the Mother Nature as far as the weather was concerned, and after a wonderful Saturday when we had sunshine and light winds, Sunday dawned with strong winds and relentless rain which went on all day. Obviously people had taken notice of the weather forecast and had come out in their hundreds on Saturday to enjoy the gardens. We have never had a day like Sunday before when the weather had been so bad all day long. Even so, I have calculated that that we had between 700 and 800 people visiting us over the weekend as we sold nearly 600 programmes with free entry for children.

People always enjoy sitting in other people's gardens to enjoy refreshments and this year we were lucky in that we had eight different venues serving up delicious cakes and lunches. It was particularly nice to see the Windibank family extending their catering skills by offering not only home-made soup, quiches and cake but bacon butties for the early birds which went down very well. Amelia, aged 13, was in charge of the catering arrangements and we owe her and her cousins a big thank you for their wonderful efforts. Janet and Martin Gate had people queuing for tables at their garden in Woodhill Road where they were serving ploughman lunches accompanied by tea served in teapots adorned by Janet's home-knitted cosies. Molly and Colin Lewis were pleased to have the help of Pam Maund and Angela Cooper as they rushed to keep up with the demand for cream teas on Saturday. Martin and Ann Sterland offered jazz in the garden again to accompany Ann's home-made cakes in their lovely garden in Nore Road which went down very well, especially on the sunny Saturday. We were very pleased to see visitors enjoying the view from our fairly new deck suspended over our garage at No. 45 Nore Road and also to serve them refreshments and sell them plants.

Jane and Tony Pagano surprised people by offering for sale home-grown strawberries from their allotment as well as plants and books from their garden which has superb views out over the estuary.

It was lovely to hear that the 1st Portishead Scouts who joined us this year made over £1100 on their one day of opening which was luckily the sunny Saturday. The Beavers and Cub s have been developing their gardening skills at their Hut in Station Road by digging a small allotment and growing potatoes, sweet corn, radishes and mixed salad leaves. The children sowed seeds in April and May and then took them home to grow on. This resulted in many plants to sell on the day as well as providing a BBQ, refreshments and stalls. We were pleased that the Cubs and Beavers had such a good day.

It was wonderful to have Maggie & Peter Payton of Stoke Cottage, North Weston and Mike and Christine Vale of Nore Road opening up again for the second year after their gardens had completely overwhelmed visitors with their variety and beauty last year.

Carol and Denise had been working literally up to the last minute to get their garden ready in Wetlands Lane. They had gone for a total makeover and visitors were amazed and delighted to see

the wonderful raised vegetable beds which had been made entirely by Denise. The mix of vegetables with the exotic plants that had survived the winter was amazing.

People always love to see what can be done with a small garden space at Port Marine and they weren't disappointed with Ian Murphy's carefully crafted space and Marianne Warren's wrap around front garden. Ian also sold a number of lovely new books for us.

It was a real pleasure to welcome new gardeners to our event and we are grateful to Maggie Philpott who opened her garden on The Vale, our first garden in this part of the town, and Debbie & Tony Jenkins who bravely followed on from their success in the North Somerset Arts week by opening their garden for our weekend in Esplanade Road.

The Open Gardens weekend is the main fund-raising event for Portishead in Bloom and we were naturally very disappointed that Sunday was such an awful day. When we came to count up the takings however, we were very pleasantly surprised. Our income came from programme sales, refreshments at seven venues, plant sales at six venues, bucket collections, raffles, donations and book sales which amounted to £4,418.19p which was just £300 down on what we made last year when the weather was incredibly good.

A big thank you from all those people who supported our Open Gardens event.