

**Barbara and Philip Denny Trust
Patricia Stadler 5th report 6 March 2023**

Spring may arrive as the holy season, with its wreath-making and short dark days, seem to be a long way back. We finished pruning the historical wisteria, the heritage roses and the apple trees, Narcissus are showing off their blooms and the magnolias are teasing us with their about-to-burst-open buds.

Inspired by the florists of the wolves lane flower company during their talk held at Kew, senior gardener Franziska used a gutter as a vase to create fireplace garlands. Last year we made the garlands from bundles of greenery wrapped around a rope. Although festive, they dried out quickly, were labour-intensive and required a lot of material. The 'gutter' idea was a brilliant option for an indoor display as the foliage sat in water which allowed us to create voluminous and dramatic mounted pieces.



My highlight of this year's Christmas crafts was the fireplace's garlands

Maybe as a result of last year's warm weather, we underestimated the frost of December and therefore sadly lost a couple of our *echium pininana*. The short-lived perennial usually takes two years to develop its cone-like inflorescence holding a large amount of flowers and seeds. Prone to self-seeding, there is hope that more seedling will show up once the weather gets milder.



Lewis clearing a dead flower spike



Growing all of our vegetables organically, we embrace the wildlife in the garden and try to encourage and support them whenever possible. As a wildlife-friendly idea, Lucy Hart took the opportunity when our shredder broke to create dead hedges. All pruned branches are being staggered in a barrier-like manner in our woodland areas, creating ideal habits for invertebrates, birds and hedgehogs. Additionally, the hedges acted as physical barriers deterring people to walk through the beds.

A couple more examples would be:

- creating different habits, e.g. not cutting back the herbaceous borders until March
- mulching the ground to keep the soil and its microbiome healthy
- hanging up dried sunflower heads for the birds to feed on



Sunflower seed heads harvested and dried in October

Each year, a set amount of the budget is spent on buying bulbs to be planted around the palace grounds. Usually, the choices of bulbs and corms are narcissus and crocus as they naturalise easily. To protect the bulbs from squirrels, we covered the areas with branches of *Berberis*. The method seems successful, as the spikes of the shrub discouraged them to dig up the tasty crocus corms.

Another winter job has been to coppice our hazel shrubs. Cutting them back over a rotation of 4-5 years keeps the shrub to a manageable size, with recurrent juvenile growth. The straight growing habits of the branches are ideal to be used as brushwood for wigwams and structures in the garden.

Another exciting moment of the last three months has been to obtain my PA1 and PA6 pesticide spraying certificates. Although Fulham Palace avoids any use of pesticides, I believe that 'knowledge is key'.

In February, I had the opportunity to spend one week at Chelsea Physic Garden as part of an exchange organised with one of their trainees. It was extremely valuable to be involved in a different botanical garden and to get introduced to their plant collection.

I am very grateful for all the opportunities that the apprenticeship offers, thanks to the precious support of Barbara and Philip Denny Trust. The variety of tasks and networking opportunities I have had access to will be extremely valuable for my future career.

Once again, many thanks to The Barbara and Philip Denny Trust.

