

# Acocks Green Village



Have you ever thought that it would be great to mould your environment to be how you would like to it?

Well in Acocks Green, our group of volunteers has 'seized the nettle' to excuse the pun and we have used Britain in Bloom as our catalyst to do just that.

Last year, Sandy the Manager of the Acocks Green BID raised some funds from the Community First funding and we entered 'Bloom' for the first time with only a couple of months to prepare. We took over two of the island beds which the council were going to cover over.

The theme for 2012 was sowing wild flowers and plants with single flowers to help our ailing bee population and, with this in mind, we planted perennials and annuals which had the desired effect. We also planted anywhere that the council did not.

Bloom is not just about flowers, it is about pride of place and we quickly communicated with anyone who could help us with our aims: Local councillor John O'Shea liaised with the council to repair the wall on the



Oxford Road - before



after

corner of Woodcock Lane which had been in a damaged state for a long time.

We contacted Countrywide who repaired the wall which had fallen down by Dixons and they obliged us also by stripping out the wall at the top of Oxford Road which

had been a dumping site for all manner of items, including car parts, general bottles and cans and a futon!



Ladbroke's - before



after

We contacted Ladbroke's head office to inform them that tiles had fallen off the front of their shop and they sent out a contractor to replace them. We contacted BT to ask them to clean their phone boxes inside and out.

We gained Bronze in 2012, we now want to better this!



Mallard Close waste ground in 2012



Mallard Community Orchard in 2013

This year, we have had more time but we had a mammoth task ahead of us. Ged Hughes one of our Bloom team had contacted the managing estate agent for the derelict piece of land in Mallard Close next to Holy Souls Primary School. We thought transforming this would be a doddle – just take off the turf, get a rotavator in and it would be done.

The rubble and dumped rubbish took months to extract. Finally, when we had dug it over many times, one of our volunteers Michael Armstrong built a round herb bed and brick edged path which we added gravel to walk on as well as around the perimeter.



Sgt Fellows presents cheque from PPA Funds

The Community Orchard fits in well with the theme for this year's Britain in Bloom - Edible Britain. London has an Edible Bus Stop, Acocks Green has an Edible shopping centre!

For the fruit trees and all other items, we were fortunate to obtain funds from the Police Property Act and a cheque was presented to us by Sergeant Mark Fellows. We held a 'Big Dig' event here in March when we received some fruit trees and a 'jam hedge' from Food Forest Brum and our local 'Poundstretcher' shop also supplied another fruit tree.

The local Weatherspoon's pub 'The Spread Eagle' and the 'Swan Trio' shop supplied us with ample refreshments and we planted our first fruit trees at the event, in spite of the rain.

We also held an event to herald the RHS Edible Britain 2013 launch in April when we sowed some of the free seeds supplied by the RHS together with other herbs and fruit bushes.

In July we saw the start of the painting of a mural on an adjacent wall echoing the features of the orchard including the meandering path and fruit trees. This is being painted by Hannah Brown, a pupil of the local Archbishop Ilsey school. We have been amazed at her diligence seeing her sit for hours painting every minute detail.

This has truly been a community project. Hannah has framed her mural with a huge heart.

As Mary Portas says our shopping centres are the heart of the community and give people a sense of belonging.



Preparing the ground for mixture of perenials and annuals on the Flowerbeds on Central Island.

We have now turned our attention to the main island beds, and this spring, nature has saved us some time and effort by self seeding forget me nots in one of the main island beds.



Forget-me-nots , self-seeded on Central Island



Predominant red planting around our War Memorial outside the library

The library was due to close for roof repairs but this has been delayed and therefore we have only recently put more effort into this area, planting around the war memorial.

We decided for visual appeal, we would put up hanging baskets outside the local public houses, not only brightening up the village but we feel they are good for business.



Mick hanging baskets at the Red Lion Pub



Local resident Margaret by the Welcome Sign basket

When entering any shopping centre, it has to be visually attractive to entice new people so we put in planters under the Welcome to Acocks Green signs and when entering the village from Olton, people will also see the repaired wall on the corner of Woodcock Lane with plants having a white and blue colour our statement to say that visitors are now entering Birmingham.

Last year a new project involved planting up of the raised bed on the central reservation near to Holy Souls Church. We planted cistus, lavender, aubrietia, alchemella mollis, hardy geraniums and veronica.

We received some funding from a Community First grant to purchase many of the plants.



Central reservation with raised bed in distance



Village in Bloom stall at Acocks Green Carnival, with some local supporters

We have also been involved with a table top sale at St. Mary's Church, received donations from a dentist and a public house and attended the Acocks Green Carnival where we raffled a hanging basket and promoted Britain in Bloom. People were drawn to the display of the Acocks Green Hoard and some showed interest in becoming volunteers.

Well after all this, we hope we have shown that the Acocks Green Bloom team has tried and at least partially succeeded in shaping our surroundings not only to suit our requirements but to ensure it entices people to shop in Acocks Green village.