



The
**United
Reformed
Church**



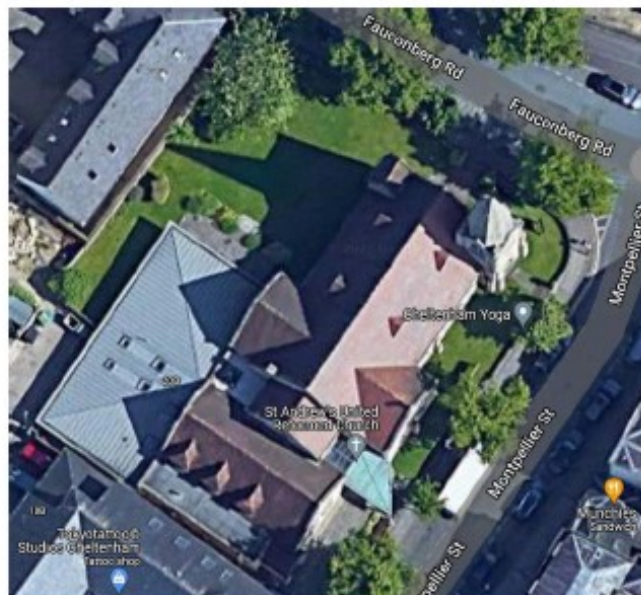
St Andrew's, Montpellier Street
Cheltenham

Psalm 23

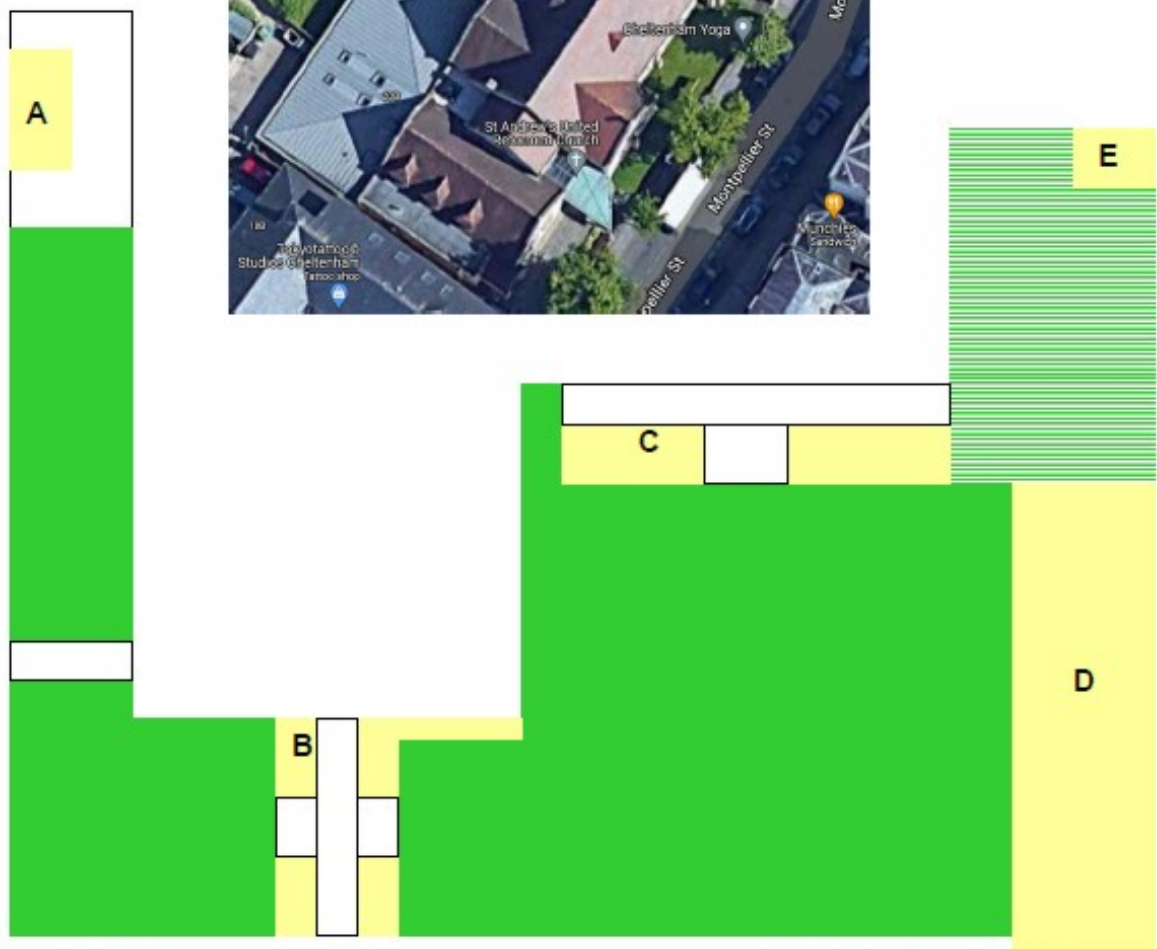
Garden Project

St Andrew's Grounds

Imagery ©2022
Getmapping plc,
Infoterra Ltd &
Bluesky, Maxar
Technologies,
Map data ©2022



Montpellier Street



Fauconberg Road

Sketch of main planting areas A-E
(not to scale)

Grass Planting area Psalm 23 garden Non grass/walkways

Why create the garden?

The Bible Society is encouraging Churches and Community groups to run with the idea of a Garden inspired by Psalm 23 and to create one of their own.

The Elders agreed that we would create such a garden here at St Andrew's. We already had the basics – grass and trees. We have added water, rocks and a sitting place, and determined how to manage the grass to create a wild area.

St Andrew's as an ECO church



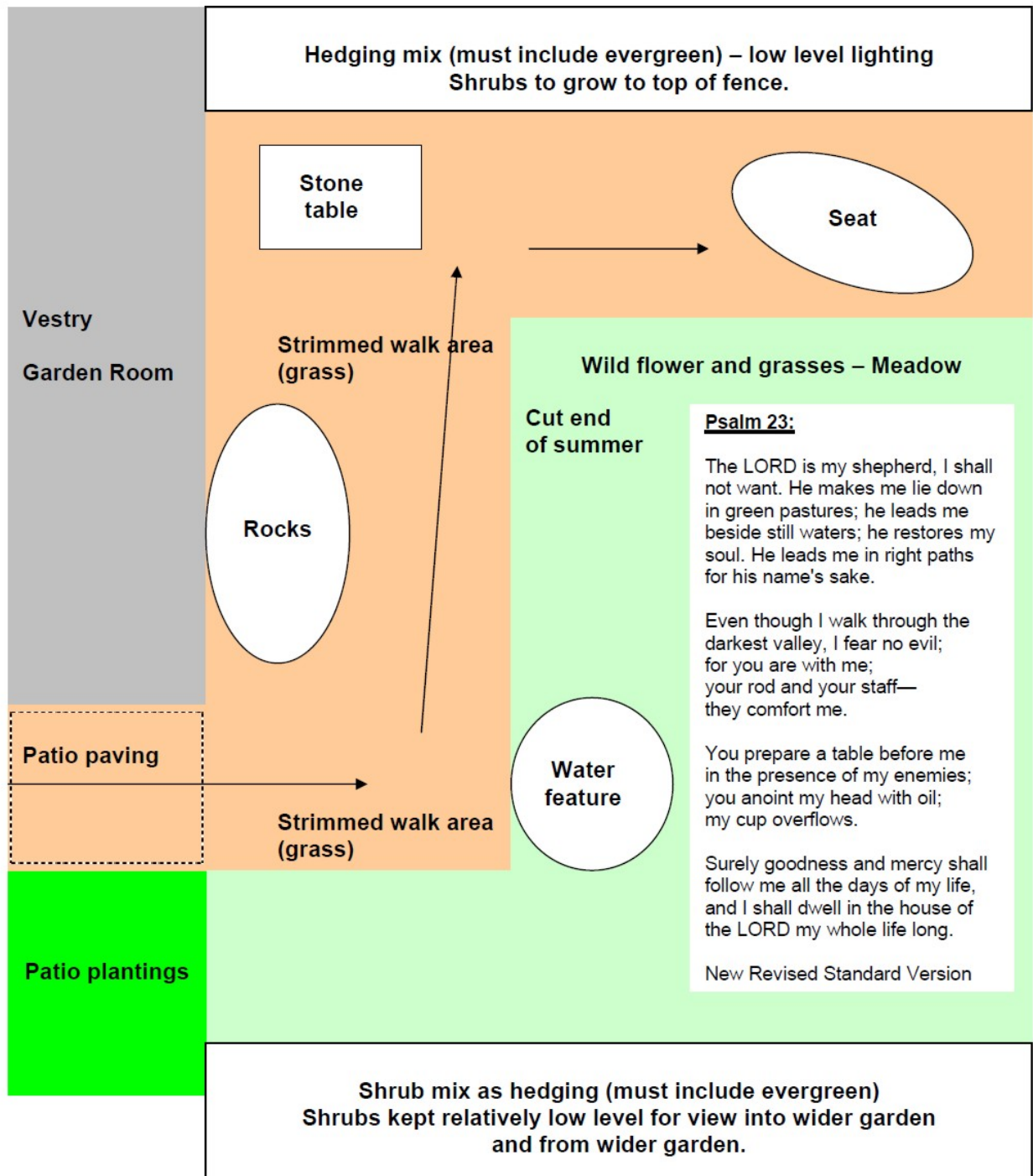
In 2011, St Andrew's took the decision to become an Eco church, part of an ecumenical programme run by A Rocha to help churches make the link between environmental issues and Christian Faith and to respond with practical action. In July 2018 we achieved our Bronze Eco Church award, followed by a silver award in December 2019 and we are now working towards gold.

The Psalm 23 Garden is an important part of *'Going for Gold'*

Looking at the design

Schematic diagram of layout proposals (not to scale or shape)

Meadow area has maximum protection from people walking across or into it (to preserve wild flowers). Plenty of walking/access space and easy access to seat.
Can sit and contemplate elements of the garden.



The words of the Psalm

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow
me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell
in the house of the LORD my whole life
long.

New Revised Standard Version

Interpreting the Psalm

Psalm 23 is the best known of the ancient sacred songs of the Jewish people. It has all human experience reflected in it and the Garden will present this.

Peace, tranquillity and security

*Natural path, meadow, growing grass
and flowers, water*

Hard times - “Darkest Valley”, evil, enemies

Rocks, reclaimed masonry blocks

Restoration, comfort, goodness and mercy

*The Garden Seat, plants,
flowers and wildlife habitat*

Final promise – “Cup overflows” “Dwell in the house of the Lord all life long”

*Flat reclaimed masonry rock table
The Whole Garden Experience*

Visitors are invited to take time out in the Garden to rest, to benefit from the sights and sounds of nature and to be uplifted spiritually.

Our starting point



There are two shrubs already growing in the area which will be incorporated. We assembled the old masonry stones.



© Sandra Jeans

The Garden in June



Looking into the garden area



Looking down from the top corner.



Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*)



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We will be planting native species with value to wildlife

Blended hedging



Honeysuckle



Dogwood



Rose Hip



Spindle

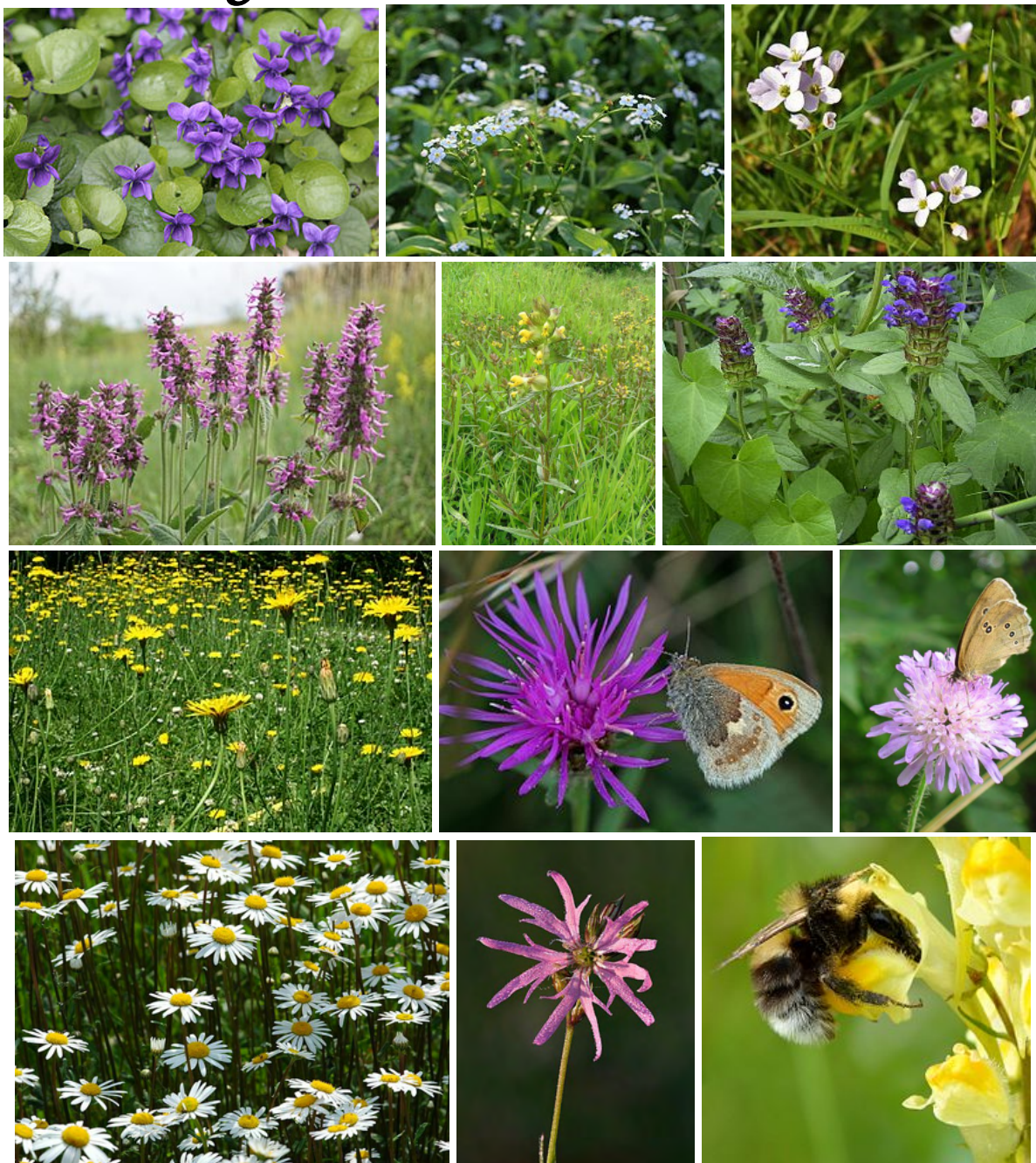


Hawthorn



English Holly

What do we expect to see coming up in the meadow area by not cutting in the summer months?



Violets, Forget-me-nots, Cuckoo Flower, Betony,
Yellow Rattle, Self Heal, Common Cat's Ear,
Common Knapweed, Field Scabious, Oxeye Daisy,
Ragged Robin, Toad Flax and many more.....

Acknowledgements and references

**The Award Winning Bible Society Psalm 23
Garden design at the 2021 Chelsea Flower
Show. The actual garden is now located at a
hospice in Winchester.**

Bible Society digital image



Bible Society information on
Psalm 23 Gardens may be found at

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/psalm-23/the-garden/>

The Garden at the Chelsea Flower Show



© Julie Jefferies

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St. Andrew's web site

<http://www.urchic.org.uk/standrews.aspx>

How does our Garden grow? Now into full summer



Pyramidal orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*)



Self Heal (*Prunella vulgaris*) with buttercups



Perforate St John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)



Pellitory of the wall (*Parietaria judaica*)

Plant food for the larvae of the Red Admiral butterfly



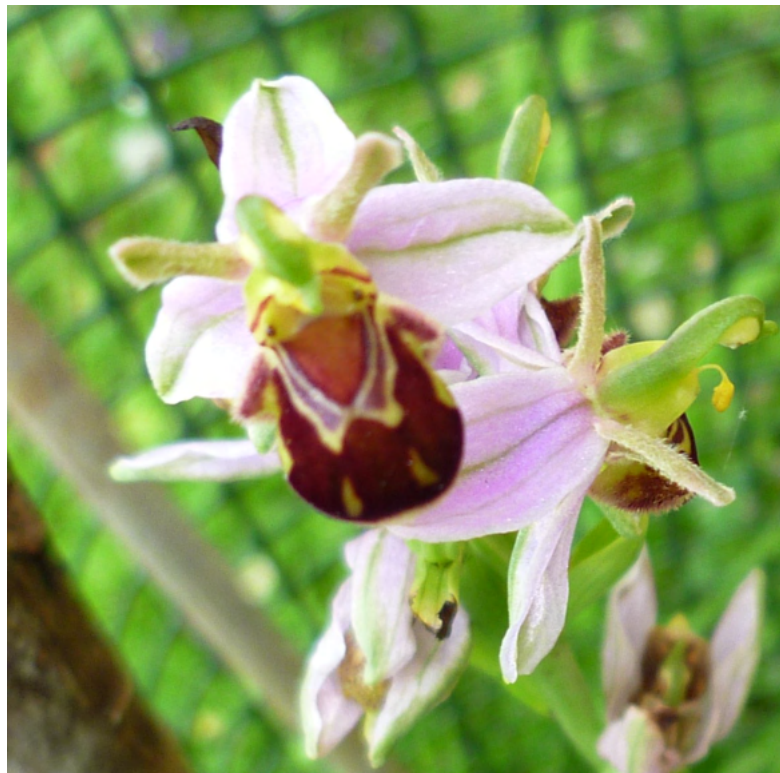
Jacob's Ladders (*Polemonium caeruleum*)



Common Mallow (*Malva sylvestris*)



Fox and Cubs (Philomela aurantiaca)



Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*)

The Bee Orchid had eight flowers on its stem.
We protective ringed it to avoid inadvertent damage.



Common Soapwort (*Saponaria officinalis*)



Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*)

Food for the Small Blue butterfly

And the welcome visitor?



Small blue butterfly (*Cupido minimus*)

**It's the smallest butterfly found in the UK.
Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
Priority Species under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.
It feeds on Bird's-foot Trefoil.**

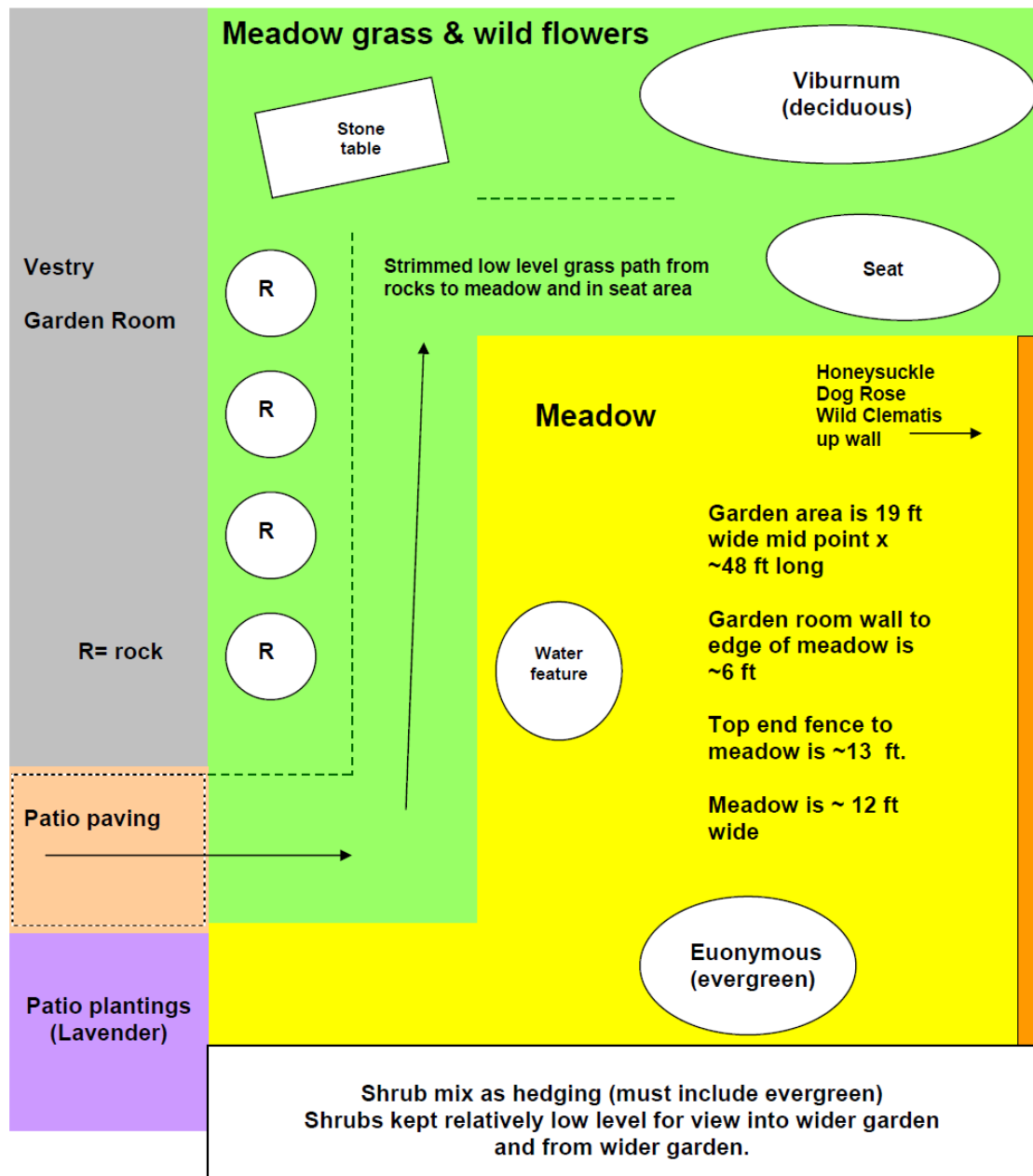
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The Plan is adapted

Schematic diagram of revision proposals (not to scale or shape)

Issues needing thought and a response:

1. The fence was found to be needing quite a lot of repair and treatment. It should be maintained regularly. It is a purpose-built fence. It requires easy access to it.
2. The Viburnum in the corner is a memorial tree to a Church Member and has been revitalised.
3. Nature has shown that the top area by the fence is perfect for species needing that particular aspect such as wild orchids. Any further planting of shrubs would change the environmental conditions. Thus introduction of hedging not a suitable plan.
4. There is a long expanse of wall which can be used for planting of suitable native climbing plants already identified as part of blended hedging varieties and support bees/other insects. Opportunity now to plant Wild Clematis (*Traveller's Joy*) which will provide winter cover and be eye-catching from Garden Room.
5. We need to increase the potential for the presence of bees and their hum. The patio garden needs the continued support and maintenance of lavender plantings being the gateway into the PS 23 garden.



Developing a sustainable wild flower meadow

As part of the A Rocha ECO church scheme, St. Andrew's is committed to developing a wild flower meadow. This is also being developed as a Psalm 23 garden to respond to the Bible Society encouragement to churches.

Whilst various physical elements have been introduced to interpret the Psalm, equally important is how this garden will be created to be sustainable.

The area has great advantages. The 18 ft of land across from the Garden Room to the brick wall has shade, semi-shade and sunny areas. This provides a really good opportunity to encourage the growth of a wide range of plants which will flower at different times of the year. It's an ideal habitat for insects, amphibians, birds and small mammals.

Already nature has responded to the first steps in the process of stopping mowing. None of us would have expected the blessing of a beautiful and relatively rare orchid only to be followed by others! To manage a piece of land as a summer flowering meadow, the grasses and wild flowers must be permitted to grow throughout the summer and cut in July/August, removing the hay crop. It should then be kept short until it is allowed to grow up the following May.

Plants which come up naturally must be encouraged to grow. Any which are introduced should be appropriate for the location. We are planting certain species gradually and we are

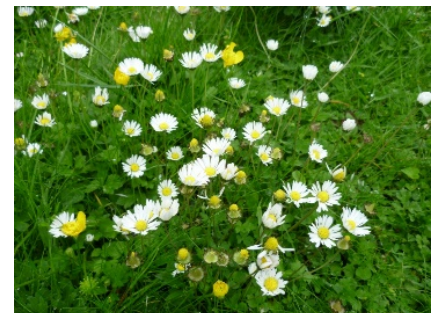
scattering seed gathered from people's own wild flowers. We are waiting to see what comes up, so it's vital that people walk only on the strimmed pathways and not the emerging meadow.

We are not rotovating the land. This would disturb the eco systems already developed in the soil. Orchids, for example, need the partnership of certain fungi and Yellow Rattle is demiparasitic and helps control excessive grass growth.

Getting the right balance of plants is going to be important for sustainability. Any species which is allowed to become dominant is going to inhibit, and even destroy, areas rich in wild flowers. We recently removed the Green Alkanet which had developed for a substantial length of the brick wall. Whilst an occasional plant is acceptable, this has encroached on the area to the detriment of other plants.

Whilst wild orchids will attract interest, equally important are other plants such as dandelions and thistles for the insect and bird life that they support, as food for larvae, for nectar and for their seeds.

The aim must be to ensure that with the minimum of intervention, the garden will be self sustaining, and a plan has been developed to ensure this.



Garden Views



Meeting the rocks and then the still waters



Greeted by wild flowers amongst the rocks



Looking back from my walk



A table is prepared before me

The gateway to the garden



Traditional lavender bushes at the patio entrance to the special Psalm 23 garden provide support for pollinators from early morning to late evening.

Setting the scene



The church flowering lawn leading to the patio gateway.



Flowers flourish in corners and across the lawn.

© Sandra Jeans

Wildflower meadows and flowering lawns

Are these different?

Yes, a **wildflower meadow**, such as that being created as a Psalm 23 Garden, is managed to allow the grasses and flowers to grow tall. It is not cut until the end of summer.



A **flowering lawn** means that by careful cutting at a high cut you can create a springy healthy lawn of grasses and low growing wildflowers, enhancing wildlife habitat and benefiting more pollinators. The lawn area at St. Andrew's has been surveyed for its nectar production again this year and has yielded an impressive July score supporting bees and other insects.

It's important to create meaningful wildlife habitat with vegetation which is at different heights. That way you increase the range of wildflowers and support a greater number of species. **Biodiversity needs diverse habitats.**

The longer grass provides winter shelter for all kinds of things, helps amphibians to breed and most important provides protective wildlife corridors. The meadows should be strimmed to avoid

compacting, and cuttings removed to minimise any enrichment of the grass to the detriment of the flowers.

The shorter lawns do not have to remain uncut, but should be mown less often. They attract clover, self-heal, bird's-foot trefoil, buttercups, speedwells and daisies. The Church lawns have been well populated with these this year. Their seeds, and those of plantain, provide food for birds such as blackbirds, pied wagtails and robins.

A pair of blackbirds were frequently present whilst working on the Psalm 23 garden, and it was with gentle exasperation that on visits we found Yellow rattle plugs we had planted pulled out – presumably seeking the insect life in the rooting systems as well as the seed sacks! This is a plant which is hemiparasitic as it acquires much of its nutrient from another plant – in this case grasses. It's a standard way of stopping dominance of grasses and encouraging varieties of wildflowers.

The RSPB has published an informative article drawing attention to the key issues of creating flowering meadows and lawns. It recommends *wait and see* approaches, and other methods to accelerate diversity of plants by use of seeding, introduction of plugs and small plants.

<https://community.rspb.org.uk/nature-on-your-doorstep/b/nature-on-your-doorstep-blog>

Article called ***“What’s living in your lawn?”*** – 10 July, 2022

The surprise in the lawn

Field Madder (*Sherardia arvensis*) is a plant not to be overlooked. It has sought sanctuary in the lawn in St. Andrew's garden. Its tiny lilac flowers may be seen in the centre of what is an amazing collection of refugees from countryside grasslands and agricultural fields. It flowers in July. It is named after the Leicestershire-born William Sherard (1659-1728), an 18th century botanist.

British agricultural practices since the 1950s have contributed to the decline of various species in our countryside. Hopefully more enlightened practices are now encouraging their re-emergence.

(Thanks to the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust for identification)



Honouring the humble plantain



Growing well in lawn edges and in meadow
providing long seed heads for birds