

# Warwick District GREEN SPACES

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## Coronavirus – Advice and Guidelines for Green Spaces

During this difficult time, we recognise the important role that our parks and open spaces can play in maintaining physical and mental health and wellbeing, particularly for those who do not have access to a garden at home. While all of our public parks and open spaces remain open at the time of publishing, we are appealing to everyone in the strongest terms to adhere to the rules stated by the government regarding social distancing.

The government states:

- stay local and use open spaces near to your home where possible – do not travel unnecessarily
- only go outside alone or with members of your own household
- keep at least 2 metres apart from anyone outside your household at all times
- gatherings of more than two in parks or other public spaces have been banned and the police will enforce this. You are however allowed to go out with your partner and children as a group provided you are in the same household.
- if you have a garden, make use of the space for exercise and fresh air
- take hygiene precautions when you are outside, and wash your hands as soon as you are back indoors

In line with the strict measures announced by the government our public toilets and tennis courts are closed until further notice and notices have been placed to prevent the use of children's playgrounds, skateparks and outdoor gym equipment.

With over 170 green spaces in our district, everyone has a park or an open space to visit within a ten minute walk of their home. So when taking your daily exercise there is no need to travel and you are strongly advised not to do so.

**When using public spaces please limit your time and be mindful of and respect the space other users.**

**Continue to check our website and social media channels for further information.**

**[www.warwickdc.gov.uk/parks](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/parks)**

APRIL 2020



## What to look out for in April



The nesting season for birds is well under way. Great tits, blue tits and long-tailed tits are rearing young and robins, song thrushes and blackbirds are fledging. Please do check any hedges or shrubs for nests before cutting them as it is an offence to disturb nesting birds!

It's breeding time in the water too; watch out for sticklebacks and newts in ponds and rivers.

The first bats are emerging from hibernation; look out for our smallest, the pipistrelle, and our largest, the noctule. Keep an eye out for some early invertebrates on foliage such as the hawthorn shield bug or green shield bug.

In the woods, you can find tides of bluebells carpeting the floor and in marshy areas, there's lady's smock (also known as the cuckoo flower), which is an important food for the caterpillars of the orange-tip and green-veined white butterflies.

In our parks, the tulips are on show at St Nick's and Jephson Gardens. Grass cutting is well under way, but grass will only be cut once daffodils and crocuses have finished flowering and the leaves have died off, enabling it to flower again next year.



## Green Space of the Month

### Mill Gardens, Leamington Spa

Mill Gardens, just across the river from Jephson Gardens in the heart of Leamington Spa, forms part of the grade II listed Spa Gardens. The Gardens, which had previously been a working mill and settlement ponds, were acquired by the Leamington Corporation in 1898. Mill Gardens were created in 1903 primarily as a play space for local children, as part of the wider Mill Improvement Scheme. The scheme included the construction of a weir, boat house, boating pool and the Mill Bridge – a suspension footbridge crossing the River Leam and connect the Gardens to the central part of Jephson Gardens. These features were all designed by Borough Engineer William de Normanville whose statue can be seen in Jephson Gardens.

The Gardens were awarded a Heritage Lottery grant in 1998. This funding allowed the Council to create better access to the river, make improvements to the boating lake, and develop a new play area. This work was completed in 2003.

The large grass area in the centre of Mill Gardens has, over the years, provided a location for winter ice skating, summer events and most recently outdoor cinema sessions. The Gardens contrast with the more formal Jephson Gardens and are very popular, providing a range of activities for children and young people. The play area could now do with refreshing, and the Green Spaces team is hoping to find a source of funding for this in the next few years.

**Postcode:** Mill Road, Leamington Spa CV31 1BA

## St Mary's Lands biodiversity improvements

Birdwatchers and wildlife enthusiasts in Warwick may have noticed a number of changes at St Mary's Lands, these have been put in place by the Green Spaces Team to attract more species and improve biodiversity in and around Warwick Racecourse.

Recent work includes the planting of native fruit bearing trees, including Elderberry, to enable birds to forage during the autumn months. In addition, two bird feeding stations have been installed - one in the reservoir and the other at the golf centre. Bird boxes have also been placed around the stables complex and two bird nesting platforms have been added.

In line with the Council's green agenda the bird platforms, or rafts, were constructed from upcycled materials including scrapped green wheelie bins, broken paving slabs and rope which had been fly tipped!

The challenge was to make the rafts suitable for coots, moorhens and little grebes. These birds use the reservoir and have bred with varied amounts of success due to the fluctuating water levels. This water is used to irrigate the race course track, during dry periods and therefore the depth can vary greatly. The nesting platforms have been positioned in areas where they will be able to move up and down with water levels keeping the nest in the water and out of reach of land based predators.

Later this spring a new bird feeding area will be seeded and in September a new wetland scape area will be completed next to the feeding area - a real treat for local bird life.



# Making the most of your own open space

If you are wondering how to enjoy fresh air and greenery while stuck at home at the moment, here are some ideas!

- Get out into the garden and tidy up all the left over debris from the autumn and winter, allowing plenty of light to get through for new shoots and spring growth
- Take 10 minutes out in your garden to stop and look around – what can you see, hear, smell and feel from one place?
- Prune any dead, dying or diseased shoots or branches from shrubs and roses, or give evergreen shrubs such as juniper and yew a prune
- Plant up any seeds you have - now is a perfect time to get green fingered and have a go at growing your own vegetables and herbs!
- Get handy with a camera and snap some lovely close ups of spring buds and blooms
- Now is a great time to get rid of any weeds before they run rampant in the summer

**And if you are stuck indoors or don't have a garden:**

- Give your windows a good clean to let as much sunlight in as possible, and keep them open for fresh air when weather permits
- Identify any trees you may be able to see from your windows – can you use the internet to identify them all?
- Water, prune and repot any houseplants that have been neglected recently
- Undertake a spring bird watch from your window, how many visit your area in an hour?
- Create a picture of a rainbow to stick in the window for passing children to smile at



## What are the Spa Gardens?

The grade II listed Spa Gardens are made up of Jephson Gardens, Mill Gardens, Pump Room Gardens, Victoria Park and Newbold Terrace East. They are a collection of parks and gardens running along the River Leam which were created between 1814 and 1903.

The Pump Room Gardens were the first to be planted, after the completion of the Royal Pump Rooms, which opened in 1814. Jephson Gardens were to follow, originating as a meadow, gardens were laid out to design by JG Jackson as Newbold Gardens, a commercial pleasure grounds. In 1846 the lease of the gardens was assigned to trustees, who improved them and opened them to the public in 1847 as Jephson Gardens (named after Dr Henry Jephson who promoted moderate diet, exercise and taking the waters). His practice attracted many people to the town.

Leamington doubled in size between 1831 and 1841, but during the mid-century growth slowed, as the fashion for spa treatments waned. In 1862, the Local Board of Health created the New River Walk to speed the flow of the sewage-laden Leam by raising and straightening its banks. The town gained borough status in 1875, and using powers granted by the 1875 Public Health Act, extended New River Walk to the Pump Room Gardens. Additional powers also enabled the acquisition of land for Victoria Park as a 'people's park'. The final component of Spa Gardens, Mill Garden, opened in 1903.



## Abbey Fields 'for our future' survey results published

Last November we invited local residents and community groups in Kenilworth to take part in an information gathering exercise for Abbey Fields.

During the five-week consultation which included seven public drop-in sessions, more than 900 people completed a survey giving their views on how they currently use the park, the features that are important to them and what improvements they would like to see in the future. The findings have now been published on the Council's website: [www.warwickdc.gov.uk](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk)



# A day **in the life** of

*Mick Hurrell, Walking for Health Leader*

## What's involved in being a 'Walking for Health' Leader?

We're trained on how to plan, set up, run and manage short, community based walks that are safe, inclusive and fun for all. At its heart, my role is to encourage people to get out together in the open air. We walk and talk. Very importantly, we share some social time together afterwards. Clarendon Park Walkers retire to the Oxford Café after each walk for a cuppa and a chat!



## How did you get involved in the programme?

In 2019 I retrained as a fitness instructor, as I was keen to get involved in developing community based outdoor activities. I discovered Walking for Health through membership of The Ramblers Association, who promote the scheme nationwide. I contacted them for more information through their website:

[www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/](http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/) and was connected to the WDC coordinator. From first contact to launching Clarendon Park Walkers took less than 3 months!

## What were your reasons for setting up the new Clarendon walking route?

I discovered that there were no Walking for Health schemes in North Leamington. The WDC team was keen to establish one and I also knew that my local surgery Clarendon Lodge had set up a Fitness Club to promote patient health. The riverside parks on our doorstep are the perfect place to enjoy our walks together!

## What advice would you give to someone interested in becoming a walks leader?

If you enjoy walking and the open air, and want to give something back to the community, just do it, you won't regret it! Leader training is free. Then you can either join one of WDC's ten existing groups, or help to set up another! Contact our local co-ordinator Jo Dagg for more details [joanna.dagg@warwickdc.gov.uk](mailto:joanna.dagg@warwickdc.gov.uk)

## Are you involved in any other projects at the moment?

Yes, 2020 is going to be very busy! I'm working with the inspirational team at Clarendon Lodge Medical Practice to establish a range of health and fitness-related activities for the local community including RunTalkRun, boxercise, circuit and chair-based exercise classes, Nordic walking and cycling clubs.

## What is your favourite time of year for exploring the district's green spaces?

I would have to say the Summer, for the long days, the colours, sounds and the sun on my face. However, I do love getting out all-year round and seeing the seasons unfurl in rain or shine!

## Which is your favourite Green Space in the district

Apart from the wonderful string of Spa Gardens through the centre of Leamington, I love Newbold Comyn. It's an exceptional open space so close to the town. I'm excited to find about how it can be developed further for outdoor recreation and a natural haven for all.

## What type of chocolate will you be indulging in over Easter?

I'm a big fan of the darkest possible chocolate (By the way, 90%+ cocoa chocolate contains antioxidants called flavonoids and is rich in minerals such as iron, magnesium and zinc). So for me, it's going to be a Montezuma's 'Absolute Black' 100% cocoa Easter egg!

To sign up to this e-newsletter, please visit:  
[www.warwickdc.gov.uk/gsnews](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/gsnews)

For more information about green spaces in Warwick District please visit:

 [greenspaces@warwickdc.gov.uk](mailto:greenspaces@warwickdc.gov.uk)

 [www.warwickdc.gov.uk/parks](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/parks)

 [WarwickDCNews](https://www.facebook.com/WarwickDCNews)

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*Joke of the Month*

*Why are people always tired in April?  
Because they've just finished a March!*



[www.warwickdc.gov.uk](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk)