

Garden Walkaround Notes 8th November 2014

Present: Tony Read, Chris Dudding, Gary Little, Cath Knight, Jane Curry, Andrew Findlay, Kay Fergusson, Brenda Peery, Alan Peery

Notes by Andrew Findlay: I have tried to record everything that was said, but I have almost certainly missed a lot of it. Corrections and further ideas are welcome.

Top Row

Main theme is blocks of Dogwood alternating with blocks of Viburnum. Underplanting is Cotoneaster and a little Periwinkle.

Problems: overshadowing by trees north of Rectory Road, Trees of Heaven reaching end of useful life, grass does not compete well with mind-your-own-business. Some inappropriate plants have self-seeded or 'escaped' from gardens. Need to hide some bins better. Lonicera outside #25 has become too large and has been scalped with a hedge-clipper as a result.

Proposals: reduce Cotoneaster significantly, plant more Dogwood (possibly with Periwinkle underneath). Remove inappropriate plants (mainly outside 22-23) and replace with plants that match the theme. Try to propagate Tree of Heaven from suckers or self-seeded specimens to use as replacements when mature trees fail. Consider suitable shrubs to hide bins, even if this would block some of the grassy areas.

Management: Cut half the Dogwoods at ankle-height each year to encourage new stems. Similarly cut Viburnum blocks very hard every 2-3 years. Keep the Cotoneaster well pruned back so it remains as ground-cover and does not compete with Dogwood. Prune Lonicera very hard aiming for new growth from a lower level to avoid need for clipping.

1-3

Main theme is large shrubs with trees over. Trees of Heaven at #1. Arelia at #3 is regenerating.

Problems: Tree of Heaven outside #1 may not last much longer. #3 needs a screen for bins.

Proposals: remove more dead wood from the Weeping Pear at #3. Use weedkiller on mind-your-own-business and re-seed with grass.

Management: Viburnum as mentioned above. There is a preference for pruning the Weeping Pears to look natural/shaggy rather than clipping them to smooth shapes.

4-8

Main theme is large blocks of shrubs, often matching on both sides of the path. Silver Birch on car-park side of path, Cornus Kousa both sides around 6/7. Some blocks of bamboo. New Viburnum Tinus at #8 now screens the bins quite well.

Problems: evergreen trees outside #5 have got very big and are crowding the house and overshadowing everything else nearby. Bamboo is damaging the path and has become very bulky. Wingnuts overshadow #8 but are legally protected so our options are very limited. Ivy has taken over some areas.

Proposals: discuss trees with June at #5, consider removing them and replanting with shrubs. Cut back the block of bamboo that is crowding the path. Remove a lot of the Ivy. Consider Periwinkle or similar ground-cover where there is currently bare earth under open shrubs, to reduce maintenance effort.

9-14

Main theme is shrubs of different sizes, some bamboo, Arelia, and one slow-growing Lawson Cypress. No large trees.

Problems: Lonicera at #9 has grown so large that it has engulfed hebe and others. It is currently clipped with a hedge-trimmer and the resulting smooth shape does not fit in well. Shrubs outside #11 have grown too large in some cases. Area in triangle beside #15's end wall is scrappy: Cotoneaster has taken the front face and the space behind is wasted. Bamboo on wall opposite #14 has become a solid block with clipped/bare sides.

Proposals: Reduce Lonicera at #9 severely and prune by hand for a smaller more natural appearance, allowing hebes etc to be seen as individual plants. Reduce Cotoneaster in triangle beside #15 almost to ground level. Clear space behind, add compost from the heap, replant with shrubs to mirror area outside #10.

15-17

No obvious theme linking the areas in front of the houses.

Problems: Several significant trees and shrubs have failed recently so this area is in need of major re-generation. NZ Broadleaf outside #17 has become too large and is dominating the corner. Ivy has become excessive. Weeping Pear outside #16 will make bin-hiding planting very difficult. Winter Jasmine outside #15 is OK when in flower, but has become thick with dead stems and is not really a 'Cedar Chase plant'. Holly and Ivy are dominating the border along the east boundary wall.

Proposals: Cut back Cotoneaster on wall by steps so that front is lower than back. Dig out stumps between #16 and #17 and clear that area completely for new planting (leaving Viburnum Davidii and Hebe outside #17). Remove Ivy. Discuss heavy pruning of NZ Broadleaf with Jon and Jane. Consider reducing Winter Jasmine significantly to allow space for new shrubs. Choose 2 or 3 different shrub types to re-plant with, and use them in groups all down the row to provide a linking theme. Consider adding one or two new Judas Trees outside #17 to link with #15. Make sure that new shrubs will not obstruct the lamp outside #17, as that is supposed to illuminate the path. Consider removing some holly from the boundary area and re-planting with lighter shrubs, possibly linking to the new planting by the houses. Flax and ferns could be used here.

Longer-Term Management

Strengthen the linking theme of planting, which has become a bit weak in some places. Avoid introducing new types of plant except as part of a major re-development of an area. Limit the number of different plants in a given area and have several plants of each type planted in groups.

Shrubs that can take it should be pruned back close to the ground every 2-3 years to maintain vigorous growth and distinct shape rather than being allowed to merge into 'hedges'.

Avoid smooth clipped shapes: prune out branches rather than clipping the outside of a shrub.

Spend more time on gardening and less on clearing leaves.

We don't need to cover every wall with greenery: the plants are supposed to complement the architecture, not hide it.

Remove the larger variety of Ivy.

What Next?

We need firm and fairly detailed proposals for the major work so that it can be costed and presented to the Committee for approval. This needs another meeting of interested people, and we should involve the gardeners (Phil Holdford) at this stage too.