



IT'S YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD - MARKING SHEET

Name of group: Riverside Naturally	Assessment date: 30th August 2021
Name of assessor: Morag Menzies	
Introduction: <p>Riverside Naturally has been going for three years, although the orchard has been going for 10 years. The group has close relations with the local community council and Stirling Council. They have their own website, which is up to date and easy to use. There are three main sections of greenspace that have been utilised, one of which is used as a Story Garden! These areas used to be shrub beds, mainly of dogwood with little diversity, and now there is a much more diverse range of plants, mostly native. They are passionate about the environment and sustainability.</p>	
Section A - Community Participation (40%)	
<p>Riverside Naturally have close links with the local community, as individuals, and through the local and community council.</p> <p>I am so impressed with the group, and their ongoing programs and events that not only benefit the immediate community but people further afield in Stirling.</p> <p>I met with Emily and Mary; their enthusiasm was infectious. The amount of groups they have visiting the site is fantastic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Riverside Primary are regular visitors and were especially so during the COP26 conference.- Riverside outdoor school group, which includes children from out with the area.- Stirling School of English, where new residents of all nationalities are shown around. <p>You can tell that everyone is welcome to join. So many people passing by said hello to me and were known and contribute to the garden.</p> <p>You can tell that community engagement and participation is very important, and the degree of thoughtfulness that has gone into communicating with people shows the importance of this non-conventional (and by that I mean lack of bedding plants) area. There are several signs telling people about how the area helps the environment, with pollinators, insects and wildlife, which is lovely to see. here are so many paths that have recently been made which are inviting, well thought out, with the reuse/recycle ethos high.</p> <p>The presence of the most up to date website I've seen in a long while is notable. The website has flyers for people to download, and in future they will have a Facebook presence.</p>	



Direct contact with end of month gatherings, where everyone is welcome to sit and have a cup of tea, or to help with anything that requires attention. There are 10 regular volunteers, with others popping in and out on a less regular basis.

Going forward, the group is keen to have work gear with their logo on it. This will not only encourage other people to ask them about what they are doing, but it also gives another sense of group/community work.

The 'ask us what we are doing', I have to say, is my favourite idea. So simple and so effective! So many more people will be encouraged to ask, and from there news travels.

Section B - Environmental Responsibility (30%)

Riverside Naturally is environment responsibility personified!

- Composting
- Deciding the correct course of action for the 'meadow area' as this area is actually quite fertile and needs thorough research into what is most fitting to grow there.
- The ongoing success of the orchard area.
- A joyous Story Garden area, thoughtfully planted (and parts left to their own devices) with the environment and the community in mind.
- A newly planted living woven willow dome, facing the water, with spectacular views from the recycled tree trunk seats.
- Assisting in the control of invasive species (Himalayan Balsam).
- Encouraging bee and insect friendly planting.
- Ongoing learning for all who participate.
- Providing free dog poo bags in the area.
- Beginnings of a successful stumpery.
- Insect hideaways, bird boxes.
- A glorious bee bank! It's the first time I've seen a bee bank in a garden area. I absolutely LOVE it.

Section C - Gardening Achievement (30%)

This is long term, environmental gardening for the area, using native plants and lots of recycled materials. It's wonderful. In particular, there are posters around the area, explaining to visitors how and why this is important. Something that left an impression on me was how the group are managing to change views of what a garden can be. I really am struck by the genuine passion about sustainability and the environment. I love that the reasoning behind this is explained fully, so it can be better understood by others.

There are a few containers with well thought out pollinator friendly perennials, herbs, and some annuals too. I think this is lovely, it's well thought out as the seating area next to the main planter has an array of smells. I think it can also be a conversation starter for pollinators, and encourages people to ask why you are actually letting more 'native wildflower/grasses' grow.

OVERALL LEVEL ACHIEVED

Level 5 - Outstanding





Areas of achievement:

- Bee bank. How fantastic to see this! I'm so impressed with the thought and knowledge of solitary bees included in your design. First one I've seen in a garden. I love it.
- Inclusive – 'ask us what we are doing?' This group wants to spread the word about environmental responsibility. Educating anyone and everyone on the benefits of this type of planting.
- Signage. Explaining the 'Why' of plants/planting. I think this is so important. People can then understand and even perhaps shift their thoughts on what makes a garden.
- Caring and involving. Some plants are donated by residents. I think this is important. It's inclusive and can spark pride, and definitely conversation.
- Experimenting with different ideas. Not being afraid to say when something isn't working and to change plans, even when funding is involved. This is impressive for any group, and something which I admire.
- Story telling at events. Getting messages over to children and adults, and learning new things, making it interesting and fun! Learning about our past relationships with plants.
- Website. It's fantastic, absolutely fantastic. Easy to find what you are looking for and very informative and up to date!

Recommendations/suggestions from your assessor:

Water harvesting in such a public area is difficult, and I understand this needs thorough research with H&S in mind. Keep thinking on it!

If at all possible, leave a few leaves on the ground at the orchard. It helps the bees and other insects.

Get going with your Facebook or other social media ideas like you mentioned. I think you could really increase your audience – in particular for events, such as the Orchard Day. Or just daily snippets of interesting info, about plants/insects!

RESULTS

Level	Description
Level 1	Establishing
Level 2	Improving
Level 3	Advancing
Level 4	Thriving
Level 5	Outstanding

