



Summer 2025

What's been growing since spring? Susan shares more about plants she's been asked about and Alison tells us who's new on the pond!

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

*Sun 13<sup>th</sup> July 11 – 3 pm **Friends at the Pond***

**BIODIVERSITY RECORDING**

*Sundays July 20<sup>th</sup> , Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> , 17<sup>th</sup> , 31<sup>st</sup> meet by Nature Pond @ 10am*

**GARDENING**

*Sun July 20<sup>th</sup> 2-4, Sat Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> 10-12, Sun Aug 17<sup>th</sup> 2-4.*

*The Mitchell Library. **Unearthed: The Power of Gardening.** Until 10th Aug.*

PHACELIA (*Phacelia tanacetifolia*)(fiddleneck) a quite stunning looking plant used here as a fast-growing ground cover and green manure. And as importantly very attractive to bumblebees, as anyone visiting the garden can't fail to notice. It was introduced from California in the 1830s.

CRIMSON CLOVER (*Trifolium incarnatum*) another cover crop and green manure. Green manures can be an alternative to well rotted garden compost or manure, some like the clover fix nitrogen in the soil, all improve its structure and fertility. They can be sown in Spring or Autumn and dug into the soil when still green.



ANGELICA (*Angelica archangelica*) Not giant hogweed, something far more benign, indeed it was known as the 'angelic plant', a remedy against many diseases. The stems can be cooked as for asparagus and the leaves used to make a tisane. But these days angelica is perhaps best known in its candied form. Candying the stems is time-consuming but the result is pretty good and works very well cooked with rhubarb. The nectar is loved by bees.

ROSES (below) FROM THE ROSE GARDEN - gorgeous images by IAN MEARNS.







Above: The photos from top show how quickly coots grow – from flame-headed fluff balls in late April to white-chested adult-sized ‘teenagers’ by 5 June (above). The devoted parents adapt and expand the family nest to accommodate their growing brood. Below and right: diligent sculpture nest coot parents caring for ever-growing juniors.



### Spring-summer ‘25 update from the QP ponds

There’s been highs, there’s been lows, there’s been masses of baby-bird cuteness. One passer-by I overheard summed spring in Queen’s Park up perfectly – ‘Wow! The wildlife here is thriving!’

On the ponds it’s been a bumper year for our fabulous coots. Twelve young have hatched across 3 nests between mid-April and mid May, and 9 have so far made it to juvenile age. This is an exceptionally good ratio compared with previous years and credit must be given to the extremely hard-working parents.

The sculpture nest site on the big pond, as always, was fiercely fought over. The victorious pair began nest building on the plinth in late February, whilst the losing pair took the unusual, but highly strategic, move of building their nest near the main footpath, claiming the iris bed as their territory as well as the boat shed end of the pond. No splitting use of the iris bed between the nests this year!

The sculpture nest was the first to hatch with first sighting on 17 April, and all 4 young were revealed by the 21<sup>st</sup> (top right). The first hatchling of the iris bed nest was sighted on 29 April, and all 5 young were first sighted on 4 May (top left).

On the QP small nature pond, one coot pair built their nest under the silver birch that fell in Storm Eowyn. Their 3 young hatched well into May, but only 1 has survived to young juvenile. Their losses may well be due to the fact the small pond has been home to four

Coots. *Collective noun: a cover or commotion of.* All photographs ©AlisonJCBrown.



nesting pairs of moorhens this year. The fallen tree, initially feared to disrupt established territories, has helped demarcate a greater number of territories across the central island. As well as being very protective of their own waters and shoreline, all moorhens have been harassed by the resident coots, which has resulted in many stand-offs and scraps on the water. Of the 3 moorhen pairs that have been witnessed to bear young, 2 pairs have successfully reared 3 youngsters out of at least 6 hatchlings to juvenile age, and their second broods have yielded at least another 6-8.

One heart-warming fact that sets moorhens apart from their coot ‘cousins’, is that the clever moorhen parents train their brown juveniles from the first nest to feed and protect their new younger siblings born of the second and subsequent nests. With a larger family of adult-sized birds to protect the teeny babies there is a greater success rate for brood two and beyond. And the brown juveniles seem relish their new-found grown-up responsibilities, fetching food and nest sitting.

And as for the ducks, well the female ducks have a hard life; they are the single mums of the pond. Many mallard mummies have had young but failed to retain them for more than a few days. Gulls, the visiting herons, magpies, crows, are all threats to a young pond bird’s life, and in truth the pond birds can all be pretty nasty to each other too. However, there has been one inspirational female mallard duck success story. On 4<sup>th</sup> May a mummy mallard appeared on the big pond with 11 ducklings! An excitable and exploring brood, she lost one a day until she realised, she and her, by then, brood of 8 could be protected if they sheltered around the big pond iris bed which was being scrupulously kept clear of predators by the hardworking female coot of the iris bed nest. Mum coot was not going to take on a hoard of 9 ducks, so she let them be. One duckling was lost in early June, but mum mallard still looks after her 7 young, who are now so grown up they are almost indistinguishable from all other adult ducks on the pond.

And though I do not want to speak too soon, this year a female tufted duck has so far retained 2 of her 8 ducklings - a first for the ponds! Mummy tufted duck’s resilience and resolve is amazing. For such a small little duck she will leap out of the water and grab a large airborne gull by its tail to get her baby back. It’s a thrill to see her succeed each day. And a thrill to see all the pond birds do so well this year in Queen’s Park.



Moorhens. *Collective noun: a plump of.* From top: photos showing the adorable teeny blue-eyebrowed and gangly-legged moorhen chicks growing up into the large light-brown, helpful-round-the-nest ‘teenagers’. All photos are of the very active breeding pairs of moorhens on the QP small pond this year.

Text and all photographs ©AlisonJCBrown.



Ducks. *Collective noun: a waddling of.* Above left: female Tufted duck with three of her ducklings when a little over 2 weeks old. Above and right: The amazing mummy mallard with her seven young.

Look out for more updates from the ponds and park on Friends of Queens Park Glasgow on Facebook!



**BROAD-LEAVED/Common Helleborine** (*Epipactis helleborine*) a native orchid just coming into flower. There can be up to 100 flowers on each spike. Some species of wasps and bees appear intoxicated after visiting the flowers, the 'alcohol' is believed to be produced by a fungus. One of the commonest and most widespread of orchids, it especially favours wasteland around Glasgow!

**Teasel** (*Dipsacus fullonum*) A plant happy in heavy moist soil. The dense prickly flowerheads last well into winter and the seeds are a favourite of goldfinches. They are made up of hundreds of tiny flowers, usually pinky-purple in colour. Among the many common names for teasel are Venus's basin probably a reference to the 'cups' created where the leaf bases join the stem and which fill with rainwater. This water was believed to be a beauty aid, but best to pick out the drowned insects first!



**Self Heal** (*Prunella vulgaris*) Excellent ground cover. Another plant happy in damp soil. In the old belief system 'the doctrine of signatures', the appearance of a plant - its resemblance to a part of the body or a medical condition - indicated how it might be used in treatment. With self heal the flower resembles a throat or (bill)hook and so was used as a gargle or mouthwash or wound dressing. Its recorded use dates back to the ancient Greeks. Friendly to bees and other beneficial insects



**Lovage** (*Levisticum officinale*) another 'not', in this case not celery which it very closely resembles. An underused herb; the leaves picked in spring or summer can be added to salads, soups or stews; like angelica the stems can be candied, or like celery blanched. The seeds too can be used in cooking. Very easy to grow. Lovage was valued across many cultures as a treatment for a variety of illnesses from nervous and digestive disorders to boils. The flowers are visited by bees. Lovage comes from southern Europe, probably Italy.

Text: Susan Readman  
Images: Peter Johnson & Ian Mearns.

FOQP want to help Queen's Park thrive. Come and join us?