

U3A Gardening group February 24 report for Forum

2024 has seen a great start for the gardening group with several new Members bringing the group total to over 100!

The group has a full programme for the year of talks and garden visits.

The February talk was the first of the year and our most popular event so far with a large turnout. Julie welcomed the new Members to the group and our speaker Keeley Metcalfe. The subject of the talk was Garden Designs for Small Gardens. Keeley has previously spoken to the group around 3 years ago but was new to most of the Members present.

Keeley trained at Leeds University in Landscape Garden Design, she was brought up near Boroughbridge and now lives near Northallerton.

Keeley told us about the stages of garden design:

Survey the site looking at soil type, drainage, aspect, existing features, boundary, views access. Consider a concept or theme for the garden, maybe a wildlife friendly garden. Start to put together a draft design and keep working on options until you have your Masterplan. Keeley uses lots of photos and plans out designs using tracing paper or greaseproof paper.

A common issue with small gardens is being overlooked by neighbouring houses and other dominant features, she suggested we overcome this by using "distraction techniques". This could involve drawing attention to another feature of the garden such as putting a bench under a tree. We could also use paving to draw the eye to different parts of the garden.

Keeley also advised using Planting Accents, for example using plants and shrubs to frame the access to a path, maybe clipped box balls. For a square garden she suggested that symmetrical planting can work well. For small gardens she suggested that we could use fake doorways and arches, consider the angle of lawns and flower beds and put larger plants towards the front of the garden. The main point was to plan the garden in advance.

This was an interesting talk which was well received by the group.

Forthcoming talks are March 1st Mr K J Vincent Chairman of the Chrysanthemums and Dahlia Society growing these flowers in containers.

On 5th April Peter Kirkland will be talking about the design and maintenance of ponds and water features.

On 3rd May we will be having our first coach trip to Holker Hall and Gardens.

Julie, Fran and Kate