



## Friends of Combe Valley – Wild-Flower Meadow

The successful planting of the wild-flower meadow was due to the generous grant from the Co-op and Co-op members, who had selected Friends of Combe Valley for the community grant.

An area of grass known as the mound was previously a pile of soil and scrapings taken from land next to the Discovery Centre to create a car park. The soil is full of stones so made planting difficult.

Earlier in 2021, when covid restrictions started to be lifted, the Friends embarked on turning this grassy mound into a meadow for all to enjoy. Grass that had been cut using scythes last year had been stored in mounds and these were cleared hoping to find bare earth underneath. Unfortunately this was not the case.

On advice we laid down thick cardboard in patches all over the site. This was then covered with a mixture of soil and sand to reduce the ph level and to add drainage. These patches were watered regularly by volunteers, initially daily but then less frequently over time. Two types of flower seed mix were used, one mainly perennial and one annual.

Meetings were held to discuss further plantings using wild-flower turf which involved removing strips of tough grass and their roots from the mound. This was an arduous task due to the nature of the hard stony ground but was completed over several sessions by the Friends conservation group.

We took delivery of the wild-flower turf on pallets. The laying of the turf was surprisingly easy and satisfying, completed in a few short hours with plenty of watering in.

The wild-flower meadow has developed well and has increased the amount of people visiting the area and enjoying the beauty of it.

The meadow has attracted many varieties of insects, including many different species of bees and butterflies.

The meadow has also been used for the first children's "I respect nature" Nature Detective session funded by Sussex Police as per the report below.

We plan to hold further children's sessions and possibly use the site for art and craft activities and are very grateful for the Co-op community grant.

Annual and perennial wild Flowers currently identified on the meadow:

Black eyed Susan, Rudbeckia Hart, Sea Holly, Eryngium, Planum, Yarrow, Schiller, Millefolium, Yellow Ox eye, Bupthalmum, Salicifolium.

Red, pink and white Poppies, Cornflower, Marigold, Red flax, Fennel, Scabious, Cosmos, Escolcia, maidenhair fern, Birds-Foot Trefoil, Greater Knapweed, Purple Loosestrife, Kidney Vetch, Viper's Bugloss, Wild Marjoram, Borage, Red Campion, Common Vetch



Hedge planting



Seed bed preparation



Bed preparation



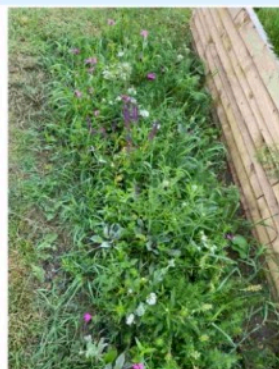
Arrival of Seed turf



New wild flower turf in place



Flower Turf by herb beds



Flower turf progressing



Corner of New Meadow



Seeded wild flowers



Bank of flowers



Escolcia



Poppies



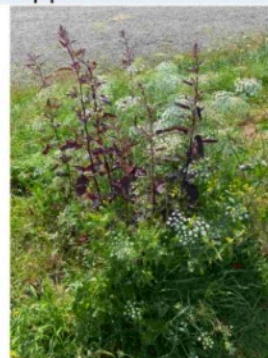
Mixed flowers



Achillea



Meadow Flower seed plot



Red Ochra (tree spinach)



## Combe Valley Nature Detectives.



respect nature - Woodland

The Friends of Combe Valley Countryside Park began running their series of free nature-focused discovery sessions for young people aged 4 to 16, commencing in the summer school holidays and continuing into autumn 2021. This has been made possible by the education fund from Sussex Police Rural Crime Unit who are keen to encourage an appreciation of local wild places and to build respect and awareness of nature and the countryside code.

The aim is to introduce young people to the incredible nature awaiting discovery in the park, including the shoreline, and to have fun whilst doing so.

The first session on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2021 was to a very great extent successful with 22 young people and their parents/guardians attending and had a focus on the nature of the local woods and meadows in Combe Valley Countryside Park, St Leonards.

We met at the Visitor Centre, Freshfields Way, St Leonards on Sea and a health and safety talk was given along with a check by the group leader that appropriate footwear and clothing was being worn along with reminders about drinking sufficient water. (Full Risk assessment was created and available to view.)

An overview of the day was given and the group of children along with their parents/guardians were led to the nearby woods. These woods had recently had been tidied up and made safe by the Friends of Combe Valley, including the removal of old tree collars and the collection of rubbish and half submerged fencing which was causing a trip hazard. Once inside the wood the group were introduced to the wonder of being calm and quiet and were able to enjoy listening to the environment around them. They were given a clipboard with identification sheets for insects, trees, leaves and butterflies. They were purposed to find and tick off items found in the vicinity in the form of a bingo card. They were also given collecting boxes with pictures of nature items to find and collect in order to discover texture, colour and smell.

The group split up and went discovering. Once completed they re-grouped and returned to the Discovery Centre with their nature finds.

A short break for drinks and a snack.

Various craft activities relating to nature were set up and the children decided on what tasks they wanted to complete.

Nature crowns using different coloured found leaves, selected herbs and flowers from the herb boxes were made and displayed.

Leaf identification dials were made.

Stencil painting of leaves, insects and flowers onto thin slivers of wood cut from fallen wood was a popular activity, these created garden hangers.

Several children and adults wandered into the recently created Friends' wild-flower meadow with flower and insect identification sheets in hand. There were many insects, including many species of butterflies and bees and a huge variety of flowers. The day culminated in the children parading their beautiful made nature crowns. The whole day allowed new experiences to be made and knowledge of plant life, insects, trees and a respect for the Environment.

All sessions followed current covid guidelines with hand washing facilities supplied outside the venue. Children were accompanied by an adult, a maximum of 3 children per adult.



Mayor with Friends



Mayor with children



Introduction talk



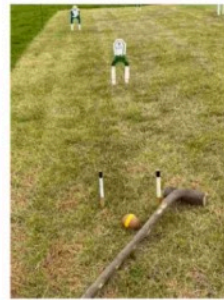
Exploring the woodland.



Book prize for Herb boxes



Washing facilities



Crazy croquet



Discovering ladybirds



Crown making



Identifying nature



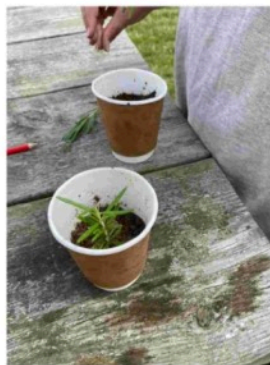
Lavender crown



More identification



Making holes for drainage.



Potting up lavender.



Exploring the wild flower meadow



Display of work



## Combe Valley Nature Detectives.



### Respect Nature-Seashore August 2021

The Friends of Combe Valley Countryside Park held the second free nature-focused discovery sessions for young people aged 4 to 16, this one based in and around the seashore.

On a glorious morning in August, twenty-one children and their parents met on the pebble beach at Glyne Gap, St Leonards to begin a morning of exploration activities including identification and Environment awareness.

The day started with an introduction including health and safety.

(A Risk assessment had previously been sent to the parents/guardians).

The group were made aware of the Seashore code before being sent out on a scavenging hunt to find and identify found items swept up onto the beach. Mermaid purses, various shells, seaweed and glass were found amongst other items. Items were shown and discussed.

Next, a search amongst the rock pools revealed a host of living fish, sea creatures and plant life. Children were encouraged to draw what they had found and any sea life to be collected in water and returned immediately after identification.

After a break for drinks and snacks the group split into two groups.

The first group were taken for a walk along the sandstone cliffs to discover a diverse community of plants including vegetated shingle, a globally rare habitat only found in a few places around the world. Many local plants and insects were discovered.

The remaining group went on a hunt for single coloured pebbles and worked together to create a lovely picture of a dolphin using white, grey and black pebbles. Another pebble picture of a starfish in the sand was created using various shades of orange/brown pebbles.

To complete the day, pieces of driftwood were decorated with paint using stencils of various seaside creatures and plant-life.

The children were given a tote bag to take away with their discoveries and work sheets.

These events could not have taken place without the support of the Friends of Combe Valley and financial support of the Sussex Police and Co-op community grants which we are very thankful for.

We hope to continue other sessions throughout the autumn and winter 2021.



Registration



Identification material



Friends support



Introduction



Scavenger hunt check-in



Scavenger finds



Preparation for pebble art



Starfish completed art



Rockpooling



Break time



Start of discovery trail



Driftwood painting



Pebble art



Finished dolphin



Starfish in making

