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Join us at our 'grand opening' and find out how the staff are using the garden to support learning within the EYFS framework in next month's issue.



Our garden is growing

In the second part of the garden makeover, Sue Cowley, Chairperson of Stanton Drew and Pensford Pre-school in Somerset, gives an update on how the build is taking shape

Last month, we planned the area, sorted out the finances and got offers to donate materials for our new garden. Now it's time for the build to get underway and all hands are on deck...

Planning the build

We divided up our makeover into two days' work. On day one (Friday), Steve Collins, our garden designer and builder, would carry out the heavy duty parts of the construction, for example, drilling holes, setting posts in concrete and erecting the fencing. On day two (Saturday), there would be a safe site for when the children, parents, staff and other volunteers arrived.

- We had various jobs planned for parents and the children, including:
- painting planter boxes before they went into the garden
 - painting the fencing and the arch
 - moving gravel – this proved very popular with the children
 - decorating pebbles with enamel paints for the garden.

The build – day one

Early on Friday morning, the garden looked a bit of a disaster area, but the donated materials were all present and correct, and Steve got straight down to work.

Steve battled on through constant drizzle during the day. His spirits were lifted by visits from committee members, staff, parents and children, coming to see how the build was going.

By the end of day one, the wooden fence and arch had been built, the oil tank trellis and gate were in place, and the willow panels had been erected along the wall by the road. Our garden area was starting to take shape.



Jack supervises Steve – 'A bit deeper with that hole, please'



Steve puts the finishing touches to the archway



Jack shifts some gravel, watched by Thom and Olivia



Laura, Lynne and Sue paint planters



Edite, Olivia, Kaitlin, Ella and Josh decorate pebbles



Our colourful planters are in place



The build – day two

To our relief, Saturday dawned bright and sunny. I arrived on site at 8am and found Steve and Mark ready to get down to work. I went inside to make drinks, while the guys got started on measuring up and constructing the planting boxes.

Soon after 10am, a steady stream of parents, carers, staff and children began to arrive. Everyone got stuck in, fortified by a constant supply of bacon sandwiches and cups of tea. Gravel was moved, planters were painted, children played and adults chatted. It was a real community effort.

While the boxes were drying, we got on with painting the fence and arch. With lots of children helping, the job was done in no time. Getting the paint out of our children's hair that evening took slightly longer!

The finished garden

By 4.30pm on Saturday afternoon, we were tidying up. Everyone agreed that we had done an amazing job, and that this was a fantastic resource for our children.

What's next?

- Even though our build is complete, there is still a lot of work to be done. We need to:
- finish sieving the donated top soil to fill the planters
 - organise the details of our 'grand opening' in a few weeks' time – we are also using this event to raise money for the pre-school
 - get an outside tap fitted
 - plan an overall design for the garden, so that we know what plants we want to go where to save time later on
 - ask the children to start planting.



End of day two and everywhere is clean and tidy

Top tips

If you are planning a garden build of your own:

- Ask around for help and donations – local people and companies were amazingly generous to us.
- Consider the impact that your build has on others. Make sure that you leave things clean and tidy.
- On the day of the build, put someone in overall charge, for example, someone to decide what colour the planters should be and so on.
- Do not make major decisions without consulting the correct people. We almost painted the fence in coloured stripes – luckily we checked first with the Hall Committee, who were not so keen!
- Remember that it is a space for your children, so involve them in planning and creating your garden.
- Consider the need for watering and long-term maintenance.
- Invite your local press to cover your story – our build was featured in the *Chew Valley Gazette*.

We have planned a trip to the garden centre with the children to spend our donated vouchers, and our shopping list is well under way. The children are already making the most of their new garden area. They have planted a variety of seeds and snails are being studied.

- With thanks to:**
- All the parents, staff, volunteers and children who helped with the build.
 - Steve Collins (email gardensbystevecollins@hotmail.com)
 - Mark Vears and Vears Ltd (www.vearsltd.co.uk)
 - R O Dando & Sons (email corinne@dando.org.uk)
 - Whitehall Garden Centre (www.whitehallgardencentre.co.uk)
 - Vears Decorating Ltd (www.vears.co.uk)
 - The Stanton Drew Parish Hall Committee
 - Manda Le Pivert and Jim Bishop (photography)

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