

June 2019

At the very end of May we had the Big Forest Find and I was able to join a walk given by Ian Beavis, curator at Tunbridge Wells museum, who showed us the huge diversity of invertebrates living in the Pinetum. Our sward management plan, which dictates that we only cut a large proportion of the grassland twice a year, leaves plenty of habitats for insects and it was enlightening to get an expert's perspective on the area. So far, we have observed and recorded 447 different species on the iNaturalist app which demonstrates that not only is the Pinetum an important home for endangered exotic conifers but also a vital environment for native flora and fauna.

As spring turned into summer there was an amazing range of flowers blooming across the site. These included: (clockwise from right) Japanese strawberry tree (*Cornus kousa*), Japanese snowbell tree (*Styrax japonicus*) and fringe tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), all producing an abundant, fragrant volume of flowers buzzing with bees.



On the Canadian west coast they refer to June as January and the heavy showers and dark afternoons were certainly reminiscent of mid-winter. The rain came as a relief though as the ground and new trees were parched from the dry start to the year. This *Acer palmatum* and *Rhododendron* however, shone through a dismal day strimming round the Pinetum.

It was exciting as well to see one of our *Wollemia nobilis* coning in this area, a sight not often seen in the Pinetum. This shows that this rare tree is enjoying its home here.





Throughout the month we kept on top of the grass to maintain the car park and concert area for the shows on the weekend of the 14th June. It was certainly surreal to see the peaceful Pinetum transformed into a festival site, and then absolutely full with people for Paul Weller on the Sunday, and other artists on Friday and Saturday.



With the volunteers, we have been working hard on the Visitor Centre beds where weeding and mulching has been the priority to get the place looking smart for the summer.



We also had a good clear out around the walkway of the play area, with volunteers Fiona and Derek getting in amongst the sweet chestnut and brambles.

