

Extra-Curricular Horticulture Club



The past academic year saw an exceptional blooming of creativity and greenery with our Horticulture Club at Banbridge Academy. Led by a talented group of Year 14 pupils - Rose Widdis, Tom Gordon-Mallory, Jenson Li, and James Dixon - the club embarked on a journey that saw the transformation of school grounds into a haven of vibrant native flora.

One of the club's most notable achievements was the creation of a wildflower meadow using native Irish seeds. The once-empty patch of land blossomed into a tapestry of colours, welcoming pollinators and wildlife alike. The wildflower seeds were sourced from a local company called 'EcoSeeds', which aims to conserve and promote biodiversity by growing and providing local provenance wildflower seeds. The aim of the wildflower project was to help conserve and enhance the local biodiversity of our school grounds by increasing the populations of native wildflower species. We selected a perennial Hi-Colour Mix of seed as these mixes last for a minimum of four years and contain a mix of 70% wildflowers with 30% fine-leaved grasses. They provide colourful, cost-effective solutions for

larger areas and can be used to create semi-permanent wildflower meadows. The mixes were designed following research conducted in conjunction with Greenmount College. We selected the enhanced mix which also includes cottage garden biennials and perennials attractive to insects. It is designed for urban areas and includes naturalised species that are attractive to wildlife.

The Horticulture Club also made good use of the school's greenhouse, turning it into a bustling hub of growth. With meticulous care, they nurtured a diverse range of flowering bedding and edible plants grown from seed. The greenhouse's shelves were lined with trays of promising potential - calendula, snapdragon, lupin, tomato, hollyhock, larkspur, campanula, night-



scented stock, and petunia - each plant representing an exciting journey from seed to full-fledged glory. This hands-on experience offered members the opportunity to learn about germination, growth patterns, and the delicate art of transplanting.

As the new academic year begins, the legacy of the Horticulture Club continues to flourish. The wildflower meadow stands as a testament to the club's commitment to sustainable practices and reminds us that with dedication and a touch of green magic, we can transform the ordinary into the extraordinary and enrich our school's environment.

Here's to another year of growth and blossoming friendships in our horticulture club.