

Green fingers lend a helping hand

Bournville Village Landscapes are busy all year round.

In summer, four teams work on the following tasks to maintain the Estate:

- Two mowing teams are grass cutting in the parks and communal areas on the Estate 17 times during the summer period.
- The other mowing team does the grass cutting at BVT's residential homes, care homes, and other lawned areas around the estate following a similar cutting frequency throughout the summer. They also do the mowing for other managed societies within BVT.
- The hedge cutting team cuts all Trust-owned hedges in parks and communal areas of the Estate and managed societies. There are about 14 miles of hedges on the Estate, which are cut two or three times a year depending on their location.
- The environmental team performs a variety of jobs including shrub



• *The BVL team work hard all year round*

pruning, weed control and litter collection. The team also carries out regular health and safety inspections of the recently opened play area on Shenley Green, and inspects and maintains the water courses on the Estate.

In addition to these four teams, the BVL tree team continue their programme of essential tree work around the Estate. The team has the following advice to offer Outlook readers who think the trees in their garden may be in need of pruning:

"It's important to get a qualified person to do your tree pruning. This is because it is quite a complex job.

Trees are grown for a variety of purposes, including for colour, shape, shade and wildlife benefits. All these requirements can be met from a single, well-chosen tree.

Before planting a tree in your garden, take into consideration the available space for both the eventual height of the tree and spread of the crown. This

information should be available either on the label or from the place where the tree was purchased.

The idea is to plant a tree that can grow to maturity with little or no pruning or surgery.

As trees age they may require attention for reasons including diseased or damaged branches, dead or dying wood, or the tree may have become too big for its location. Additionally, the top growth or crown of the tree may require thinning, lifting or reduction.

At times, branches may have grown over buildings, public roads or footpaths, and to remove them may require specialist equipment.

The safest way of pruning medium to large native trees is to employ a fully-trained tree surgeon. It's a task that is often beyond the capabilities of most people.

Pruning may involve the use of specialist tools and equipment and, depending on the work being carried out, it can involve a number of different techniques. A reputable company should be able to offer you advice and suggestions and recommend the correct works to be carried out to the tree."

Beeches reaches a proud milestone

The Beeches in Selly Oak Road, Bournville, reaches its centenary this year.

The Beeches was originally built in 1908 by George and Elizabeth Cadbury as a respite centre. Mr and Mrs Cole managed the building when it first opened. During the summer months, they provided a break for inner city

children, fed them well and let them get much-needed fresh air. By the time they left, the children were healthier and happier.

For the remaining months of the year, the Salvation Army used The Beeches building to refresh their volunteers - men and women who were working in some of Britain's most deprived areas.

During World War One, the building was used as a convalescent home for officers injured in the fighting. It was later used as a college and then the management centre for Cadburys.

One hundred years on, The Beeches is now used by the Chartridge company as a conference centre.

Best laid plans at exhibition

Every year residents get a "hands on" experience from BVT's "Better Living" Planned Maintenance exhibition. The event enables people who will be benefiting from major upgrade works in their homes to see at first hand and to touch a range of fittings and finishes they can choose from.

A key function of the Maintenance Team is ensuring customers have a range of choices and that they are supported in helping reach the right decision.

As upgrade work such as kitchen and bathroom refurbishments, re-wiring, central heating installations and roof repairs are potentially disruptive, this event also gives people the chance to meet surveyors managing the work and ask any questions they may have.

This helps ensure that stress and disruption is minimised and individual concerns are dealt with as the Maintenance Team's top priority.

Tenant participation

Two tenants from the Maintenance Panel - John Millward and Paul Billington - were chosen to form part of the team that would review the contract for the day-to-day electrical repairs contract.

Working alongside Steve Fellows and Wendy Challinton, both from BVT, John and Paul will help review this contract that is to cover the day-to-day electrical repairs for all the BVT properties excluding Telford. This requires approximately 3,000 repairs per year.

The tender was sent to five suitable companies that were recommended by the Independent Electrical Contractors Association. The team then interviewed

two contractors and team members marked them individually using a points system to identify the key areas of importance.

The contractor awarded the most points was unanimously selected by the team and they recommended to the BVT Trustees that the contract be awarded to CD Electrical Contractors Ltd.

This is one of the first maintenance contracts in which tenants have been fully involved and, owing to its success, will be followed by others in the future.



• Staff happily answered residents' queries at the planned maintenance exhibition

Congratulations!



• Mark and Sally pick up their awards

Two BVT staff were recently honoured at their graduation ceremonies.

Sally Rock, a housing officer at the Shenley Office, received a Bachelor of Arts in Professional Housing Studies (BA PHS), whilst Mark Greenwell, an invoice clerk in the Maintenance Department, received an HNC in Maintenance.

Both have worked for the Trust for a number of years, Sally joining in 2001 and Mark in 2003.

Event Alert!

Senior citizens are welcome at a Lunch Club every Wednesday at Shenley Green Centre between 12 and 1pm. A main meal, pudding and hot drink costs £2.50. If you would like further information, contact Steven Wood on 0121 475 7521.

Community halls

Several years ago, BVT undertook a survey of all the community facilities in Shenley - whether or not provided by BVT, including the church hall at St David's and the Shenley Lane sports centre.

The results revealed that several of the buildings required extensive work - especially to adhere to current disability legislation - and that they were largely under-used.

As a result, Shenley Manor Hall was demolished. Plans are now well-advanced to improve and extend Shenley Court Hall, and work is set to begin in 2009. With regard to outside work, the multi-use games area near Green Meadow Road, and shared with the school, has now been completed. This scheme incorporates a small children's play area, both hard and soft landscaping, new street furniture and lighting.