

## Process

We initially chose a rainbow theme as a symbol of inclusivity. We also wanted to include a sensory element and create an oasis for pollinators within the town of Hexham.

On beginning to think about how this would work from a planting perspective, we realised that a single bed would have to be enormous to accommodate enough planting for a rainbow effect across the seasons. We liked the idea of being able to be emersed within the

planting, as we felt this would be advantageous from a sensory perspective, so decided on two semi-circular beds facing each other, which combined would create a colour wheel. We included seating in the middle and wheelchair space so that people can linger and use the space as a restful, mindful experience. We wanted to create a space for people in the community that would be beneficial to their mental health.

We chose a hypothetical location within the town, beside the Abbey. This gave us the aspect of the beds to inform the planting design. We wanted the beds to be low enough that they could be easily viewed by all from either a sitting or standing position. We chose the shape of the beds to give maximum planting space but allow for access for wheelchairs and space for seating. These are elliptical in shape which, with the WI logo in the middle, gives an eye shape overall.

As our raised beds have curved edges, this affected our choice of material. Initially we thought about stone to match the Abbey buildings but realised that this would be prohibitively expensive. After researching other possibilities online, we decided on cut logs to soften the edges, blend with the plants and provide mini habitats for wildlife.

To encourage a range of pollinators we would include bug hotels within the garden. These would be placed amongst the planting and could be designed by local schools using recycled materials. We would also encourage schools to be involved in the development of the garden to raise awareness of the need to create spaces for nature. This would also link with the RHS campaign for school gardening.

## Planting

Plants have been chosen with the following criteria in mind:

Rainbow of colours throughout the seasons - including different colours of the same, or similar, species creates colour at the same time, but also rhythm and repetition to the planting scheme e.g. five different heuchera, each with different colour foliage and flower spikes to fit the rainbow theme are threaded through the borders.

Wildlife friendly - plants with the pollinator friendly logo have been selected, with different flower shapes and varieties that are suitable particularly for different bee populations throughout the seasons. Grasses will be left overwinter to harbour hibernating species and where the edges of the logs meet the path, the grass will be allowed to grow to further allow insects to settle.

Sensory impact - flowers with scent are included, different leaf and flower shapes and textures, grasses for movement and sound (along with the insect buzz) and herbs for taste with the strong visual impact of colour blocks.

Low maintenance - plants have been chosen which require little maintenance other than a yearly tidy up and feed. Some may benefit from deadheading, but this is not essential. Plants that still have impact as the flowers fade are included to give structural interest through the winter.

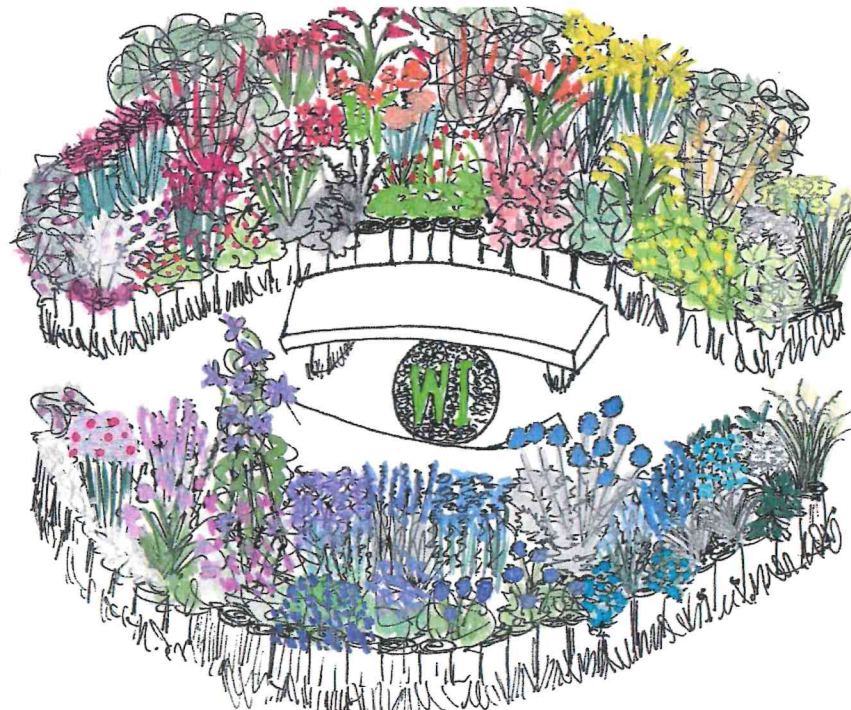
Aspect and height - the rear bed is planted with height towards the back and lower plants at the front as it is south facing. The front bed will contain lower plants overall with a few accents of height so that it doesn't block light from the opposite bed and so that the two beds are visible as a whole. Plants which prefer slightly shadier settings will be placed beside or behind taller plants.

Drought tolerant - as watering will be limited, plants have been included that will tolerate some periods of drought, although our climate in the north-east is generally cooler and damper than further south.

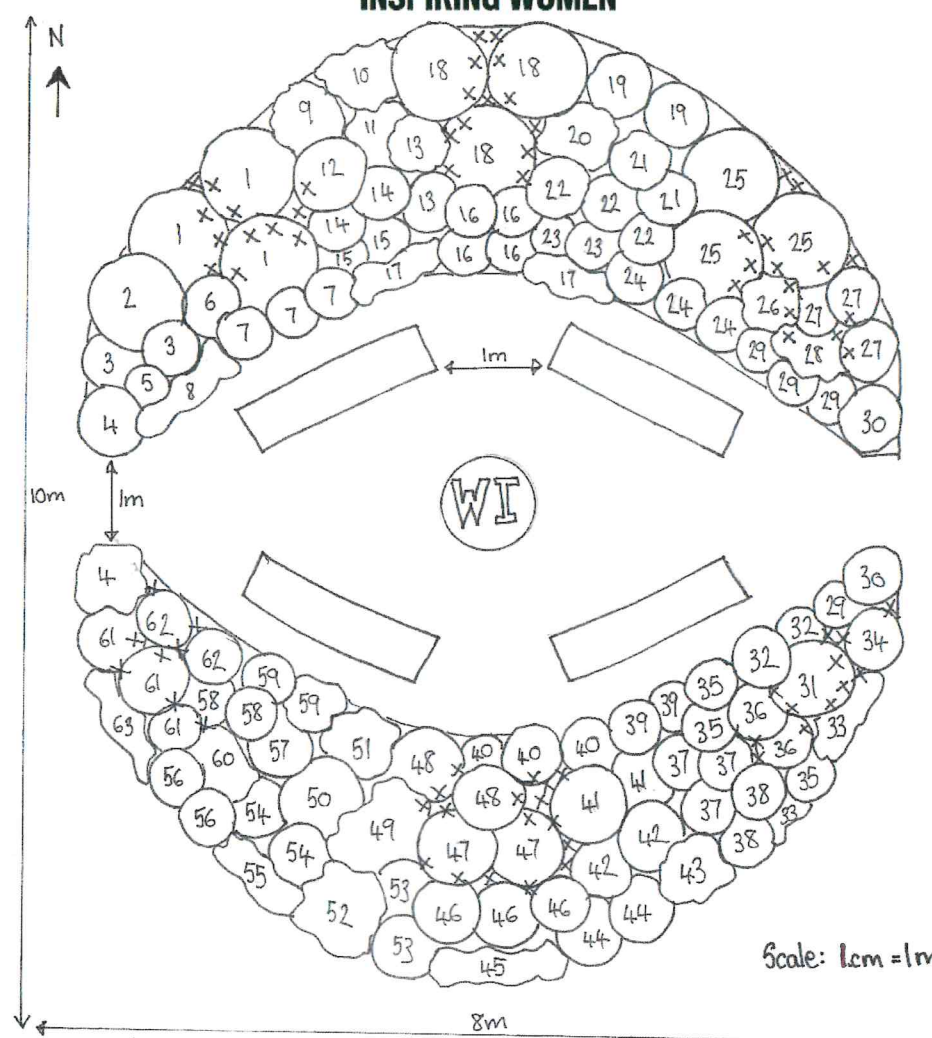
The hypothetical positioning of our bed means that it is surrounded on three sides by the walls of the abbey buildings. This will offer some protection from strong winds. However, sympathetic support structures will be placed within the bed to give extra strength. These will be made from a variety of recycled materials.

# HEXHAM RAINBOW GARDEN

An Inclusive Place for People and Pollinators



the **WI**  
INSPIRING WOMEN



## Research

There are four members from Hexham Town WI who were keen to be involved in this project. We all have gardens of our own and between us have interests in the environment, nature and general wellbeing, so we felt it was important to include these aspects in our garden to reflect us and our WI. We have met as a group regularly since February, initially by Zoom and then in person outside. After each meeting members went away to research or work on different aspects of the design and then we would meet to check progress and next steps. One member attended a short course on how to draw a planting plan. During the process we have reported back to our WI.

Plant research was carried out by different members of the team, mainly through the RHS plant finder website. We were able to search for plants by colour, season, hardiness, soil type and aspect and then check the size and spread to assist in designing the overall structure of the beds. We have packed a wide variety of different plants within the beds to give a full and exuberant effect and attract as many pollinators as possible. Some of the plants we know from our personal experience in our own gardens e.g., the Heleniums and Agastache are terrific bee magnets and so we included different varieties to create some rhythm and repetition.

## Recycling and sustainability

Our intention would be to create the garden sustainably. The logs used for the borders will gradually decompose and through this process provide habitats for wildlife. Plants would be sourced locally where possible, including taking cuttings and growing from seed in peat free compost mixes. Where plants are sourced from elsewhere, we would research nurseries where the plants are grown in peat free compost. The WI logo, central to the garden, would be created from a mosaic of recycled glass. The WI would be made from shades of green. Bug hotels would be made of recycled materials and natural objects including garden canes, clay plant pots, pinecones, dried leaves, twigs and logs with holes drilled in. Plant supports would be created from prunings such as hazel twigs, willow woven pyramid structures and reworked items such as metal clothes hangers.

### Bed 1 - Red - Orange - Yellow - Green

1. *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima'
2. *Pennisetum advena* 'Rubrum'
3. *Helenium* 'Helena Red'
4. *Knautia macedonia* 'Mars Midget'
5. *Heuchera* 'Red Lightening' (PBR)
6. *Hylotelephium* 'Purple Emperor'
7. *Geum* 'Mrs Bradshaw'
8. *Primula* 'Vallii'
9. *Heliopsis helianthoides* var. *scabra* 'Bleeding Hearts'
10. *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer'
11. *Lychnis chalcidonica*
12. *Monarda* 'Cambridge Scarlet'
13. *Helenium* 'Helena Orange'
14. *Penstemon* 'Red Riding Hood'
15. *Heuchera* 'Coral Forest'
16. *Geum* 'Totally Tangerine'
17. *Saxifraga poluanglica*
18. *Cornus sanguinea* 'Amy's Winter Orange'
19. *Heliopsis helianthoides* var. *scabra* 'Light of Loddon'
20. *Crocsmia* 'Prince of Orange'
21. *Agastache* 'Tangerine Dreams'
22. *Helenium* 'Sahin's Early'
23. *Heuchera* 'Coral Bells'
24. *Geum* 'Lady Stratheden'
25. *Cornus sericea* 'Golden Twigged'
26. *Crocsmia* 'Paul's Best Yellow'
27. *Helenium* 'Helena Gold'
28. *Doronicum orientale*
29. *Heuchera* 'Cironelle'
30. *Stipa tenuissima*

#### Bulbs

- Tulipa praestans* 'Fusilier'
- Tulipa* 'Orange Emperor'
- Crocus* 'Orange Monarch'
- Tulipa sylvestris*
- Narcissus cyclamineus* 'Tete-a-Tete'
- Crocus Chrysanthus* 'Cream Beauty'

### Bed 2 - Green - Blue - Purple - Pink

31. *Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *humilis*
32. *Hellebore* 'Green Marble'
33. *Veronica gentianoides* 'Tissington White'
34. *Penstemon humilis*
35. *Festuca glauca* 'Blaufruchs'
36. *Veronica spicata* 'Royal Candles'
37. *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue'
38. *Lavandula viridis* 'Jekka's Blue'
39. *Hellebore* 'Single Plum Purple'
40. *Scabiosa caucasica* 'Moonbeam Blue'
41. *Agastache* 'Blackadder'
42. *Phlox paniculata* 'Blue Paradise'
43. *Geranium* ROZANNE
44. *Aubrietia* 'Argenteovariegata'
45. *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Purple Treasure'
46. *Rosmarinus Officinalis* 'Roseus'
47. *Salvia* 'Officialis'
48. *Aster x frikartarii* 'Monch'
49. *Clematis viticella* 'Kiev'
50. *Geranium* 'Dreamland'
51. *Rosemary officinalis* 'Venzano Prostrate'
52. *Penstemon* 'Victoria Plum'
53. *Lavandula stoechas* 'Spring-break Princess'
54. *Thymus vulgaris*
55. *Scabiosa* 'Pink Mist'
56. *Phlox paniculata* 'Cherry pink'
57. *Agastache* 'Red Fortune'
58. *Origanum vulgare* 'Compactum'
59. *Geranium* 'Elke'
60. *Echinacea purpurea* 'Sensation Pink'
61. *Heuchera* 'Berry Smoothie'
62. *Erigeron karvinskianus*

#### Bulbs/corms

- Crocus chrysanthus* 'Cream Beauty'
- Scilla siberica*
- Crocus Tommasinianus* 'Lilac Beauty'
- Anemone blanda*
- Allium* 'Purple Sensation'
- Crocus Sieberi* 'Firefly'