

Designing the Dunoon Goes POP garden

Over tea and cake on a blustery October day in 2023, a small group gathered at the POP shop to start a new design project. Their goal? To gather ideas and work on a plan for the new flavour-filled garden for Dunoon Goes POP.

A small, sheltered and derelict space at the back of the POP shop workshops, off Hillfoot Street, was unused for many years. Large sycamores, a carpet of willowherb and brambles had reclaimed the site that once held a two-storey building that was used as a workshop and for storing timber. Thick whinstone walls that enclose two sides of the space are remnants of the old building, and two other existing buildings enclose the other sides. These walls create sheltered surroundings for an intimate walled garden.



A blank canvas

The goal of the garden design project was to work with people from our community to create a garden inspired by Dunoon's soft drinks heritage and drinks-making in Scotland. POP shop member Lynne Maclagan from Papaver Gardening led the workshops.

"Botanical flavours are fundamental to Dunoon Goes POP soft drinks and drinks-making more widely. But many traditional flavour-giving plants are overlooked and their historic origins not widely known," says Lynne.

“By creating a drinks garden filled with flavoursome plants at the POP shop, people can learn about the history of plants and how they came to be used in drinks from soft drinks to teas and liquors. Many of these heritage stories tell us about the impact of colonialism on Scotland as well as Scotland’s role in the development of the transatlantic slave routes, which brought sugar and soft drinks into Scotland and Dunoon.”

Rooted in heritage

On a visit to The Hidden Gardens in Glasgow, the group enjoyed a tour and immersed themselves in a garden designed with similar values around inclusion and community to POP shop enterprises CIC.

The Hidden Gardens is located in the southside of Glasgow behind the Tramway, and international arts venue, and the Scottish Ballet headquarters. The garden was part of a large-scale regeneration project that started in 2003, pioneered by the arts organisation NVA. Eighteen months of community consultation informed the design of ‘*Scotland’s first urban sanctuary garden dedicated to people and peace*’.

Beautifully maintained by head gardener Paula Murdoch and her small team of staff and volunteers, the garden is a series of interconnected spaces peppered with art. There is an open lawn and a medicinal herb courtyard, two spaces where they can host a range of activities including festivals, workshops and Tai Chi.

Woodland, butterfly borders, wild meadows and formal herbaceous borders with trained fruit trees all create a beautiful and wildlife-friendly garden that local people love to visit.

Paula took us on a tour of the garden, showing us how they maintain the garden for people and wildlife using a range of approaches including a dead hedge, which is made up of old branches from the garden. We also looked at the different materials used throughout the site, including metal and brick, which reflect the industrial heritage and materials used in the surrounding buildings.



Good for people and the planet

Alongside visiting gardens, we also thought about what plants we might include and how people would experience the garden. Throughout the design process, the group discussed how to create a garden sustainably and shared ideas for making space for wildlife, how to harvest rainwater, ideas for including our drinks theme and where to reuse materials.

Through sketches, mood boards, brilliantly drawn layout plans (thanks John!) and discussions, the group shared ideas that were taken on board for the final design.

Hazel, one of the group who shared their ideas and thoughts for the new design, comments:

“I loved playing a part in creating an exciting new garden space and meeting new people from the Dunoon community.

“Researching garden ideas and creating mood boards was great fun and incredibly relaxing. It was fascinating to learn about the planning behind the Hidden Gardens and to use this knowledge to inform design ideas for the new Dunoon Goes POP garden.”

A garden in progress

Several of the group have continued in our process as we started to build the first phase of the garden using reclaimed materials and growing plants from seed or planting up those we sourced from Scotland-based plant nurseries. New participants have come on board, keen to learn about creating a garden using sustainably-minded methods while helping us to turn the design into a garden.

“A garden is never finished,” says POP shop founder Hannah Clinch

“We hope to have the first phase of the garden completed by the end of this summer. We know that the new space will make a difference to our community and the development of Dunoon Goes POP as a local social enterprise.”

Why are we making a garden?

We’re making a new garden for Dunoon Goes POP, the soft drinks enterprise based at the POP shop in Dunoon. We want to bring soft drinks production back to Dunoon in a way that minimises our impact on the planet and maximises our positive impact on the community.

We’re doing this by connecting people to the fascinating heritage of soft drinks-making through practical workshops, growing ingredients and gathering local heritage stories.

Thanks to National Lottery players, we have funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund and we’re running two Dunoon Goes POP projects to help us work towards a socially enterprising approach to local soft drinks production.

This project is also supported by [Dunoon Community Development Trust](#) and [Grow Food, Grow Dunoon](#).