



Wisley's Alpine Log

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Back in Log 23 of 2008 I went off-topic a bit and described the latest findings regarding the cunning ways that pitcher plants catch their prey. Carnivorous plants have always fascinated people. Many however see them as greenhouse plants for a warm environment – perhaps because this is where they are most often displayed – and don't realise that some species are hardy and can be grown outside in the UK. Last year one of our team, Anita Drury, suggested we should build an area to demonstrate this fact. As we were considering this, we had a chance conversation with Alistair and Jenny Pearce of Southwest Carnivorous Plants during one of their visits to exhibit at a Wisley Show. They really encouraged us to go ahead with Anita's idea and said if we did, they were about to clear out some of their stock plants and offered to let us have them for free to plant in the new feature. So Anita's idea of building a new bog specifically for carnivorous plants was crystallised and she took the lead in its development.

To create the bog, we chose a pool on the Rock Garden and aimed to reduce its width on either side to create the planting areas. This was the pool we started with, shown during the process of draining it so we could start work on it:



One of our team, Peter Herman, was the main one involved in the construction side of things, helped by Rob, one of our trainees, and staff member Chris Allan. Peter used metal cages

called gabions as a basis for forming walls that would be the edge of the much-reduced pool. You can see them being put into place here:



As you observe in the picture, the gabions are next filled with rubble and old bricks. Peter then cemented paving slabs on top of them which in turn had decorative stones cemented on them.



The carnivorous plants we were going to use only need a depth of 30 cm to 40 cm of compost to grow in. The original pool was quite deep, so we first filled up much of the excess depth with gravel, visible in the above picture. At this point too much gravel had been added, so some was removed again to provide the right planting depth of compost. A membrane was put over the gravel and then a layer of sand to protect pool liners which were added before finally filling with compost. Another job Peter had to do at this stage was to cement over the walls of the gabions to provide a waterproof edge for the pool. Here Rob is helping him with the task:



You can see Chris here who is trimming off the excess liner. The bed on the far side has already been done.

The pool we are working on is the middle one of a series of three, one above the other. While Chris was trimming the liner, Peter was adjusting the outflow from the pool to try and make it look good as it falls into the pool below:



The construction work had started back in early January and we had envisaged being finished by the end of February. But the poor winter weather caused a lot of delays, so it was only last week that the construction was completed. But finally we were ready for planting:



The plants from Southwest Carnivorous Plants arrived on Monday this week and we planted them on Tuesday morning. Most of the team plus trainees got involved with this:



This, from left to right, is Lucie, Anita and trainee Suguru working on planting one bed...

...while trainees Rebecca and Chloe worked on the other side



Here we are almost done:



Looking from above gives a better view of the whole thing:



As I write, there are still just a few plants left to put in. I'll write about the plants another time, but here is a "before and after" comparison as it stands just now:

