

GARDEN WALLS – a stitch in time

Old garden and boundary walls, often built of dressed stone or old and attractively weathered brick, make a huge contribution to the special character of Montpelier.

Yet they are often taken for granted, and neglected, leading to avoidable and sometimes dangerous dilapidation, and expensive and disruptive repairs with a heavy impact on the local environment (lorries, machinery, noise, fuel consumption, obstructed roads and pavements etc).

Retaining walls, which hold back the earth on Montpelier's terraced hillside, are especially prone to collapse, because of the great weight of earth behind them.

“A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE” - WHAT YOU CAN DO :

- Keep an eye on your walls, repair and repoint when necessary (a lime mortar will usually be appropriate – take advice). When rebuilding retaining walls, leave weep holes to allow water to escape. Trapped water adds to the pressure on the wall, and if it freezes will expand with the risk of further damage.
- Do not plant trees or large shrubs close to retaining walls – as the plant grows above the ground, so do the roots below, and they will eventually push the wall outwards.
- Do not allow plants to grow in your old walls: self-seeded buddleia, valerian and ivy often take root in old walls. They may look pretty, but their roots will eventually displace mortar and pull the masonry apart. In time the weight of the plants can also pull the outer skin of the wall away. It is best to remove plants while they are still very small and can be pulled out without damaging the wall and without resorting to poisonous chemicals.
- If the plants threatening your wall are larger, you may have to use herbicide. Just cutting the plants back is not enough – the roots will continue to grow within the structure of the wall and the plants will make new shoots.

Remember:

- It is illegal to disturb birds' nests in the nesting season (March – August inclusive).
- Trees over a certain size are protected in the Conservation Area, and you need permission to work on them – you can get further information from Bristol City Council.