

news

Spring 2009

Some of the changes we see in disabled people through gardening are astonishing and sharing this knowledge is something we are passionate about at Thrive.

In this edition of *Thrive News* you'll read how we strive to reach people of all ages and constantly look for new ways to make the benefits of gardening accessible to everyone.

Our website www.thrive.org.uk has more information on our work, if you would like more information on gardening for disabled people we're only a phone call or email away. Call us on **0118 988 5688** or email info@thrive.org.uk.

We'll be pleased to hear from you and happy to help.

Sharing the benefits of gardening

All ages and abilities can benefit from a sustained and active interest in gardening. Exercise in the garden can help improve physical and mental health and many people feel better for being outdoors. The opportunity to socialise and connect with other people is also important as is a sense of purpose and achievement.

The hope that gardening can improve your life is a positive for those born with a disability, as well as those trying to cope with disability caused perhaps by an accident or an illness, such as stroke or heart disease.



"...gardening is a powerful tool. It helped me to accept the fact that I had suffered a stroke and to come to terms with it. It helped me to learn to live again." Ian

Sharing the benefits of gardening...

...with young people

M-power and a gardening and conservation course during school holidays are just two of the projects Thrive has developed to help young people. The M-power course started at the Trunkwell Garden Project in September 2007 and offers pupils, who find life and school difficult, time away from the confines of the classroom to consider what they want from life, how they might achieve their goals and to get a better understanding of themselves. Eighty per cent of the young people completed the programme, a good level of success with pupils on the brink of 'dropping out'.

Students were asked to set their own goals for the course, these included:

"I would like to be positive and try to get on with people I don't know much."

"I would like to improve my behaviour by not being rude to teachers and stay in school by not getting excluded."

"I would like to have a more positive approach."



THRIVE'S SECRET GARDEN IS A HOME FOR OUR YOUNG GARDENERS



We are also hoping to help disabled youngsters aged 11–14 during the Easter and summer school holidays. An unusual part of our plan is to offer activity weeks for disabled children to attend with their siblings, helping them to connect more and work together. The courses will include physical work in the garden and woodlands, growing vegetables, looking after plants and complementary activities such as art and games.

...and with those with learning disabilities

People with learning disabilities are set to benefit from Thrive's Grow Cook and Learn course. The principle is to literally grow the food, cook it and learn about healthy eating. Activities will include seed sowing, planting out and harvesting crops. Cookery demonstrations using a microwave will show how to make simple nutritious dishes at home from the fresh fruit and vegetables grown.



Green Circle helping older people cope with their garden at home

In the last edition of *Thrive News* we mentioned our plans to work with Hampshire County Council and help older people leaving hospital, or those in need, with some gardening. If older people feel they can cope with their garden, they are more likely to stay in their own home and live independently for longer.

This project is now called Green Circle and our plans have progressed with the recruitment of a Project Coordinator. This person will oversee the project, deliver the scheme and then work with organisations to promote the service to older people. Work to develop the scheme started in January 2009 and Thrive will coordinate the scheme across Hampshire. We have hopes of developing the initiative with councils in other areas of the country in the future and will keep you up to date on our progress.

The anxiety of living with dementia

Dementia is a cruel, progressive disease but gardening can help people in the earlier stages by stimulating positive memories, prompted by seeing a particular plant or from the smell of other plants, and by offering gentle physical exercise to relieve stress and depression. It's a disease that can affect younger as well as older people and it is estimated that 775,000 people in the UK are living with dementia.

We would like to continue offering a gardening programme for people with dementia at our Trunkwell and Battersea Garden Projects, and a recent fundraising campaign helped boost the funds available. We also hope to create an easy-to-use gardening guide for people with dementia to use at home with their carer and family, and your generous donations will go towards achieving this aim.



EILEEN HAS DEMENTIA BUT COMING TO THRIVE MADE HER SMILE

Sally Brampton: **"Gardening keeps you connected into the seasons and keeps you connected into life itself. I think that's really important if you suffer from any kind of mood disorder to have that kind of optimism, to know that there is always a future."**



SALLY BRAMPTON

Sally Brampton is a journalist and novelist, and is the founding editor of British *Elle*. She is also a depressive, and in the past has become so ill that she has twice attempted suicide. Sally wrote the book, *Shoot the Damn Dog*, a memoir of her depression.

Sally gave this interview to *The Times* in support of Thrive, and a film of the interview was shown on their website as part of the newspaper's Christmas Appeal.

"When I'm gardening the only thing I think about is gardening and I think it's what physiologists call flow – that you become completely absorbed in something that you're doing and it transcends everything, you just forget everything else.

"When you are very depressed you might be suicidal you know, which is just one of the symptoms of severe depression. I think that what a garden teaches you is that things die, but things come back, and there is always this constant cycle. It keeps you connected into the seasons and keeps you connected into life itself. I think that's really important if you suffer from any kind of mood disorder to have that

kind of optimism, to know that there is always a future.

"I just think what Thrive does is absolutely fantastic. I've always thought with Thrive that there is a feeling of real acceptance about people and their differences and it brings people together, that's just wonderful I think."



NICOLA CARRUTHERS

Nicola Carruthers, Chief Executive of Thrive, also appeared in the film and talked about how Thrive changes lives through gardening:

"We run structured horticultural therapy programmes for all kinds of people with all kinds of needs, then on top of that we have projects for people to use gardening in their own homes. So there are thousands of people who can use gardening to their benefit. Really, it's the process of gardening that helps people... if you change one life you can affect their friends, their family, their carers. Then you affect the community and you affect wider society – and that is how change happens."

If you missed the articles about Thrive in *The Times*, or if you would like to see the film of Sally's interview, visit www.timesonline.co.uk.

Sharing the benefits of gardening with stroke and heart disease patients

Ian's stroke changed his life in many ways but it was gardening that led him to a different life.

Ian was a self-employed landscape gardener, strong, healthy and working to support his young family. The effects of a severe stroke meant a three month stay in hospital and the start of a difficult journey towards recovery. Ian came to the Thrive Trunkwell Garden Project: "Before I came to Thrive I simply did not think there was any way that I could garden again with one functioning hand. Thrive treated me as an individual – not just another disabled person or stroke 'victim'. I am now a firm believer that therapy though gardening is a powerful tool."

Thrive's *gardening for hearts and minds* guide is helping many people who have had a stroke, or are living with heart disease. It is free to NHS patients in England if ordered through an NHS heart or stroke health professional. Alternatively, you can order a guide direct from Thrive for £8.99.

For more information visit www.thrive.org.uk or call us on 0118 988 5688.



Just before Christmas last year, Maggie Philbin and a team from BBC Radio Berkshire broadcast their live morning show from Thrive's national office in Beech Hill. Ian came with other Thrive gardeners and volunteers to tell listeners how gardening really can change lives.



Maggie Philbin, the show's presenter, was very impressed: **"You do such special work here, it's been a real honour to come and meet everyone and reflect some of your efforts on radio. You make a real difference to people's lives and as a keen gardener I can understand why it's so powerful!"**

Thrive and RNIB Blind Gardener of the Year winners

There can't be many 12 year olds who appear in two BBC programmes in one week, but as the Young Blind Gardener of the Year 2008, Elliott Roberts made the news.

Elliott, from Impington Village College in Cambridgeshire, had an exciting week last November when he attended the competition award ceremony in London and then gave interviews for BBC Radio 4's *In Touch* programme and CBBC's *Newsround*. Elliott has complete sight loss but loves gardening: "What I love is being out in the sunshine, and deciding what to plant where... it's not a problem I can't see... I use my memory to remember where things are."



LEFT: ELLIOTT LOVES HIS SCHOOL'S GARDEN
RIGHT: ELLIOTT WORKING IN THE GREENHOUSE

waterproof trousers" demonstrates Jean's down to earth attitude, which has helped her continue gardening despite being diagnosed with macular degeneration in 2001. Joint second prize was awarded to Elisabeth Jones from London and Andrea Gordon from Swansea.

Blind Gardening Group of the Year was won by The Meristems Garden Group from Nottinghamshire. The judges were very impressed with the group's achievements and their passion for gardening. Second prize went to The Swail Pottage Group from Surrey and third prize to The Cardiff Institute for the Blind.

Jean Harrington, 82 years and from East Sussex, won first prize for her holistic and innovative approach to gardening. Her sensible advice to "swallow one's pride and wear baggy



JEAN HARRINGTON

The next Blind Gardener of the Year Competition will run in 2009 and is supported by The National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund. If you'd like to join our mailing list to get advanced information about the competition, call Susan Twigg on 0118 988 5688 or email bgoty@thrive.org.uk

Sharing the benefits of gardening...

...with Gillian, a Thrive volunteer

Gillian volunteers each week at the Thrive Trunkwell Garden Project near Reading in Berkshire. Helping others through gardening at Thrive has motivated Gillian to train as a horticultural therapist.

The opportunity to take voluntary redundancy in 2008 allowed Gillian to apply for a place to study for the Diploma in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture that Thrive runs in partnership with Coventry University. Gillian started her studies last September and is thoroughly enjoying her new vocation.

Gillian says: "Working at Thrive enabled me to combine my passion for horticulture with the satisfaction of sharing my enjoyment of gardening with others. Helping people overcome obstacles and get enjoyment from their achievements gives me a real buzz. Each time I come to the garden my day is different. Although some of the gardeners cannot always remember the techniques I show them or the names of particular plants, they amaze me in so many different ways and I have come to expect the unexpected!"



...and with Alistair, a Thrive gardener

Brenda, Alistair's mother comments: "We have noticed such a great change in Ali since he has been to Thrive. He has learnt patience, tolerance... how to work independently, and in a group, and so much more..."



Alistair is a young man with severe communication difficulties due to autism. Horticultural therapists working with him at Thrive are however delighted to have recorded dramatic improvements in his social and life skills. He now takes part in all the project's gardening activities including sowing seeds, digging and weeding, and has learnt to use a lawn mower which was a big personal achievement. And as Brenda says, he has changed at home too, becoming calmer and able to concentrate better.



Thrive and Mr Fothergill's

Brighten up your garden next summer with a new mix of Morning Glory Hazelwood Blues from Mr Fothergill's. The seed and plant specialists are supporting Thrive by donating 25p for every pack sold.

These quality seeds give a mix of stunning half hardy annual flowers and bring together some of the loveliest blue and purple colours available in Morning Glory. Perfect for trellis and fences, these flowers are self-supporting and flower from late June through to October.

The seeds are available from good garden centres or online from Mr Fothergill's website www.mr-fothergills.co.uk.

THE TIMES

If you have bought *The Times* newspaper recently, you will have read a series of articles promoting Thrive as one of the charities to benefit from their Christmas Appeal.

Articles highlighting our work focused on people who have had a stroke or are living with heart disease, blind and partially sighted gardeners, our younger disabled gardeners and those with mental health issues. Thanks to the journalists at *The Times* and everyone who supported us. A selection of articles are on *The Times'* website www.timesonline.co.uk.



SARAH PRICE WITH HER WINNING DESIGN

Battersea update

Don't forget to visit the Thrive website www.thrive.org.uk for an update on our major redevelopment at the Battersea Garden Project.

The photo gallery and blog from garden manager, Susan Stuart, will give you all the latest news.

We have now raised an impressive £300,000 of the £765,000 needed to make our dream at Battersea a reality. The recent competition to design our new main garden was won by Sarah Price and prizes were kindly donated by shopping channel and supporters of Thrive, QVC.

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