



The Growing Space (Wincanton) Ltd
The Balsam Centre
Balsam Park
Wincanton
Somerset
BA9 9HB
Tel: (01963) 31842
E-mail: info@thegrowingspace.org.uk

Social & Therapeutic Horticulture
Community Based Education and Training in Horticulture & Gardening

Text for Bruton Community Forum 22nd.4.24

The Growing Space is a Social & Therapeutic Gardening project that forms part of the Healthy Living Centre (The Balsam Centre) in Wincanton.

We provide mood-boosting gardening activities that help lift depression, reduce anxiety, overcome learning disability, and enable people to learn new skills while benefitting from working collaboratively on projects that improve public outdoor spaces.

Activities also enable participants to gain a sense of pride through achievement and articulate what they perceive to be barriers to employment and community participation.

We work with a wide range of people and organisations within a 10-mile radius of Wincanton.

We have large greenhouses, lots of space for fruit, flowers and vegetables, and a new wildlife garden with a large pond. We engage about 50 people a year of all ages in gardening activities (from toddlers through to the more mature). We have 7 dedicated volunteers helping us to deliver therapeutic services and maintain the gardens.

Working in partnership with The Healthy Living Centre enables us to:

- work from a wide range of professionals including a volunteer coordinator, mental health workers, dementia and older persons specialists, early years and youth practitioners.
- maintain good relations with local grass-roots groups including horticultural societies, self-help groups and environmental groups. Particularly the One Planet Groups.
- work closely with local authorities and statutory bodies.
- assist and advise many local gardeners new and old on gardening methods, growing vegetables, herbs and ornamentals.

The groups and activities we currently run and will continue into the future are:

Young People and Nature

Last year we started a new project working with young adults aged 18 – 25 who are experiencing mental health problems and missed out at school and college. We provide them with meaningful activities that help them get more motivated for work and training. This has been in the Balsam Centre wildlife gardens and at local nature reserves. We will be continuing this project into the future and hope to work with local organisations and groups who have a wildlife focus.

Greenhouse and Propagation Group

This group suits people recovering from mental ill-health. We meet in a quiet, calm space on **Wednesday afternoons** in our cosy but roomy greenhouse. Participants can clearly identify goals, build confidence, add structure and stability to their week, and take advantage of the mood-boosting power of propagating and caring for plants. We focus on sowing seeds, taking cuttings and propagating vegetables and flowers.

The Compost Crew

Participants in this group help us make the compost and leafmould that feeds all the flower and vegetable gardens around the Balsam Centre. We also do other weeding, pruning, and landscaping tasks. This is an active, **all-weather group**, nothing puts us off!

Supported Gardening

If you people's confidence is lacking, they need extra help, or they're feeling a bit isolated, they can attend one of our **Tuesday** or **Wednesday** workshops. They get lots of support from our horticulture workers and are invited to set goals that help them learn and progress. The gardening choices are many and the range of activities captures their interest and boosts their confidence and motivation as they begin to see the results of their work.

Volunteering

We need people who have a background in horticulture, care or education to help deliver our services and maintain the gardens. If someone has no experience but are interested, our qualified and experienced staff can provide training and guidance. We need community members who want to take on their own area of the gardens. We'd like anyone to contact us for details of our volunteer positions.

We will continue our close links with people and the organisations supporting them in Bruton and hope to develop new links as new groups emerge and needs change, so that more people from Bruton have access to our services.

The Growing Space

22nd April 2024