

Trellis Conference 2011 Report

Tuesday 15th March at Perth Concert Hall

Trellis's annual networking conference this year celebrated the very positive benefits of gardening to health and well being. The theme for our 5th annual event was: **Gardening – the original *feel-good* activity** and we welcomed more than 90 delegates from all over Scotland.



The conference was opened by **Jim McColl**, MBE, Trellis patron, well-known horticultural consultant and TV & radio broadcaster. Jim has been working with people who have learning/physical difficulties since the 1960's and soon found out how useful gardening could be in helping us all achieve a sense of worth, purpose and enjoyment. That feeling about gardening hasn't changed a bit in 50 years!

The keynote address was given by **Pam Whittle**, CBE, Chair of Greenspace Scotland. Pam offered delegates plenty of food for thought about the current funding and policy climate and how it relates to gardening. A keen gardener herself, Pam seeks refuge in her garden whenever she can find the time in her busy schedule.



Project Showcases

The day got off to a lively start with the Project Showcase presentations. This was a superb opportunity to learn more about three therapeutic gardening projects, straight from those who manage, develop and work in them. This year we had the pleasure of hearing from:

Lesley Speedie, Project Manager of Larkhall Community Growers in South Lanarkshire, who is coordinating an exciting new project to develop a community garden in Larkhall. Lesley shared her plans to transform a derelict piece of land into a vegetable garden with raised beds, paths and greenhouses to cater for all interest groups.



Next, **Debbie Butler** co-ordinator of the Walled Garden in Perth offered her address, 'Between these Walls' including some lovely images by photographer Graham Millar of people working in the garden. The picture she painted was of a wonderful community where all participants are able to develop to their full potential. The Walled Garden is a community-based support service which helps people who are recovering from severe and/or enduring mental health illnesses. Along with the Wisecraft project in Blairgowrie, the project support 65 adults from the Perth and Strathmore areas every week, helping them to recover in a supported work environment. The Walled Garden is also a popular local attraction, where visitors can tour the gardens, buy plants and ornaments and enjoy lunch or coffee in the café.



The project showcases ended with a film made by **Hugh Fife** and the people working at the 'Woods for All' woodland project in Blairbuie, Argyll. Woods for All is an award winning Reforesting Scotland project that works towards access and inclusion. Reforesting Scotland is a leading charity and movement involved in environmental, social and sustainable forestry in Scotland. They represent over 750 members and their vision involves the creation of a well-forested and productive landscape, as well as a culture which values the contribution that trees and woods bring to our lives. Hugh is co-ordinator of this project as well as the author of "Warriors, Kings & Secret Guardians - Native Highland Trees".



After a short break for tea and coffee with a delicious selection of biscuits where everyone had an opportunity to meet other delegates and share information it was time to go to the first round of workshops.

There was a choice of **5 workshops** on the day divided into 2 rounds so everyone had the chance to attend 2 workshops.

1. SOS: Sink or Swim - Surviving Lean Times through reinvention and diversification – learning from two projects in Aberdeenshire plus bonus session on how to raise profile for your project – *John Duncan, Easter Anguston Farm Training Centre, Tony Archer of Aberdeen Forward & Alan Reid of VSA.*

2. Fruit Tree Pruning Master Class: Demonstration of pruning techniques to achieve the desired shape or size of tree for the required purpose – *Colin Stirling & Jim McColl*



3. A Year Working in Community Gardens: The story of a new project enabling gardeners with learning disabilities to work in 5 community

gardens in Edinburgh, plus an income generating pilot project. – *Alison Edelsten & Kerry Kirkwood, Columcille Centre, Edinburgh*

4. The Story So Far: preliminary findings on the evidence for HT (from the PhD literature search jointly supervised by Trellis & Stirling University) – *Di Blackmore, PhD student & Dr Ruth Jepson, Senior Research Fellow.*

5. Horticulture Therapy in a Secure Setting: What works and how they do things at Leverndale Hospital. *Peter Ross, Team Leader, Nicola Devlin Deputy Ward Manager & Tommy Harrison, Project Nurse, Acorn Project, Leverndale Hospital*

Feedback on workshops

1. “Interesting to hear how others work”, “Good practical advice” and “A lot of information”.
2. “Excellent, worth 100 books”, “Clear, light-hearted, informative” and “Very useful indeed”.
3. “Very well done, good ideas”, “Brilliant” and “Very informative”.
4. “Interesting, food for thought”, “Interactive, interesting, lots to follow up” and “One to watch”.
5. “Very interesting”, “Really interesting, relaxed and informal”



A buffet lunch was served and several sitting areas gave us ample opportunity to enjoy the food and talk to our fellow delegates. Next Gordon Croll, our timekeeper, blew his whistle and off we went to our next choice of workshop.

Apart from the workshops, which were appraised by many delegates as inspiring and informative, the **networking opportunities** were rated as highly valuable. Delegates found it uplifting to be able to speak to people running projects slightly different from their own, but with similar concerns.

Suggestions for future events from the delegates:

- Workshops on funding and audit
- Ask NHS or MP as keynote speaker to speak about therapeutic horticulture to get the complete picture
- Give handouts from speakers
- Give another update on PhD research or regular progress reports
- Information about community based therapeutic gardening for the elderly
- Like to hear from people who benefitted from projects
- Workshop on community gardens
- Photos, artefacts, seeds, or plants from projects for display, swap or sale.
- Ask linked organisations to participate

Some statistics: 89 delegates from 44 projects

We concluded the day with a raffle and a look at the drawings of the event by Thomas LaCroix.

