Therapeutic Horticulture – 20 years

A milestone for the Scottish network



trellis
gardening for wellbeing

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How the floral clock began...


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What if... asking about suicide could save a life?
Suicide Prevention Scotland.
RUNNING FOR LIFE




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Wish...

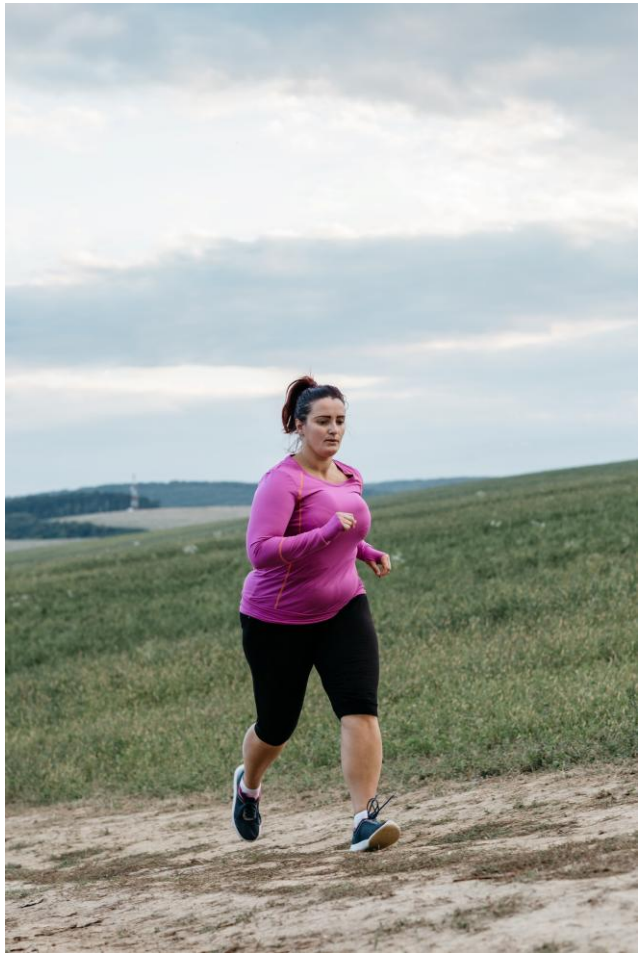
Therapeutic horticulture becomes mainstream

East Lothian GP practice pilot





- Working with patients referred with depression and anxiety
- 2 x 12-week blocks: Autumn/Spring
- So far excellent results
- Pilot: aim for nationwide adoption
- Sustainable recovery/self-management skills
- Reduce strain on waiting lists
- GPs very supportive - personally as well as professionally engaged



67%

Fewer GP appointments needed by people with mild-to-moderate depression and anxiety in the three months after finishing the programme. Lead GP, Dr Peter Churn, 'stunned'... hopes this pilot can 'serve as a 'blueprint'.

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One conduit to mainstream adoption = capturing attention



Green spaces can shield UK cities from extreme heatwaves and save the NHS millions every year, says report

"Therapeutic Horticulture: A therapeutic gardening pilot scheme in East Lothian saw patients referred for mild-to-moderate depression require 67% fewer GP appointments within three months of finishing the programme."

PDA enrolling soon!

- Validated Sept 2026 by Qualifications Scotland, the national authority – a huge milestone after many years of effort.
- Teaching scheduled to begin **late January 2027**.
- Teaching by D&A college, Trellis & SRUC, interwoven timetabling, an experienced teaching team and flexible, mixed assessment.
- Professional Development Award in 'Developing Professional Practice in Therapeutic Horticulture' (SCQF level 7= OFQUAL level 5, equiv , Y1 university) 1 yr of study, 1 day/week.
- Eligible for grant support & recognised by employers as a national qualification. Also recognisable to potential colleagues so they can have confidence when referring clients to course graduates.
- Will meet requirements for UK Professional Register (ASTH)
- Some APL accepted – details tbc



Professional Development Award *– what, who, when where?*

- Trellis teaching jointly with 2 colleges:
  - SRUC Elmwood – horticulture double unit
  - Dundee & Angus – 2 care/ therapeutic units
  - Trellis – 2 new TH units
- Enrolment via SRUC – applications open asap. Those on our register of interest will be notified.
- Hybrid, blended learning – some online & placement
- Day release basis, 1 year course
- Fees tbc – based on standard unit rates

For whom – for you?

- Career changers
- Students of horticulture, related care/health subjects or other relevant topics
- TH practitioners seeking a qualification or to fill gaps in knowledge/confidence
- Anyone interested in this work willing to complete course work & placement.
- Main tutors for TH modules must be experienced practitioners and meet the ASTH competences
- Some guest tutors will cover specialist areas
- Likely Thursdays for main teaching day

SRUC

D&A DUNDEE AND ANGUS COLLEGE

trellis gardening for wellbeing

UK Professional Body (ASTH)

- Routes to registration ✓
- Code of Ethics & Standards of Practice ✓
- Practitioner Competences ✓

In progress:

- Application forms & process
- Policies/procedures & panels
- Website – domain secured, placeholder welcome page in progress, further work as funding permits, **www.ukasth.org.uk**

Application process to join the register of Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioners *DRAFT Vs7 8 10 24*

Purpose and aims of the register:

- **To register STH practitioners who provide a benefit to public health and wellbeing.**
- **To maintain an accessible application process that allows all who meet the outlined Core Competencies to join.**
- **To assess applications using fair and ethical processes.**

Option 1: Training in STH	**Option 2: Training in Health/Care with additional evidence of training and/or experience in Horticulture and STH**	**Option 3: If you do not meet the requirements for application to the register via Option 1 or Option 2, the UK ASTH will consider your application on a case-by-case basis**
Apply via this route if you have completed either of the following courses: Diploma in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Level 5. * **OR** Professional Development Award in Developing Professional Practice in Therapeutic Horticulture (SCQF level 7) (not yet available but Trellis is hopeful that this qualification will be available from 2025 onwards in Scotland).* **AND** you have been delivering STH since qualifying for a minimum of 1 years / [hours tbc] hours in practice.	Ofqual level 5 / SCQF level 7 or above in a recognised qualification that equips you to work with individuals and groups with an identified health, care, or educational need in a professional capacity. This may include an HCPC/allied health profession*, General Medical Council (doctor), nursing/midwifery, social care, social work, counselling. **AND** have horticultural skills/training/experience (for example but not limited to training in horticulture [level to be confirmed], or evidence of self-led learning, or work experience/voluntary work in horticulture throughout all four seasons).	Examples of those applying to the register via Option 3 may include those with international qualifications, or qualifications from non-listed professions e.g horticultural or land-based qualifications, and those who have been working in STH for 5 plus years without being able to register through Option 1 or 2. You will be able to evidence how you meet the Core Competencies of an STH practitioner (see Core Competencies Guidance ***(to be developed)***. **AND** can provide the evidence of learning and practice detailed below this table. If the registration panel assess that you do not meet the Core Competencies required for registration, you will be provided with advice and guidance on how to do so. This may





Skinnergate Lifehouse Group, Perth, another strong season & a planning session with Trellis patron, Brian Cunningham



Jenna has moved onto a new job; Carys is now working with Perth local groups

Auchinleck *Oot the Back Door* Women's Group

Our Project Advisor Joan designed a programme of activities to explore the great outdoors at Dumfries House to support these ladies in different ways.



World Therapeutic Horticulture Day



- **18 May**: putting TH on the map; bringing people together to share knowledge
- New countries joining 2026 include Argentina, Puerto Rico, Hungary, Serbia and Guyana
- Colleagues in Ukraine under shelling again, but we're trying to help 2 practitioners in Kyiv to attend conference 2027 and visit projects, while supporting via training materials.
- What are you planning for 2027? **Help turn the map green!**



Impact Stats

- Strong attendance at training events & seminars inspires us to expand & improve services
- Tailored to: practitioners seeking CPD and startup groups needing inspiration & help with the basics
- Hands-on help for groups on site through our fieldwork service
- Direct therapeutic programmes for people facing depression, cancer, loneliness, early onset dementia, life's low points and hurdles.
- A friendly voice at the end of the phone to help with queries of all kinds.

Research Evidence

- **Edinburgh University**: New Masters student will present research to the network in May, and we welcomed another candidate beginning her studies this August. With tutor at Edinburgh, we aim to have any paper(s) arising published in academic journals sharing the work and building the evidence base.
- **Research in other fields prompting new thinking and protocols:** New evidence on dementia suggests early symptoms may be partly reversible; some models visualise it as Type 3 diabetes. Could protocols like those used for metabolic health (activity, anti-inflammatory diet and routines that promote metabolic/circulatory health) be used to delay/reduce cognitive decline? Gardening can have a part to play here.



Professional Learning Seminars



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Raising the profile of TH in Scotland & globally

Hosting international speakers including from the AHTA, HK, Europe, Australia

Review of articles for AHTA journal & related publications

Interviews & articles in UK & international journals & podcasts

Communication with Scottish govt: therapeutic horticulture contribution to policy

National health practitioner events, e.g. Stroke Forum: presenting on TH & its role in improving health in UK.

Collaboration with TH associations & universities overseas



An Irish podcast



Mike Hamilton
1961-2026


Best of all, highlights of the year have been meeting people and talking about gardening.

Thanks for being part of the first 20 years!



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