trellis
gardening for wellbeing

Impact Report
2025-26



Transforming lives through therapeutic horticulture





Our vision is that excellent therapeutic horticulture and its benefits are available to all.





Introduction

A Year with Trellis

- 14,310 disabled & disadvantaged people supported to garden each week through our network of 530 projects
- 184 enquiries answered
- 534 practitioners learning from our training, live demos and talks
- 38 new videos created with 284 videos now on our YouTube channel
- 17 projects, given in-depth support, helping 544 *more* people to garden
- 186 beneficiaries directly supported through our therapeutic horticulture programmes
- 355 people learning and sharing good practice at our networking and learning seminars
- It costs just £15.70 per person to deliver our vital services



A message from our CEO

This is a landmark year as we celebrate 20 years of Trellis. And what better way to mark it than with the floral clock in Edinburgh! We were honoured to see our work commemorated in the world-famous floral clock this summer.



This unique and sparkling work of horticultural genius dates from 1903 and is created through the skilled planting and tending of 35,000 plants including geraniums and sempervivums in a design that not only provides accurate timekeeping for visitors, but beautifully represented our logo design and the tagline, *Gardening for Wellbeing*. The clock design also embodies the feelgood elements of gardening, that same feelgood power we and practitioners across Scotland harness every day in our work to help thousands of people to improve their wellbeing. We are sincerely grateful to the gardeners of Edinburgh City Council Parks Team and Mr David Dorward for their dedicated work to create this phenomenon and bring our work to a wider audience.

Trellis runs on a modest budget providing excellent value for money. Our support services cost a little over £15 per person to run. Despite this excellent cost-benefit ratio, raising funding to develop and continue these services takes a huge amount of our time and energies still. Staff and board teams have agreed on the need to reshape our funding make-up towards a more sustainable mix that includes more individual supporters and income generation.



We have seen some startlingly positive outcomes for participants of our direct therapeutic horticulture support programmes, which we're delighted to share in these pages. Equally we continue to develop new training, seminar topics, and networking opportunities to support practitioners on the ground, helping bring life-changing therapeutic gardening services to those who need them most.

My thanks to every person who has supported us this year and in the past.



Key Services

Therapeutic Horticulture Programmes

"Lovely to use senses. Therapeutic and takes you out of your thinking head."

During the year we enjoyed the challenge of providing a large number of longer-term therapeutic gardening programmes, working with a variety of beneficiaries. These included a pilot project at a GP Practice in East Lothian, supporting people diagnosed with depression and anxiety. You can read more about this and some of the other people we supported on the following pages.



As with all our work, we seek to learn what has changed for people through our support. Reflecting on our therapeutic gardening programmes we were staggered by some of the outcomes for the people involved, from increased confidence and positivity to a significant reduction in the number of GP visits participants needed.



In-depth Support

"We're very grateful for the support of Trellis. This will be a great space to be supported in."

In-depth support for groups and organisations seeking to start or improve their therapeutic gardening practice comes in many different forms. Over the year we supported 17 organisations with regular hands-on gardening workshops, staff training, planting plans, site advice and designs and much more. This support enabled 544 *more* people to garden and improve their wellbeing as a result.



We worked with groups supporting people with a cancer diagnosis, people living with dementia, isolated older people, people with mental health issues, schools with specialist Additional Support Needs Units, women struggling with addiction and substance misuse and Occupational Therapists working with people recovering from serious brain injuries as well as another group based in an assisted living complex.



Online Learning and Resources

"This was such an affirming session."

Our YouTube Channel continues to grow with more valuable and inspirational resources. We created 38 new videos including lots of simple 'how-to' activity videos for growing your own veg and great crafty table-top ideas. The channel also includes recordings of the 8 live activity demonstrations we ran during the year, attended live by 107 people (often practitioners alongside the people they support). Our learning seminars, 3 of which ran as part of World Therapeutic Horticulture Day celebrations, were very well received with 216 people attending. We were thrilled to welcome therapeutic gardening guru, Rebecca Haller to speak at one such event, live from Colorado. In addition, our Garden Bites Calendar gave groups engaging monthly ideas to try.



Key Services

"Really informative, inspiring and lots of creative ideas. Great to connect with others too."

"Everything in this unit has been interesting and I will be sharing with patients that I work with."

"I'm so grateful to Trellis for bringing together people from all over the globe."

Annual Conference & Good Practice Sharing

The Trellis Conference is Scotland's leading event for professionals working in therapeutic horticulture. Held annually, it brings together over 100 practitioners, researchers, and advocates from across the UK to share knowledge, explore best practice, and strengthen connections across the sector. This year's delegates enjoyed workshops and presentations from experienced practitioners and organisations covering topics such as nurturing wellbeing after spinal injury, supporting youth mental health and how care settings can assess their outdoor spaces for better use. We were delighted to have Trellis patron, Brian Cunningham of The Beechgrove Garden, also run a Horticulture Masterclass.





Our members tell us that enabling them to connect and learn from others in the field is one of the most important roles that Trellis fulfils. We were thrilled to run a packed network event in Aberdeen together with Cfine (Community Food Initiatives North East) with 34 happy attendees.

Training

Over the years our training has grown to include hands-on live activity workshops, online seasonal gardening courses and topic specific training such as Autism and Gardening. This year, we realised a long-held ambition to support practitioners with a complete beginners guide to therapeutic horticulture, launching a new training course bundle exploring core elements of the practice. These half-day online courses covered an introduction to the sector, adaptive gardening techniques, core characteristics of therapeutic horticulture spaces and supporting mental health through therapeutic horticulture. We look forward to launching more in the coming year to enhance this training alongside the Professional Development Award.





World Therapeutic Horticulture Day



Now heading for its fifth year, Trellis inaugurated World Therapeutic Horticulture Day to create a platform to raise awareness of the practice, link people around the globe and celebrate the work of the sector. The movement has grown significantly with 29 countries participating in 2024 to 48 countries this year - almost a quarter of the world! Don't forget to join us on 18th May 2027.

With our supporters' help, we have...

Helped cancer patients improve their mental health

This year we ran many seasonal workshops for groups supporting people living with a cancer diagnosis together with family members. From exploring herbs through the senses to creating beautiful spring wreaths, Joan, our Project Advisor has been joined by many people who found that time connecting with nature and sharing mindful activities together is great tonic for the mind.



With the help of trusts and foundations and wonderful donations from individuals, we have supported people living with cancer and their families to enjoy time together, putting their worries aside, even for a little while.

Angela, who has ovarian cancer said: ***"Finally managed to create something positive out of a normal agenda of negativity."***

Another participant said "(It's) lovely to use senses. Therapeutic and takes you out of your thinking head! Thank you :-)"

With 1 in 2 people affected by cancer in their lifetime, we'd like to ensure we continue to support people to improve their wellbeing through gardening. Whilst it might not offer a cure, therapeutic gardening can bring simple pleasures, reduce isolation and help people establish healthy routines and proven coping mechanisms for difficult times.

Supported people with depression

Our pilot programme with Harbours Medical Practice in East Lothian helped people living with mild to moderate depression or anxiety to recovery and develop practical skills and strategies they could use to manage their wellbeing beyond the programme.

Over 12 weeks, participants set personal goals, learned new gardening skills and gradually built confidence through meaningful activity, connection with others and time in nature. The garden provided a safe, low-pressure environment where people could focus on something positive, while developing healthier ways to cope with difficult days.

As a result, **measures of wellbeing increased by 60%** and **GP visits fell by a staggering 67% in the 3 months** following the programme.



For many patients, skills learnt in our programme translated into changes far beyond it. Some began attending community groups, returning to work, volunteering and reconnecting with activities they'd previously enjoyed. Others formed their own social network, explored ways to continue gardening together, and took on new challenges that had previously felt impossible. The lead GP said he was 'stunned' by the results and 'hoped they could be a blueprint for other projects'.

As one participant said: ***"I have entered 2026 with so much positivity, hope and optimism for my future that was lacking when I joined the group."***

Reduced isolation for people living with dementia



Over the years we have provided many workshops for organisations who support people living with dementia, and their families. This past year was no exception, providing monthly, table-top gardening activity sessions with a small group through Alzheimer Scotland.

Learning about herbs, creating herbal bath bags, potting up bulbs and crafting seasonal wreaths were on the agenda and always a welcome and positive distraction for participants. In addition, the sessions give people the opportunity to meet up with others experiencing similar challenges, and to leave with something lovely to enjoy themselves or share with loved ones.

Joan, who ran the sessions, said:

"These regular, predictable sessions create opportunities for connection, relationship-building and community belonging. The use of plants including flowers and herbs, often encourages conversation - reminiscing about plants grown with a grandparent or smells that evoke happy memories."

In addition to supporting people living with dementia we also presented at two Dementia Care conferences to share how gardening can be the secret weapon in helping to reduce isolation and improve wellbeing.

"This brings a smile to my face! What a wonderful initiative."

Improved life chances for homeless people



Thanks to funding from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund we worked with 3 groups in Perth and Kinross, running therapeutic gardening programmes for people struggling with their mental health. One such group were the residents at Skinnergate Lifehouse, a resettlement facility for homeless people run by The Salvation Army. Additional funding, from The Gannochy Trust, enabled us to increase our support and run 12 sessions throughout the year. We were fortunate to obtain a short term allotment plot which the participants loved tending. As well as reducing their isolation and learning to work with others, the allotment brought the chance to learn about food growing and healthy eating - vital in helping to improve their life chances.

Seeing their hard work paying off with such a bountiful harvest was wonderful for the group's confidence and mood. As with all participants across the groups we supported, the positive change in their wellbeing was significant after each session - improving mood, feeling good about helping others, connecting with nature and feeling more connected to others. We continue to work with Skinnergate Lifehouse this year as they create and develop their own allotment space.

Alex, who has been homeless for 3 years said: ***"Makes me feel good. Gets me out working with the others learning new skills."***

"

Key Developments

The PDA in Professional Practice in Therapeutic Horticulture

The practitioner qualification that we've been developing in collaboration with SRUC and Dundee and Angus College reached significant milestones including passing the formal Qualifications Scotland vetting and validation process as a nationally recognised course. The Professional Development Award (PDA) in *Developing Professional Practice in Therapeutic Horticulture* (SCQF level 7-8) is eligible for grant funding and, being accredited by the national qualifications authority will mean it can be widely recognised among employers. In turn, this will enable maximum access to study for people from all walks of life from career changers to others getting back on track after illness or time out of the workplace or education. We expect the course to open for registration in the winter.

The UK Professional body for the sector – the ASTH

Work to develop the UK professional body for therapeutic horticulture, the Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (ASTH) continues at a good pace. We concluded work on the final draft of Practitioner competences and the Routes to Registration, with approval from the ASTH Forum members and began creating the policy and procedural documents needed to launch the registration process as a pilot. Work on crafting the first application documents and pathways has begun too and discussions at our regular Forum meetings have been very productive and helped refine all these materials. Since we formally launched this endeavour back in 2021 we've been joined by a partner charity, Thrive, and some very talented volunteers, working in close collaboration with a view to launch the register in the next 18 months.

Training for learners at every level

Over the year we developed four new training courses and accompanying information resources to equip practitioners with the understanding and skills to help more people enjoy the profound health benefits of being in gardens and connecting with nature. We continue to develop new courses to support the professional needs of practitioners and help them face the daily challenges of their work with clear frameworks and evidenced-based learning under their belts. The comprehensive suite of training courses we now offer allows everyone, whether new to the sector or more experienced practitioners to build their skills and confidence, from beginner level up.

"This was one of the best webinars I've attended. It was well organised, interactive and interesting!"



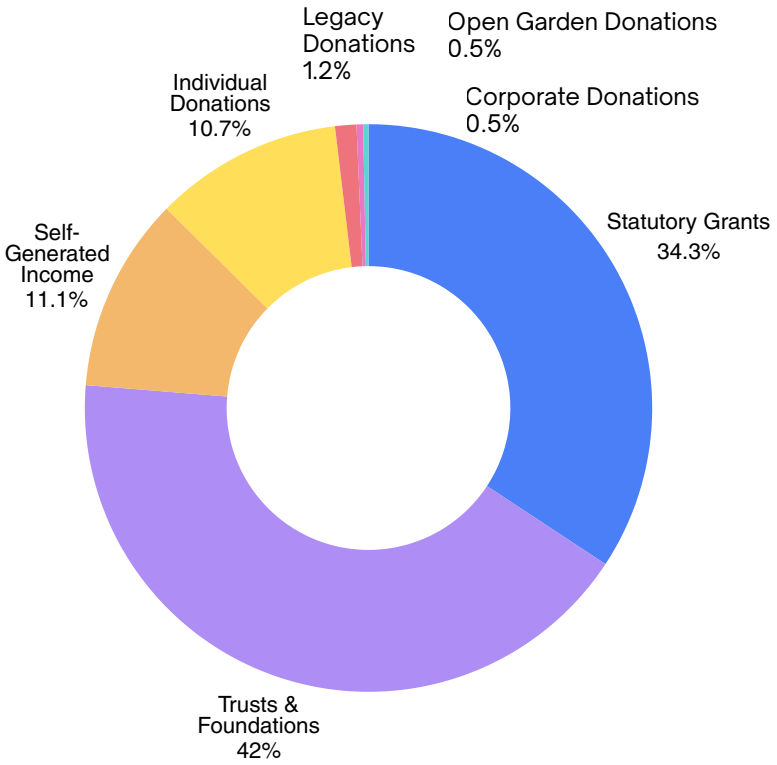



Income

Generating income is always a challenge and we are determined to diversify our income streams to help make Trellis more sustainable. We are a small charity that is punching well above its weight through the kind and generous help of our supporters. With your help we raised £229,506 in 2025/26.

Where our income comes from

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who supported our work through monetary help or gifts of their time and knowledge. Your generosity helped 14,310 people to transform their lives through the power of therapeutic gardening.



Corporate Support

We're grateful to the companies who helped us with in-kind and monetary donations. From chosing us as their charity of the year (The Edinburgh Practice), to hosting wellbeing sessions for their staff team (Binn Group), to providing glorious herbal teas at our floral clock reception and hosting a network meeting (Seilich). Your support means the world.

Growing Circles

Along with our newly re-vamped 'Friends' giving programme we have also developed our major donor programme. One wonderful donor said: "There's something good about having grafted for a day in the garden, it's good for your mental health, you just feel better all round. Hearing that there's a charity out there helping people to do that for a variety of health reasons just ticked all the boxes for us. You can't help but be caught up in their enthusiasm and their desire to do more."

Friends of Trellis

The regular donors who give support through our Friends Scheme are a vital part of helping us to become more sustainable and enable us to plan for the future. Thank you very much to this wonderful group of people. We hope to welcome more to the scheme in the coming year.

Garden Openers

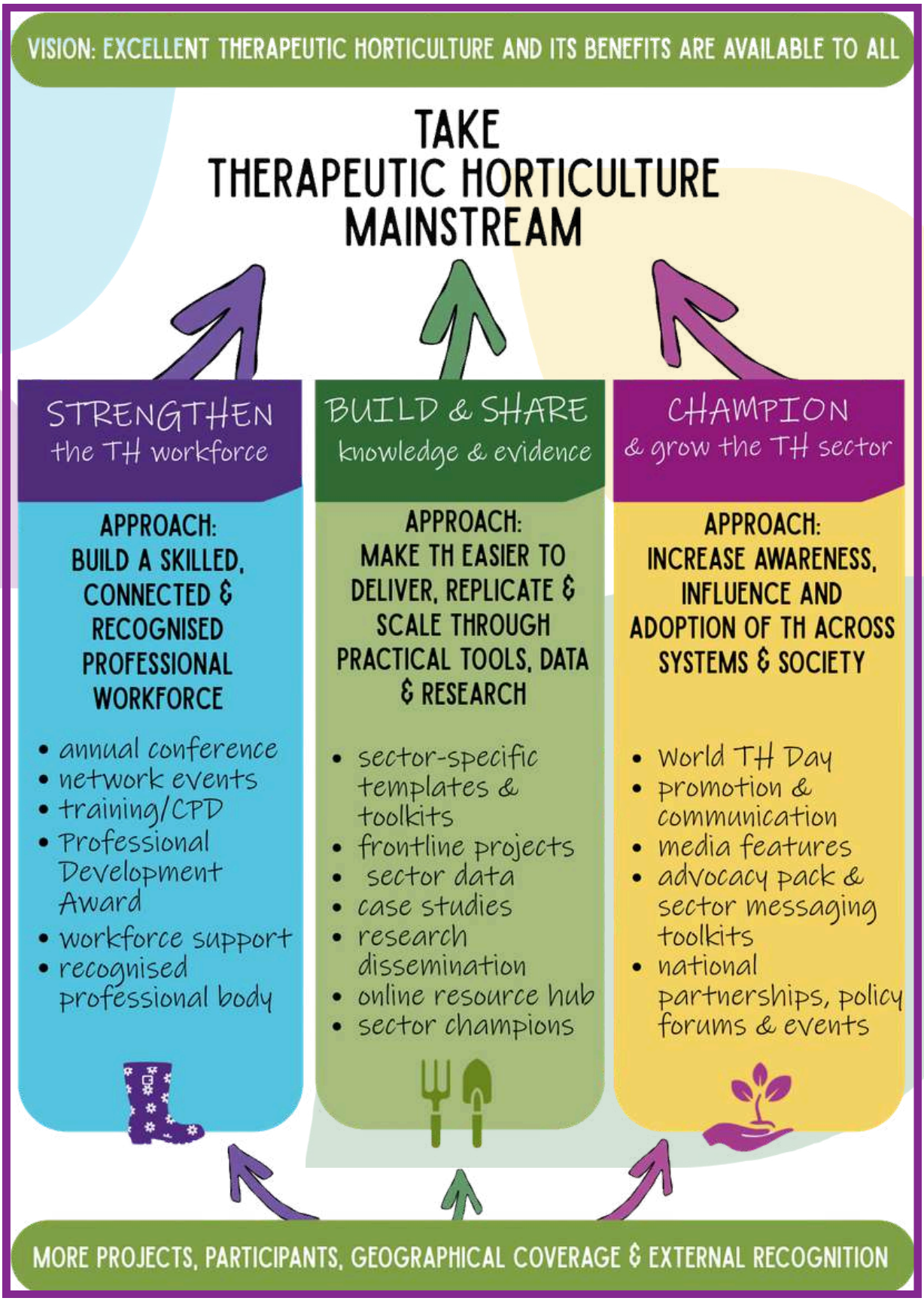
3 kind groups and individuals opened their beautiful spaces to raise money for our work. These included regular donors Merrylee Plotholders Association and Kelvinside Allotments in Glasgow and Fairnielaw House in East Lothian.

Celebration, in-memory & legacy giving

Every gardener knows the importance of nurturing, providing the essential support that plants need to grow strong over time. Our sincere thanks to those who have remembered us and left a gift in their will in this year and to those who remembered someone special with a donation to Trellis, helping us to grow strong.

Next Steps

Over the year, we've been working on a new strategy to take us into the next 20 years. This infographic summarises how we're working to make sure the future is one where therapeutic horticulture is available to everyone.



Help change a life today

when you choose to...

Become a Friend of Trellis

Join our Growing Circles

Introduce Trellis to your organisation

Support a key Trellis work programme

Make a gift in celebration

Leave a legacy



Scan to find out about these and other ways you can support us or email jo@trellisscotland.org.uk



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Trellis is a charity registered in Scotland, number: SC037429