

## Wider application

The project highlights the benefits of participation and provides mainstream environmental and other groups with a convincing demonstration of one way in which excluded members of society can be integrated into their activities.

Involving people with disabilities and older people in tree-related activities promotes social inclusion and can be very rewarding for all those participating.

## Further information

### National Urban Forestry Unit

This leaflet is one of a series produced by the National Urban Forestry Unit. NUFU provides a national focus for the exchange of information and good practice in urban forestry.

If you would like further information, or if you have examples of good practice to share with others, please contact:

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### Further reading

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**McChesney J (1994)**

*Trees for therapy* Tree News (Autumn) The Tree Council, London

**Relf D (1992)**

*The Role of Horticulture in Human Well-being and Social Development* Timber Press, Oregon

**Stoneham JA and Kendle AD (1989)**

*Plants and Human Well-Being* The Sensory Trust, Bath

**Ulrich RS et al (1991)**

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*Photographs: Sensory Trust, Thrive*

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# Urban Forestry in Practice

## Therapeutic horticulture



CASE STUDY 21

# Therapeutic horticulture

## Introduction

Horticultural or tree-related projects can help to re-integrate people with disabilities and older people into society. Also, recovery from illness or injury can be improved by working with living, growing materials. The physical activity and emotional satisfaction gained from nurturing plants promotes both good health and social inclusion.

## Specific example

### Project name and location

**TRUNKWELL GARDEN PROJECT**, Beech Hill, **READING** RG7 2AT, UK  
Grid reference SU 693 645

### Project partners

- Wokingham, Reading and Berkshire local authority social services departments
- Reading Borough Council (*Trees for Our Future* project)
- Thrive
- BTCV

### Project objectives

To give those involved the opportunity to:

- become more active members of society
- build confidence and improve social skills
- restore strength, mobility and dexterity after accident or illness
- acquire basic skills
- gain pre vocational and vocational training for land based industries

### Site description

The Trunkwell Garden Project (TGP) is one of five garden projects run by Thrive, a national charity promoting the use of gardening and horticulture for training and employment, therapy and health. Individuals of all ages and abilities who have mental health problems, physical disabilities and learning difficulties come to the project from Berkshire, south Oxfordshire and north Hampshire. Those attending the centre work in the woodland and garden areas on individually tailored programmes.

The Trunkwell Garden Project's tree nursery has made productive use of a previously under utilised area of the estate parkland. Intensive site preparation was undertaken to establish blocks of native tree seedlings. Participants in the scheme maintain these trees as part of their individual development programme.

The trees are planted within the species blocks at 1m spacing. This system defines clear boundaries for individual work areas. This in turn helps participants to develop their tree production skills.



All kinds of disabilities can be catered for at Trunkwell

### Implementation

The Trunkwell Garden Project works in partnership with local authorities and community groups. It is also part of the national *Trees of Time and Place* campaign which aims to help as many people as possible to gather seeds from a favourite tree, and to grow personal saplings to plant for the future. The project runs community training events in seed gathering and planting, aftercare and maintenance, tree identification and recording.

From these and other events, local people take their collected seeds and grow them on to the seedling stage, when they are passed into the project's care. TGP participants then plant the seedling trees and care for them until they are approximately 50 cm in height, when they are passed on to local communities who would not otherwise be able to afford trees for their projects. Details of seeds gathered by individuals are carefully recorded, and this provides the long-term tree guardians with a full pedigree (genetic, geographic and historic) of their trees.

Planting and caring for trees helps to strengthen both social and technical skills



For those involved, the Trunkwell Garden Project provides a great sense of achievement and increased self-confidence

### Results

A thriving tree nursery has been established, which provides a valuable training resource for individuals to widen their experience in conservation and related fields. The nursery can also be used as a vehicle for teaching other skills, whilst at the same time introducing people to a new activity which can develop into a hobby or employment opportunity.



### A personal profile

Tony is totally blind and also has other sensory impairments and learning difficulties. He came to the TGP with no qualifications in land-based industries although he had a keen interest in the outdoors. Tony is in his mid twenties. His interest in conservation intensified when he was given the task of planting and maintaining a section of the tree nursery. The formal layout of the nursery provided Tony with well-defined physical boundaries, and the work suited him well. After working to achieve NPTC (National Proficiency Test Council) certificates in conservation, based around his work in the tree nursery Tony, has progressed onto a TGP community based employment preparation project. He now has increased self confidence and new skills gained through his work in the tree nursery.