

Wider application

The demand for native trees and flowers grown from locally gathered seeds is increasing. The seed collecting, propagating and growing on of such plants is particularly empowering for people who have traditionally been excluded from the world of work. By providing a professionally managed facility that involves local people, offers skilled supervisory support and works with individuals with diverse special needs, it is possible to achieve a range of sustainable outcomes.

Further information

National Urban Forestry Unit

This leaflet is one of a series produced by the National Urban Forestry Unit. NUFU is a charitable trust and it provides a national focus for the exchange of information and good practice in urban forestry. If you would like further information on other case studies, or if you have examples of good practice to share, please contact:

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Forest of Avon

The Forest of Avon is part of a government-backed programme of 12 Community Forests which are creating well-wooded landscapes in and around some of England's major towns and cities. It is centred on Bristol and works with farmers, landowners, statutory bodies, local councils, community groups and individuals to involve them in creating and using new woodlands. For further information, please contact:

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| Ashton Court Estate | Email: | admin@forestofavon.org |
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Further reading

Aldhous J (1994) *Forest Nursery Practice* Forestry Commission Bulletin 111, HMSO, London

BTCV (2001) *Tree Planting and Aftercare* BTCV, Doncaster

Gordon A G (1982) *Seed Manual for Ornamental Trees and Shrubs* Forestry Commission Bulletin 059, HMSO, London

Gordon A G (1992) *Seed Manual for Forests* Forestry Commission Bulletin 083, HMSO, London

McCrackin P (1999) *Successful Small Tree Nurseries* (obtainable from Peter McCackin on 01866 822591 or see www.treetrader.co.uk)

Stokes J et al (2001) *The Good Seed Guide: All You Need to Know About Growing Trees from Seed* The Tree Council, London

Images: Forest of Avon Tree Life Centre

PRODUCED BY



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Urban Forestry in Practice

Tree growing as an aid to social inclusion



Tree growing as an aid to social inclusion

Introduction

Urban and community forestry combines many aspects of social, environmental and economic development. A partnership approach to tree growing and woodland planting which brings together skills, expertise and resources from a wide range of bodies and individuals can address social exclusion whilst at the same time improving biodiversity, achieving landscape change and developing local economic resources.

Specific example

Project name and location

FOREST OF AVON TREE LIFE CENTRE, BLAISE CASTLE, HENBURY ROAD, BRISTOL, UK
Grid reference: ST 562 787

Project partners

- BTCV
- Forest of Avon
- Bristol City Council
- Cannington College
- Avon and Wiltshire Mental Healthcare NHS Trust (The Pines)

Project supporters/funders

- Bristol Water
- Landcare Ltd
- City of Bristol College
- European Social Fund
- Forest Education Initiative
- Countryside Agency
- Western Partnership for Sustainable Development (Future West)
- Western Power Distribution
- Freeways Trust
- R W Bailey Memorial Trust

Project description

The Tree Life Centre (TLC) evolved from the Trees of Time and Place (ToTaP) millennium campaign, adopting the core elements of community seed collection, propagation and tree planting as a means of developing a dedicated centre where these skills could be used to engage and benefit volunteers with special needs and mental health problems.

The TLC is based on two separate sites in Bristol. At Blaise Castle, one quarter of the derelict 1ha kitchen garden, together with its greenhouses, is now a nursery for containerised tree seedlings and the rest of the area is used by Cannington College for practical teaching. At nearby Lawrence Weston, just over 1ha of derelict allotment land is now used to grow trees.

Development

Towards the end of the Trees of Time and Place millennium campaign (see case study no.16), the partners in Bristol evaluated the best options for retaining the existing skills, knowledge and goodwill, whilst also developing and expanding links to organisations dealing with people with mental health problems and learning difficulties. Consultants were engaged to draw up a flexible business plan and the partnership expanded. Initial funding (MARK, FROM WHERE?) helped restore the greenhouses and provide capital equipment, whilst a client base was established with local training, care and health organisations.

Four local schools
have used Tree Life
Centre for
educational work



Objectives

The Tree Life Centre has three main objectives:

- working with the disadvantaged and socially excluded
- promoting biodiversity through the use of local provenance seed
- planting trees and woodlands to help achieve the Forest of Avon strategic vision of a greener and more well-wooded region.

Operation

The TLC is run by the charity BTCV and jointly staffed by regular volunteers and employees of the New Deal Environmental Task Force. In addition, referral and management links have been made with voluntary sector mental health organisations and NHS Trusts. Each weekday up to six people with learning difficulties, mental health problems or other special needs also work on the TLC under specialist professional supervision. Other community groups and individuals are also involved through campaigns such as the Tree Council's Seed Gathering Sunday and National Tree Week.



Staff and volunteers collect tree seed, propagate seedlings and supply young trees and shrubs to community planting schemes and to a local commercial tree nursery. Tree stock which has been propagated from seed of local provenance is in increasing demand, particularly from local authorities and wildlife organisations, and the TLC aims to supply this market. Close co-operation with local commercial tree nurseries ensures the TLC does not compete with them unfairly.

Whilst tree growing is the principal activity at the Centre there is a wide range of other related activity, including educational days which are organised in partnership with the Forestry Commission's Forest Education Initiative, and practical conservation work in Bristol City Council's surrounding woodland.

The TLC has also extended its propagation skills into the Local Heritage Initiative Woodland Wildflowers project. This is funded by with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and managed by the charity Landlife. Wildflower seeds are harvested locally and sown to provide herbaceous woodland plants, which are then sold to enhance the ecological integrity of the Forest of Avon.

Results

In the first two years of the project:

- Over 9 000 volunteer day equivalents were achieved, providing a range of positive health, training and development benefits for the individuals involved
- Eight volunteers progressed into full time employment
- Four local schools were directly involved in learning through seed collection, propagation, planting and the use of locally grown timber
- Approximately £25 000 was generated through plant sales

The TLC can accommodate approximately 20 000 trees. In each of the first two years of operation, over 10 000 trees were supplied and planted into the Forest of Avon's hedges and woods.