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Welcome to Root & Branch

History

In September 2000 a meeting for local people interested in the development of a Therapeutic Horticulture project was organised. Shortly afterwards, a study undertaken by the Vale of the White Horse Mental Health Development Worker identified a lack of services in the Vale District for people experiencing mental distress. Root & Branch (R&B) was set up, and opened its doors to gardeners at the beginning of July 2003.



Root & Branch

Funding

R&B achieved charitable status in September 2001. Funding was secured from Lloyds TSB in September 2002, The Community Fund in November 2002 (for three years) and the Lankelly foundation in July 2003.

Aims & Objectives

R&B aims directly to meet the needs of people in the Vale of the White Horse who are experiencing Mental Health problems. We are here to promote mental health and social inclusion, and for people to gain knowledge & skills. We provide a welcoming, friendly and supportive environment.

What we do

R&B is based in converted stables on an organic farm. We provide gardeners with the opportunity to get involved with a wide range of activities, such as organic horticulture, growing (and eating!) fruit and veg, recycling, preserving, educational and social outings, community events and much more!

"The friendships and support shown to me at R&B, not to mention the self-esteem I have gained from the activities, has become invaluable to me." - A.S. 2003

This issue is funded using money raised from a sponsored half-marathon.

Gardening Tips

- The days are getting warmer so start to check plants have enough water.
- To help air circulation in a greenhouse and polytunnel, leave a door or window open during the day. Keep closed at night.
- Plenty of time for seed sowing. Choose native wild flowers such as poppy or corn marigold for beneficial insects.
- Collect plastic pop bottles. They make great cheap cloches for plant protection.

Bird Box Making Workshop (Sue Jones)



A fun day had by all

This workshop was set up and run by David and Simon, who are both Volunteers. It was a very successful day and enjoyed by all that attended. We made basic bird-boxes and Robin boxes.

Nest-boxes are important for birds and other wildlife including bats and hedgehogs, as modern habitats are often very short of the cavities they need to nest and roost

safely. They are particularly needed in gardens, where they may be the only places available for nesting.

In most gardens, boxes for Blue Tits or Great Tits are preferable, as these have a very good chance of being occupied. Bigger boxes can be used to house Starlings, and Robins often use open fronted boxes.

The Robin is one of the few birds to sing all year

round. The male bird's loud, melodious song is particularly forceful in early Spring, when breeding territories are being established. Outside the breeding season, both sexes sing identically, defending individual territories.

Further workshops will be organised for Hedgehog & Bat boxes to be made.

Being a Gardener with R & B (Sue Jones)

I have been attending R & B since the end of October 03 that was recommended by my Community Psychiatric Nurse. I started going once a week then after a few months increased to twice and since January have been going three times a week so have got more involved. I just love being there - I call it my 'Haven of Tranquillity'. It is the best thing that has happened to me since being ill and with the help of R & B,

I am on the road to recovery.

I have learnt so much about gardening including seed cleaning, seed sowing, pricking out, making lanterns from willow - the list is endless.

I find that as soon as I get to R & B, I forget about everything else and go about my day feeling relaxed and on a nice day most of the time is spent outside.

I have been asked by Liz if I

would like to prepare a Newsletter for R & B which I accepted because it gives me satisfaction that I can contribute something. I am also going to become a Trustee from the gardeners view.

I don't know what I would have done without R&B, they have all helped me tremendously and I would like to thank them all very much.



*My
"Haven of Tranquillity"*

Volunteering with R & B



R & B

It gives you SPRINGS

What has volunteering at R&B done for me?

Concern for others, lots of laughs, plenty of fresh air and hard work, new friends, as well as the opportunity to learn, have all helped to give a new lease of life to a fair fat and very over forty person.

Interacting with a variety of people can be a feature of volunteering with R&B. Working with others to complete a task in the most efficient and enjoyable way often requires ingenuity and

can be quite challenging. Helping to offer a safe and caring environment for regulars and newcomers to R & B is a critical part of the projects' therapeutic essence. This includes listening, understanding, getting to know, encouraging the sharing of difficulties, not judging but respecting - basically making time for people.

Opportunities to learn and or broaden existing land

based skills and rural crafts are endless.

For example helping to build a garden from scratch using organic and conservation principles.

To learn about coppicing, willow-working, making and positioning bat and bird boxes, lantern making...with many more to be arranged.

In a nut-shell, volunteering at R&B is interesting, fun and rewarding.

Branching Out (Patsy Dyer)

When the warm spring days begin, gardens and gardeners become active to say the least. The polytunnel at 'Root & Branch' is fit to burst at the time of writing, with an eclectic collection of annuals, biennial and perennial plants all showing their desperation to be planted out in the garden. It is a lovely site.

Outside, the garden is starting to develop in preparation for planting

out. The vegetable garden, taking the shape of a four-bed rotation site, already has a lovely wood chip path being laid, edged by locally grown willow hoops. The wide cruciform pathway of the vegetable garden is suitable for wheelchair access. Most of the plants in the polytunnel can wait until June 1st to be planted out. We will however be planting many vegetables directly in the garden in the next few days, including

beetroot, broad beans and chard as well as carrot, leek, lettuce and onion. Important things we will have to keep in mind at the time of planting out will be 'mulch', pest, and disease. Mulch for weed suppression, will be used and items such as netting to protect the carrots from root fly, with home made cloches to hopefully protect the young seedlings from slugs and snails.



Lungwort
(*Pulmonaria*)

Storytelling Event (Liz Clarke)



Inside the Yurt.

As part of National Storytelling week, R&B hosted an enchanting evening of storytelling. We borrowed a yurt from one of our neighbours for the event, and a team of volunteers and gardeners spent the afternoon erecting it in our garden, furnishing it with comfortable seating and decorating it with candles

and lights. Three professional storytellers entertained the audience with adventurous, humorous and mythological stories of nature from around the world. A few people from the audience shared mesmerising stories they had brought with them. The evening was popular and approximately sixty

people from the local community attended. As the event was such a success, R&B intends to host another storytelling event for next year's National Storytelling Week.

Sponsored Half-Marathon (Ian apThomas)

To raise funds for the project, Liz Clarke ran the White Horse Half Marathon in March. She trained hard in the three months leading up to the race, whenever work and other commitments allowed. Being much too old and fat to keep up with her on foot, I accompanied her when I could on my Dawes racer.

It was raining hard on the morning of the race, but we were in good spirits and although Liz developed serious blisters after three miles, and had to hobble most of the second half of the course, she completed the race.

She stands to collect @£300 for the project from her sponsors, whom she would like to thank immensely. The money will be used to print the newsletter professionally, and to buy tools for the garden.



Liz ready for the start, with support from Ian.



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- *The Community Fund*
- *Lloyds TSB Bank*
- *Oxfordshire County Council*

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DO YOU HAVE...

...any gardening equipment, blacksmithing equipment, carpentry tools and art & craft items you no longer need and would like to donate to R&B?

We are also looking for a working desk-top photocopier, a digital camera and a scanner, so if there are any floating around that are looking for a home, please contact R&B.

Financial donations are also greatly appreciated!

Future Plans and Events with R & B

- A patio and dry stone wall
- A Wildlife pond
- A Greenhouse
- A Woodcraft Workshop
- A Herb Garden
- A Forge
- A Fruit Garden
- Bee Keeping



What's over the horizon?

**R&B will be holding a summer fete on Sunday 25th July, from 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm.
There will be plenty of activities for the whole family.
For more information, contact R & B.**