



# ROOT & BRANCH

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## *Root & Branch Blacksmithing Project*

At last excitement comes to reality as we have our first day on the new Forge. Form a queue to all have a go!! Coming out of the woodwork even more faces to join in. By lunch time shaped metal rod and bars becoming the trend with twists and hooks and welding together—oh such fun! All thanks to an excellent teacher Joe from Bridewell Organic Gardens. Most are pleased with their work, some not quite as intended, practice, practice metal work everywhere. The Forge is a great asset to Root & Branch. A big Thank You to the funders. (Sue Jones).



## *At Root & Branch ...*

I started at Root and Branch at the beginning of June, just in time for the hot weather. Since then I have been involved with all sorts of projects and courses which have been varied and exciting. In June we had a music workshop where we produced a Root and Branch song called “Secret Garden”. Also in June we had a painting day where we were taught Monet style painting with acrylic paints. This gave me a grasp of painting which I had never found at school.

Through July and August we did a woodworking course in which we build bat boxes and bird boxes with hand tools. We were trained in the use of power tools which we used to build a garden chair. Work on more chairs is still ongoing and we hope to produce some to sell to raise funds for Root and Branch. In the last few weeks we have begun a blacksmithing course which has given us the opportunity to use the new forge. This has been excellent fun as well as being a great chance to learn a really traditional skill. Throughout this time we have been working steadily in the garden which continues to produce beautiful fruit and vegetables for us all to enjoy.

Root and Branch gives me focus and purpose for my days and makes an enormous improvement to my life. It has been a great opportunity to learn new skills and make new friends. (Joe Norton)

## Woodworking Course

If someone had said to me a year ago that I was going to make a chair, a chair that would actually fit its purpose I would have laughed, nervously. However, this summer we started off small sawing away and hammering numerous amounts of nails to make bird boxes, bat boxes and planters. Armed with our new skills it was time to master the health and safety of power tools – something we were all looking forward to! With a great instructor it took us no time to grasp the practicalities of the Mitre Saw and Table Saw (with no injuries I must add!). With two great supervisors we were ready to tackle an American style chair. Over five weeks we worked hard to cut, shape and eventually put together our chair, something that we are all incredibly proud of and that does indeed fit its purpose. (Rebekah Cavanagh)



*Gita Demonstrates The Bench Saw*

## How To Make Beeswax Furniture Polish

We extracted beeswax by purifying a surplus mixture of beeswax and honey. We bottled the honey and cast the beeswax into moulds. We had a number of ideas as to what of we might like to do with the beeswax, such as making candles and polish. We decided on the polish, and the first batch was developed into a thick, rich cream, which is ideal for use on absorbent wood to give an easily applied, protective and high-gloss finish. We made the second batch into solid polish for hard wood surfaces, which is again easy to apply and to buff to a high-gloss finish. We made the polish by mixing soap flakes, beeswax, turpentine and water in varying quantities and then applying heat. Be careful though if you do try it yourself, as turpentine and wax can be an explosive combination!

## Thinking of Administration?



One of the goals I set myself in 2006 in agreement with my doctor and psychologist was to gain permitted work. I thought about the type of work that I wanted to do and put together my CV.

But what next? As I had no current work experience and was unsure about what I could cope with, what I needed to do was to try and find a voluntary admin job to test this out. I came across Root & Branch through an internet search, and saw that they were looking for a voluntary administrator. The job description seemed to tick all of the boxes: it was local; I could set the hours that I worked; and it asked for people who had an understanding of mental health. I arranged to meet Liz and got the job! It didn't matter that I had suffered with depression, that I was undergoing treatment, or that I hadn't done paid work for a while, I was accepted as me, which was an amazing feeling.

Liz suggested that my first project was organising a conference on 'Gardening, Mental Health and Well Being' because I had previous experience of organising conferences. We brainstormed all the different things that needed to be done and off I went. Sitting at the computer trying to draft an invitation letter for the conference was daunting, as I hadn't done this for so long but I did it and the invitation letters were mailed. The rewards from taking this small step came immediately, week by week my self confidence grew and before long I was phoning universities to try and raise interest in the forthcoming conference, something six months ago I could never have contemplated.

I was now ready to look for permitted work. Preparing for an interview, I realised how much experience I had gained from Root & Branch and how fortunate I was to have had this opportunity. I now have a part-time job and continue to work as an admin volunteer for Root & Branch. (Janet Rogers)

## *Being a Trustee*

I have been a Trustee since Root & Branch gained charity status in 2001. Seeing the project grow from an idea into reality has been very exciting and rewarding. As a Trustee, I attend monthly meetings to discuss issues relating to fundraising, promotion, developing new policies and projects, and many more subjects.

As a Trustee, I feel that I am doing something positive for my local community, as well as having the opportunity to meet new people and learn new skills. I feel as though I have benefited from having been involved in this project in so many different ways, especially from seeing people who attend the project have the opportunity to recover their mental health.

If you are interested in becoming a Trustee, please phone Root & Branch on 01793 780380 for more information. (Adam Twine)



## *What We Are Doing in the Garden this Autumn:*

- Sowing perennial seeds for next year's Summer flowers
- Raising the vegetable beds in the polytunnel
- Bringing non-hardy plants into the polytunnel
- Pruning the wildlife hedge
- Sowing Winter vegetables for inside the polytunnel
- Dividing plants in the flower borders
- Planting broad beans, onion sets and garlic for early Spring crops
- Sowing green manure in the potato bed
- Planting *fritillaria* and tulip bulbs in the flower beds
- Planting a mini orchard (apple, pear, plum and damson) close to the soft fruit cage
- Planting step-over espaliered apple trees around the herb garden
- Planting espaliered fig, peach and apricot tress along the south facing wall by the vegetable garden
- Finishing off the pergola and dry-stone wall
- Constructing three new beehives and transferring colonies into these new hives.

## *Volunteering at Root & Branch*

I have been going to Root and Branch for a couple of months now in a voluntary capacity as part of my secondary programme at Gloucester House treatment centre. In the past I have had mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. I feel the tranquillity of the garden and the relaxing working environment at Root and Branch help to keep these mental issues at bay.

I have met a lot of new people in a short time. The staff are excellent and it is nice to have fellow clients that have had a similar issues as myself.

I am delighted that I have been introduced to the world of plants. My utmost appreciation goes to all the staff for giving me an opportunity to learn about the different aspects of gardening such as planting, weeding, trimming and pruning. I was invited to go along to a couple of festivals with the staff and clients. We went to the 'Tree Festival' and also the 'Chilli Festival' at Chichester. I had a brilliant time at both festivals.

Growing up in Swindon it was difficult to have any serious association with gardening. I really appreciate Root and Branch for giving me the chance to finally get involved in this fascinating hobby. (Darren Sharp)

## *Adrian Taking a Break*

I came to Root & Branch to help me feel better. I have been coming for 4 months and have been painting various things, mosaics, plenty of watering, cleaning pots, potting on plants, mowing the grass, a bit of art, window cleaning, weeding, made lacewing hotels and washing up. People at Root & Branch are friendly and supportive. I like the journeys to and from Root & Branch. I like taking home vegetables and drinking tea. (Adrian Gore)





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**Many Thanks In This  
Issue To:**

- Faringdon Quakers £75 Donation
- Lord Faringdon Trust £500 Grant for Beekeeping Project
- Mr Burnett £30 Donation
- Thames Water for £250 Prize
- Zoë Williams £30 Donation
- Ironmongers Trust £5,000 donation for Forge
- Oxfordshire PCT £1850 for Blacksmithing Course
- Rowse Honey £500 for Beekeeping Project

**We are funded by many organisations, including:**

- Woodward Charitable Trust
- Big Lottery Fund
- Zurich Community Trust
- Allen Lane Foundation
- Awards for All
- CHK Charities
- Woodroffe Benton Foundation
- Garfield Weston Foundation

**Become a Volunteer with Root & Branch**

*Are you looking to do something interesting,  
challenging and rewarding?  
Then become a volunteer for Root & Branch!  
We can offer you the chance to get involved in  
administration, fundraising, gardening,  
crafts, as a trustee etc. with a friendly  
and supportive organisation.*

*Call **01793 780380** for more information!*

**Future Plans and Events:**

- Six-week cookery course with a hotel chef
- One-day cookery class with an Italian restaurant chef
- One-day foot massage workshop with a local Masseuse
- Six-month Winter craft programme including pottery and mosaics
- Visit to Lacock Abbey
- Sowing perennial seeds
- Taking semi-ripe cuttings
- Planting an orchard
- Six-week advanced Blacksmithing course
- Christmas party and trip (Ho Ho Ho!)



*Rowan Weeding the Flower Beds*