

CHERRY TREE NURSERY – OPEN DAY NEWS 9,10,11 JULY 2009

We would like to welcome everyone to our 2009 Open Days, and hope very much that you will enjoy your visit.

Cherry Tree celebrated its 19th birthday in April this year. Back in 1989, when Cyril Speller and Roslyn Aish first envisioned a project to 'promote well-being through the use of land' they anticipated 15 people per week attending the project. We now have 168 people on our books, and the number of referrals continues to increase. There have been a lot of media reports recently concerning the rise in mental illness, especially depression, due to what is called 'the economic downturn'. We certainly find that more and more people are looking for support due to mental health problems, and realise that this situation is unlikely to change in the near future.

2009 has been a year of ecology, environment and education for Cherry Tree. Now our wildlife pond is well-established, we are noticing a real increase in wildlife at the nursery. Two volunteers have built and installed a large number of bird boxes, all of which have been used for nesting by bluetits, sparrows and robins. Another robin has hatched a brood in a large hydrangea, and a wren has nested in a hanging basket which was on sale! We have blackcaps, bullfinches, goldcrests in winter, wood warblers, greenfinches, chaffinches, goldfinches, great tits, coal tits and buzzards, and have noticed a consequent reduction in the greenfly population!

It has been a good slowworm year and there have also been grass snakes and a 'plague' of painted ladies. We have also seen elephant hawk moths and have a resident fox.

With financial support from Bournemouth Borough Council we have built a recycling centre and now have weekly collections by a local firm. This fits much more with our ethical approach, and volunteers visited a recycling centre earlier in the year. We are also trying to buy ethically sourced and fair trade products wherever possible, and are buying 'green' cleaning products through a workers' co-operative.

We were actively involved in the Big Green Fortnight in May, supplying plants attractive to bees to the Big Green Bus, and hosting a Plant Exchange and Children's Planting Day for the Fortnight. We now hope to make this an annual event.

Throughout the last 19 years, Cherry Tree has promoted the links between the natural world and mental well-being, so we are proud to be working with Dr Paul Stevens from the first undergraduate department of Ecopsychology in the UK, based at Bournemouth University's Centre for Well-being and Quality of Life. We are to be involved in research under the theme of 'Restorative Environments', the surroundings and circumstances that promote mental well-being, and the renewal of deeper bonds with nature.

We are finding that we are selling a lot more fruit trees and bushes, vegetable plants We would like to welcome everyone to our 2009 Open Days, and hope very much that you will enjoy your visit.

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We are finding that we are selling a lot more fruit trees and bushes, vegetable plants and herbs, and are pleased that people are starting to grow more of their own food. We continue to be involved with local schools and organisations setting up sensory gardens, herb gardens, and fruit and vegetable growing areas.

We are expanding our schools project under the theme of 'caring for people, caring for plants' and are trying to expand this from primary into secondary schools to raise awareness of the environment and promote sustainability. It is very important to introduce awareness of mental health as early as possible, in view of the fact that one teenager attempts suicide every 22 minutes in the UK*. (ref: Centre for Child Mental Health)

At the Stour Valley Festival, to be held on September 12th and 13th, the nursery will be hosting the Bournemouth & Dorset South Beekeeping Association's annual Honey Show, and holding a special children's 'paint a pot, pot and plant' event connecting art and horticulture. We are now especially promoting plants which attract wildlife to the garden, especially bees, butterflies and beneficial insects. We now have symbols on bed labels to help people to encourage wildlife to their gardens.

For this year's Open Day we are featuring herbs, at the end of Cherry Tree's 'herb fortnight', during which a variety of courses have been held under the herbal theme. We are selling a wide variety of herbs as well as herbal creams, soaps, balms and teas for the fortnight. The courses will be followed by visits to, and talks from local herbalists. Volunteers have already had a birdwatching visit to Blashford Lakes. Our winter film show theme this year was very environmentally-focussed with films on Peak Oil, organic food growing, eco-villages and other ways of living.

Sadly our three-legged cat, Moogi, disappeared, but our new black and white cat, Twinkle, has settled in very well!

This winter, thanks to generous donations from local charitable trusts, we were able to install a new 3-phase electricity supply connected at the nursery rather than at the front gate. This has already substantially reduced our electricity bill!

Our completely indispensable Citizen's Advice Bureau adviser, June Perryman, completed 10 years with us in January, which was celebrated in the traditional way with coffee and cake.

In March we had our most successful plant sale ever, which reflects our improved plant quality and variety.

We continue to offer a variety of horticultural and literacy classes, and hope to start a numeracy class in September. People who work in the Sales Area enjoyed a recent 'Improve your selling skills' course. We are also working with Kingston Maurward College towards establishing a specialised course for our volunteers. We are also having a visit from the local Disability Employment Adviser to advise volunteers about returning to employment.

Canford School help us in many ways. They followed their donation of computers by holding a 'mufti day' for us which funded the purchase of a pressure washer to make our slab paths safer. They also invited our volunteers to lunch in their school hall, which was a great success.

Meanwhile Cherry Tree has been supporting the homeless project now based at Michael House for seventeen years. A group of volunteers visited to present the proceeds of their Christmas raffle and enjoyed being showed round.

The Forge Garage at Winton regularly help us with our vehicles, and promoted us at the Winton Carnival. Many thanks to FR Aviation for their kind donation of a working milk float. We are also very grateful to the Rotary Club of Bournemouth North and to Mike Clements of I-MAC for enabling us to upgrade our security system.

On the subject of vehicles, SWOP the charity urgently needs a replacement minibus for use by both projects. Our current vehicle is no longer reliable and volunteers have suffered from a shortage of outings as a result. Our annual Cherry Tree caravan holiday in Weymouth nearly suffered as the minibus broke down both going and coming home and fleets of cars had to be organised. We currently have £890.84 in the minibus fund. Any contribution, large or small, will be gratefully received.

The volunteers of Cherry Tree Nursery Bolivia Group have now raised over £25,000. Four communities in Bolivia now have clean safe drinkable running water, and soon we

hope a community in Ecuador will join them. The group are then hoping to support another Bolivian community. They were lucky to have talks about Bolivia this year from Linda Bowditch and John Chudley. Linda has now visited our Ecuadorean community and we are looking forward to hearing about it in August.

22,676 plants were potted at our May Potathon, followed by the Harry Roffey Day visit to Abbotsbury Subtropical Garden and Swannery. We would like to thank Stanbridge Mill and JP Morgan for letting us have plant stalls on their premises, which were very successful.

Helga is opening her lovely garden to the public again this year and selling our plants and tea and home-made cakes. Many thanks to her and our loyal band of cake-makers, to Chrissie for the lovely lunches she makes and to our fantastic event catering team. Special thanks also to all the people who work in the shop, particularly on Saturdays.

Volunteer Noreen has just returned from Australia where she linked up with former volunteer Diane who is now running TESS – the Tasmanian Eating Disorders Support Service.

The Mind Out for Mental Health Group recently performed their anti-discrimination play for us.

We are pleased to have made friends with Henry Quinney and all the volunteers at the New Leaf allotment project. We look forward to continuing to work together in the future.

Ex-volunteer Matt has created a wonderful evaluation survey which is conducted by staff in the form of a review. This is producing information as to volunteers' individual and collective needs which are already being acted on. The final results are to be collated and published.

We have been very fortunate to have volunteer Cheryl, a graphic designer, working with us to improve our signs and displays. We hope you have noticed our new roundabout sign and we are delighted today to launch our new shop display which she has designed for us. Please take time to appreciate her fantastic work. Please also have a look at our press cutting album compiled by volunteer Jane, who has also written a summary of our history. It is amazing to look back on all that has happened here! We plan to update our website this autumn and winter with the help of a web consultant. It is time to make it more informative and professional.

In June 2009 long-term volunteer Bob died suddenly. We held a memorial event for him here, and in his memory are today launching the Bob Anderson Camping Fund. Bob loved sleeping in his tent, and we hope the fund will pay for the volunteers' annual camping trip. This year they are going to Corfe Castle. Bob took the memorable photograph 'the Princess and the Peacock' which won the South West of England Photo Challenge in 2002. The prize was presented by actress, Jenny Agutter, and the photograph was featured on our Christmas card that year.

We are grateful to Bournemouth Borough Council in many ways, most of all for our site for which we are pleased to say we now have a 6 year lease. They also helped repair our leaking tearoom roof in the winter. We are very anxious to start fundraising to replace this building. We believe we have now identified suitable architects, who specialise in providing sustainable designs for the socially and economically disadvantaged. We hope they will be able to draw up proposals and costings so that we

can launch the appeal for our building replacement programme, which, along with the minibus, has to be our current priority.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped and supported us. We rely on the goodwill and generosity of our friends and supporters. Special thanks need to go to our regular supporters the Kinson Conservative Club, Jay's Fish and Chips and George Fry Ltd. We would also particularly like to thank the Alice Ellen Cooper Dean Foundation, Allis Merlo Charity Pro Am Golf, the Archer Trust, Bournemouth Borough Council Adult & Community Support, the Dorset HealthCare NHS Foundation Trust, the Holdenhurst Charity, the Incorporated Free Church Council, Mr & Mrs Arthur King and The Valentine Trust.

It has been another busy year, and there seems to be more to do every day. Without doubt more projects such as ours are needed throughout the country. The growth in mental illness reflects the lack of community and of human contact with the natural world. It is highly significant that citizens of English speaking nations are TWICE as likely to experience mental illness as ones from mainland Western Europe. (ref: Oliver James (psychologist) the Guardian)

So, as always, our love and thanks to all of you who help us to maintain a safe haven in a cruel world. Please keep visiting us. Above all, thanks to all our very special volunteers.

That all may have laughter, hope and dignity