

## IN THE BEGINNING

**1990** On 14 April 1990, four volunteers, one member of staff and a dog started work at Cherry Tree Nursery for three days a week. The site had been derelict for many years, and had been used as a rubbish dump for rubble, lumps of concrete and logs from the 1987 hurricane.

Basic water and electricity supplies were installed with the help of a Community Service team. The East Dorset Health Authority was replacing its mobile chiropody unit and donated the old one for an office.

Peter Allsebrook gave us a £1,000 interest-free loan for start-up costs. A kettle and six mugs were purchased. Stewarts Nurseries gave us stock plants representing their one hundred best selling varieties. A greenhouse was erected and the first cuttings were taken. The site was broken into and vandalised for the first time.

In October a full-time member of staff was employed and the nursery could open five days per week and more volunteers could start.

20,000 cuttings were rooted – a success rate of 95%. 5,000 native tree seedlings were planted. By the end of the year twenty volunteers were attending, and many were also studying horticulture at Kingston Maurward.

At Cherry Tree we have always known that everything we needed would have to be fundraised for or donated. With a lot of hard work and generous help and support we gradually acquired more buildings and expanded the nursery.

**1991** A caravan was acquired for a separate volunteers' tearoom; and standing-out beds were created for our newly potted plants. We appeared on TV for the first time.

**1992** After two years of watering by hand, the North Bournemouth Rotary Club and their French twin at Chateau Gontier funded an irrigation system. A wildlife pond, flowerbeds, tool shed and potting shed were built. The nursery was being broken into constantly.

**1993** Was the year we raised enough money to fund flush toilets to everyone's delight! This year also saw the first plant display and information area constructed. British Gas donated a van to the Christchurch Gardening Service for the elderly and disabled which we had been running since early 1991. The volunteers adopted Michael's Night Shelter for the Homeless as their special charity.

**1994** Bournemouth Borough Council granted us the second half of the site to expand the Nursery. This meant lots of clearance work of all the logs stored there, fencing the entire site, and enlarging the car park. A bigger office was acquired. Cherry Tree's show garden and stall at the Bournemouth Garden & Flower Show was featured on BBC South Today.

**1995** We drained and levelled the site, laid proper paths and gravelled the beds. We laid a central path across the nursery which we then filled with plants. We visited the House of Commons, and spoke for the first time at a National Conference. The Citizens' Advice Bureau Service officially started.

**1996** Our sixth large polytunnel was built, the display area slabbed and extended, and the whole nursery laid down to slabs and gravel. The literacy class started. The first Harry Roffey Day trip took place, to Kew Gardens.

**1997** The volunteers' new large tearoom was donated by the Fire & Rescue Service in Dorchester. The old tearoom was converted into a computer room and courses started. The first information hut was erected and benches installed in the display area. A major fundraising drive enabled us to install our greenhouse and propagation unit. Our third TV appearance, on Meridian TV, took place.

**1998** More polytunnels and the first shade tunnel were built, followed by an extra large polytunnel and the shade house. There was major vandalism. Volunteers visited the House of Lords.

**1999** The kitchen was upgraded. A borehole was dug looking for water without success. New storage facilities were acquired, and a new water pump.

**2000** This year we raised funds for the Quiet Room, the new Toilet Block and the new Training Room to be installed. The Courtyard Garden, with water feature, was built.

**2001** The new workshop was completed, also the extended sales area, the upgraded irrigation system and capillary beds. The first visit to the Eden Project took place. SWOP's second project opened at Chestnut Nursery. The Literacy & Numeracy group was awarded Group of the Year award. The first video of Cherry Tree was produced.

**2002** We replaced many slabs and extended the Information Area and the car park. More capillary beds were built and the stock bed mypeked. The Computer System was upgraded, and security cameras were installed.

**2003** Cherry Tree won the Queen's Golden Jubilee award. The disabled toilet was installed and the multispan tunnel erected.

**2004** Liz Pitkin went to the House of Commons to receive the 'Older Volunteer Hero' award. We put a tarmac surface on the road and the car park and improved the nursery entrance.

**2005** Cherry Tree Nursery volunteers' Bolivia Group started. Water supply enlarged.

**2006** We built and opened the Function Room. Cherry Tree was highly commended for The Beacon Prize. The DVD was updated. The standing stones were donated.

**2007** The Local Nature Reserve, which we are part of, gained the Green Flag Award. The Wildlife pond was completed. The Old Information Centre was demolished, and work started on the new one. New potting stations and the tree area were completed.

**2008** The New Information Centre was completed and opened. New computers donated. A former volunteer started work as a nursery van driver. Recycling centre built.