

Gardening4Health Newsletter

Edition 3 Autumn 2024

I've realised that my timing for the release of these newsletters is always a little behind the curve. Any of you that know me well will think this comes as no surprise! Looking out of the window today I see that my definition of "Autumn" is not Autumn at all – but is in fact the time that Winter takes a proper hold. It's no accident that I'm perpetually a few weeks behind with my viewing of Gardeners World as well; one of the down-sides of "Catch-up", so my Gardener's clock is always set a little late. Is this cause or effect? Whichever - enough excuses!

Cause for celebration this "Autumn" as the Directory had its 500th garden added.

The latest project is [The Listening Space](#) - a project based around a community garden located in a GP surgery in Kentish Town, North London. There's lots going on here – over and above the garden – all for the wellbeing of the Surgery's staff and their patients. It's well worth having a look if you have a moment.

Also worth highlighting is their participation in the [River of Hope](#) - a scheme that links residents with local services and projects in Kentish Town and Camden. Empowering people to engage, connect, and live healthier, happier lives through community support and participation.

Altogether a very fitting 500th entry!



A National Association of Social & Therapeutic Horticulture

Many of you will be aware that [Thrive](#) and [Trellis](#) have been working towards the formation of a Professional Body for STH.

Led by them, and using their shared expertise, networks, and hard work: a Professional Development Forum (including a wide range of Professionals currently working in the world of STH) has been working on this since 2021.

The first fruit of all this hard work is the recent publication of a draft [Code of Ethics](#) to support the work of practitioners working in therapeutic horticulture. This code will be one of the main guiding documents for people working in the sector, and especially those who apply for inclusion on the accredited register of STH practitioners.

If you are not already involved in the Professional Development Forum, but would like to know more, please register your interest by completing this [short survey](#).

Autumn Symposium - The Safe Green Space: Gardens and Health



We had a wonderful day on 6th November at [the Serge Hill Project](#): a day full of learning, sharing, and connecting, as Serge Hill and Gardening4Health combined forces to host a symposium.

Sue Stuart-Smith gave the keynote speech: expounding on the themes from her bestselling book [The Well-Gardened Mind](#), it was at the same time beautiful, educational, and inspiring - and the tone was set.

Arit Anderson and Keely Siddiqui-Charlick followed, moving us seamlessly from laughter to tears, as they showed us how projects like [Sunnyside Rural Trust](#) can impact people, gardens, communities, and the planet, and how anything's possible if you have enough cake!

I gave a brief update on Gardening4Health and our plans now we're officially a charity.

Next up was Ruth Madder from [Bridewell gardens](#) - an in-depth look at working as a Social and Therapeutic Horticulture practitioner.



After a delicious lunch with time both for chat and wandering in the stunning Barn Garden and Plant Library, Kurosh Davis brought us back to calm and focus with a stunning solo performance of Bach on the viola.

Then came an afternoon of immersion into [Horatio's Garden](#) - Olivia Chapple - founder and Chair of Trustees spoke about their incredible journey, before interviewing Joe Darrell.

Joe's been a patient in both the Glasgow and Stanmore spinal units. With modesty, humour, and honesty, his story will leave a profound impression on all who heard him.



Tom Stuart-Smith described the challenges of designing the Stanmore garden, and illustrated the beautiful and functional space it has become. Finally head gardener and horticultural therapist Ashley Edwards explained the many ways the space is used, and the phenomenal impact it can have.

Horatio's Garden is not just about the gardens. It's shone a spotlight on just how dehumanising our healthcare system - both in terms of its space and its processes - can become. The gardens in many different ways are showing us a better way forward for holistic healthcare.

Thank you to Millie Souter and Derek Hunter for the garden tours, and an especially big thank you to Becky Fincham for masterminding the day for us. It ran without a hitch.



Lastly, thanks to Tom and Sue; the Safe Green Space they've created here was the perfect setting for such a brilliant day.

Gardening4Health charity status and Patrons

Since the last newsletter, we've had our charity status confirmed by the Charities Commission. To this end I wanted to introduce our six Trustees and our three Patrons – all amazing people.

We met recently at Tuppenny Barn for the first in-person meeting of our Board of Trustees.

Founder and CEO Maggie Haynes showed us round the site, inspiring us with all the extraordinary projects that go on there.

Maggie is one of our six founding trustees, along with Farah Brooks-Johnson, me -Richard Claxton, Boyd Douglas-Davies, Wendy Fenn and Anne Wagstaff.



We spent the day planning the next steps for Gardening Health - and how to build both the network, and our goals around STH: through provision, connection, education and growth.



Arit Anderson, Dr Olivia Chapple OBE, and Dr Sue Stuart-Smith have all kindly agreed to be our Patrons.

I suspect they're all well known to you – so need little introduction, but you can read more about them, and all the Trustees, over on the ["Our People" page](#) on the website.

Infographics to help promote Social and Therapeutic Horticulture

Dr Carly Wood is a Senior Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Science at the University of Essex and Director of the Health, Exercise and Active Lifestyle Research Group there. Her research is focused on how nature-based interventions can be embedded within health systems to ensure access for all. She spoke about this at Tuppenny Barn last year.

As part of her work, she's produced some useful Infographics designed to be shared with service users, health professionals and policy makers/commissioners. There's also a guideline for their use.

They can all be accessed through the website [here](#). Also, you may want to click the link below to catch up with a webinar where all of this is explained, and there's also a useful short film from an STH provider on the Healing Power of Gardening. We're keen to get these shared as widely as possible, please download them and send them on to your networks.

https://essex-university.zoom.us/rec/share/Ti1QdtHrhMihluPKSTcdeSUy1dEoh-aLXII0-IrZqjlr5sgc78XRj76vbms9RwxJ.AfCwXd8lgn82g_RP

Have you thought about trying social and therapeutic horticulture?

Social and Therapeutic Horticulture uses **gardening** activities to improve health. Evidence shows it could:

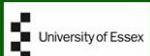
- Reduce symptoms of mild to severe depression and anxiety
- Enhance skills, knowledge and social relationships
- Improve both physical & mental health

It can be used where depression and anxiety are linked to other health conditions or concerns (e.g. loneliness) and alongside other types of treatments. It can take place indoors and outdoors, and in both community and healthcare settings.

FIND OUT ABOUT GARDENS NEAR YOU BY:

Speaking to your GP, Social Prescriber or health professional
OR
Searching for a local provider and self-referral information at
<https://gardening4health.co.uk>
<https://www.trellisscotland.org.uk/>

This poster was co-produced with lived experience experts and STH stakeholders

MQ Mental health research  Scan the QR code to access the poster online 

National Evaluation of the Preventing and Tackling Mental Ill Health through Green Social Prescribing Project

Many of you will have seen coverage in the press this summer following the publication of the final report from this project. A collaboration between DEFRA, Sheffield Hallam University, Exeter University, and the University of Sheffield, this was a two-year £5.77m cross-governmental Shared Outcomes Fund initiative to improve the use of nature-based settings and activities to improve mental health and wellbeing.

It caught the headlines due to some punchy summary findings to capture both the imagination of clinicians and commissioners alike.

'Better than medication': prescribing nature works, project shows

Scheme helping people in England connect with nature led to better mental health, report finds



More than 8,000 people were helped to take part in activities including community gardening. Photograph: RachelDewis/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Figure 1 What The Guardian had to say

People with mental health needs were supported to access nature-based activities seven centres: Humberside, South Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Manchester, Surrey and the West Country.

The image shows the front cover of the report. At the top left is the Sheffield Hallam University logo. Next to it is the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research logo. To the right are logos for the University of Exeter and the University of Sheffield. The title 'National Evaluation of the Preventing and Tackling Mental Ill Health through Green Social Prescribing Project' is in the center. Below it, it says 'Final Report - March 2021 to June 2023' and 'January 2024'. The cover features several small photographs of people engaged in outdoor activities like walking, paddleboarding, and gardening.

They reached a broad range of people compared with earlier social prescribing schemes, with 21% from ethnic minority populations and 57% from economically deprived areas.

There were statistically significant improvements in wellbeing (ONS4) following participation: Happiness increased from an average of 5.3 to 7.5. o Life satisfaction increased from an average of 4.7 to 6.8. Feeling that life is worthwhile increased from an average of 5.1 to 6.8. Levels of anxiety reduced from an average of 4.8 to 3.4. •

In one pilot depression symptoms reduced from 8.1 to 5.6 and anxiety decreased from 11.1 to 8.5 (Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale).

In another pilot levels of physical activity increased from 84% to 95%.

The project also found the cost of a green prescription was about £500, making it cost-effective compared with other treatments. Cognitive behavioural therapy costs about £1,000 for 10 sessions.

Estimated social return on investment of £2.42 per £1 invested by HM Treasury Shared Outcomes Fund and national partners.

The estimated social return on investment is £1.88 for every £1 invested in the project overall.

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/centre-regional-economic-social-research/projects/all-projects/national-evaluation-of-the-preventing-and-tackling-mental-ill-health-green-social-prescribing>

Therapeutic Garden Tours

A new venture: [Therapeutic Garden Tours](#) offers professionals working in the field of Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, or anyone interested in this field, the chance to join specialists Cath Manuel and Anna Baker Cresswell on a tour of leading Therapeutic Horticulture organisations and gardens.

Their first tour is on 28th September 2025 and will include visits to Horatio's Garden, Chelsea Physic Garden, Serge Hill, and Tuppenny Barn.

To find out more or register your interest [click here](#).



The Growing Well Garden

Lastly, I wanted to highlight a lovely piece on Gardeners' World from a few weeks ago all about [The Growing well Garden](#)

It tells the story of how Devon GP Susan Taheri set up the garden from scratch, on land adjacent to the surgery where she worked, with the aim of providing a more holistic offering to her patients.

If you missed it you can watch it by clicking the link [here](#)