

The Wonky Garden – Our Story



We are based at Ditton Community Centre, Widnes, Halton. Together with volunteers, we have created and nurture therapy, children's and allotment gardens supporting mother nature throughout the seasons.

All of our practices are 100% chemical free and focus on minimising our carbon impact.

We support physical and mental health, enhancing life skills and educating about food and the natural environment, garden maintenance and DIY skills. Our plants and cut flowers are used for therapy and gifting to individuals and local groups and the majority of our edibles are gifted to a local causes.

The Wonky Garden CIO is a registered charity (number 1204894).

You can find out more about us on our Facebook, Instagram or Twitter page @The Wonky Garden.

Our journey started in February 2018 when we were invited to take over an allotment behind a local community centre by Halton Borough Council (HBC).



The Flower and Children's Gardens 2018



The Flower Garden Transformation



Work started with creating wide herbaceous borders, then the garden buildings, shelter and accessible pathway and lots of trees.



The Flower Garden Today

We have a heart in the garden now. We also have much needed wildlife supporting trees, shrubs and perennials. The greenhouse and potting shed are a hive of activity for sowing, potting on, nature-based activities, creating bouquets and relaxing with volunteers or visiting groups and individuals.



The Allotment 2018



The Allotment Garden Transformation



The Allotment Garden Today

With our growing capacity extended, we grow a huge range of edibles and cut flowers. The shelter is the perfect space to prepare our harvest and flowers and gather with attending groups to enjoy nature-based activities all year round.



Creating 'The Yard' 2023 - 2024

We wanted to extend our capabilities to become more self sufficient with growing our own plants, grow more to gift and to create a Community Network Group. Halton Borough Council were, once again, really accommodating and we have finally completed our infrastructure!



How we Support our Community



Our Community Engagement Focus:

- Additional needs, vulnerable and disabled children and adults, including hospital inpatients.
- Bereaved, carers and individuals of all ages experiencing life-changing health issues, isolation or loneliness.
- Year-round education to primary, secondary and college students in addition to work experience and internship opportunities.
- Victims of modern slavery, asylum seekers and refugees.
- Gifting (one of our biggest community engagement impacts):
 - Food to our local foodbank and social supermarket.
 - Edible, perennial and cut flower plants to our Community Growing Network (14 groups).
 - Cut flowers and mini plants to those in need of a pick-me-up.

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Our wonderful Volunteers



Our Wonderful Volunteers



Volunteer Engagement



- Balance enthusiasm with what can reasonably and joyfully be achieved.
- Always, always include a chatty break, brew and snack.
- Word of mouth has been the most powerful way to attract volunteers (especially through gifting).
- Always ask potential volunteers what they want to do and why us.
- Keep the dialogue going, encourage input and experimentation.
- Saying yes straight away can have its downfalls, always 'try before you buy'. Trial periods are essential; team fit, personal expectations, safety.
- Remember. volunteers are just that - they come and go and are with us to have a better day - they sign for themselves, not necessarily to mentor or assist others.
- If someone has additional needs insist on a mentor until everyone is comfortable that it is the right environment and that they will be safe.

We have received some wonderful recognition and awards



- Royal Horticultural Society Participation and Recognition
 - Half hour episode of Britain In Bloom
 - RHS Tatton Flower Show/School Gardens
 - BBC North West Community Garden
 - RHS Britain In Bloom In Your Neighbourhood – recognised as Outstanding
 - RHS filming June 2024, as part of 60th anniversary 'Friendship' theme
- Media spotlights: BBC Radio Merseyside, BBC North West Tonight, Five Live, The Guardian, Express, Sunday Mail, Mirror, RHS Magazine, Peoples Friend and Women's Weekly, Women and Home, Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- Winner, Cultivation Street UK Garden for Better Health October
- Member of The National Garden Scheme
- Winners of BBC Make a Difference Award

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