

The world-class Alnwick Garden...

in development



ROOTS & SHOOTS PROGRAMME

In recent years there has been increasing public concern about the quality of children's diets, rapidly increasing rates of child obesity, diet-related diseases, and low consumption of fruit and vegetables by children. Many youngsters, particularly in the inner cities, cannot relate to where their fast food comes from. Children have little or no experience of seasonality because supermarket shelves stock popular produce all year long. The taste of a strawberry fresh from the garden is a completely different taste experience.

Children shown carrots complete with roots, dirt and shoots are amazed that they are all different shapes and sizes, bearing little resemblance to the washed carrots bought in the plastic bag. Many children leave school with only rudimentary cooking skills. They do not realise that they can actually grow some of what they eat themselves. Children who typically turn up their noses at vegetables will eagerly taste fresh kale and radishes if they have grown the crops themselves. Having a child experience the taste of freshly picked peas, beans, and tomatoes creates memories that last a lifetime. It also helps them make healthier snack choices

The Alnwick Garden Trust has a specific role to play in promoting healthy life choices especially around healthy eating and family activity as part of our key charitable objectives. We would therefore like to run the following activities as part of an annual programme, named 'Roots and Shoots':

Gardening for all ages - Children and gardening make a natural combination that has yielded positive results for generations. Whenever you ask an adult gardener how they got started gardening, invariably it was thanks to a caring relative or neighbour who helped them when they were young. Gardening is a way to connect with family and pass along a legacy. This project is an example of intergenerational learning with many activities designed to bring younger people in contact with the older generation, creating real opportunities to learn new skills, sample traditional gardening methods and learn about organic methods



Gardening is often seen as an elderly persons hobby and not something for young people to enjoy. We aim to change that with a focus on children's gardening and courses in basic horticulture for those young people keen to learn more. The satisfying experiences of planting, cultivating, and harvesting fruits and vegetables can create a lifelong appreciation for healthy living. The Roots and Shoots project will use the nursery garden for demonstrations, opportunities for first hand experiences and a source for growing produce to create our own healthy dishes. Children can learn new skills, have fun, play and develop self-confidence by spending time in the garden tending plants and growing their own food. Most children enjoy being outdoors and love digging in the soil, getting dirty, creating things and watching plants grow. We will also include a number of family gardening activities which will be an opportunity for children to bring their parents along to learn about gardening. Children will also be able to take home a starter pack of seeds to sow in their own gardens at home.

Grow Cook and Taste Programme - Throughout the year we will run a series of cookery demonstrations and tasting sessions using the produce in season. Our Head Chef will devise a range of healthy food options that will appeal to a wide audience. Our portable cooking units enable us to cook outside or in classrooms. The emphasis will be on local fresh produce.

When people are persuaded to try unusual vegetables or fruit they are more likely to respond favourably in a supportive, non-challenging environment. During our local Nettle Fest, visitors were given the opportunity to taste nettle cheese, nettle tea, nettle soup, nettle beer and even nettle ice-cream. The more adventurous were even persuaded to eat the nettles raw.

In a series of opportunity to taste workshops called **Tastebuds** children and adults visiting the garden will be encouraged to try a wide variety of fruit and vegetables, for example, during Play Week, children have the opportunity to make their own fruit kebabs.

Delicious Desserts – The Alwick Garden is well known for our delicious desserts and this will be a feature of our project. Our Head Chef will create healthy delicious desserts and teach people to make them.

Project Outcomes

Fitness and Wellbeing - The simple act of digging a hole, raking soil, pulling weeds, and hauling buckets of water works various muscle groups in the body. Researchers found that, with proper guidance, 30 minutes of gardening burned more calories than a 30-minute aerobics class. Plus, gardeners get the benefit of the fresh air and fun.

Encouraging 5-a-day – We hope that by enabling children to taste more unusual fruits and vegetables that they may be willing to try them more at home.

Using fresh produce – We aim to show parents how easy it can be to prepare meals with fresh produce and how different fresh food tastes compared with processed, convenience foods.

Linking food to health – We aim to increase peoples knowledge diet related illness such as heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes and cancer.

Gardening interest – We aim to change the perception of gardening as being a hobby for older people and promote it as a fun and interesting family activity for both adults and children.

