



Dorset Gardens Trust Schools



Lockdown e-newsletter - July 2020



HELLO AGAIN! We have been missing you.

We do hope that you are all well and that school life is gradually becoming easier.

Thank you everyone for all you have been doing for the children. It must have been very tough coping in these days of isolation and social distancing so we were thrilled when one school wrote to thank us for our help last year in creating a suitable space outside which could be used AND enjoyed by the children who had returned to school, they called it "an inspirational resource". We were also excited to hear about one child who had been having lessons outdoors and described her day as "we have been doing worms and insects". Much has been written about the benefits of gardening during these times and the DGT Schools committee would like to offer our help; ideas, training, worksheets, advice and where possible some financial support. Remember you can contact us on schools@dorsetgardenstrust.co.uk

WE ARE INCLUDING SOME REPORTS FOR YOU TO ENJOY AND HOPE THAT THEY WILL INSPIRE YOU TO HAVE A GO YOURSELVES WITH SOME OF THE PROJECTS MENTIONED

It seems such a long time ago now but last year Tara Kirwin went for a training day with the RHS at Wisley - here is her report.

A Day at RHS Wisley

Thanks to a bursary I received from the Dorset Garden Trust, I was lucky enough to spend a day at RHS Wisley learning how to teach Edible Gardening to First School children.

Although the weather was appalling we did manage to complete the programme, and also keep dry.

The day started with a talk about what are considered by the RHS to be the 15 best crops for children to grow. The information can be found on their Campaign for School Gardening web site. It is a tremendous resource for teaching gardening to children, and especially how to link gardening to the curriculum in subjects such as maths, science and English. They also showed us how to garden on a tight budget and in limited space.

The techniques were all very basic so you did not need to be a particularly good gardener to implement them. The course gave us the opportunity to work on the allotments and in the greenhouse. We also had extra talks from the "Head of Edibles" on composting and green manures.

If you have a chance to go on one of their courses, or indeed just want to visit the garden at Wisley, I can thoroughly recommend it. The lunch was quite nice as well.

The photos below show us talking about compost, and then seed planting in the greenhouse next to the allotment.



Remember - if you think your school would benefit from a teacher attending such a course we can award a day's training bursary to successful candidates. Please apply saying how it would benefit your school.

We also heard from ALLENBOURN School

This week the **Allenbourn** pupils have been busy sharing their stories of Lockdown using the book 'My Hero is you...' as inspiration, children have produced a variety of types of books to both record their experiences and explore those of others around the world. To further mark the reopening of the school after school closure the children and staff have planted 14 plants; 7 colours of the rainbow to celebrate our return to school. These plants are June

flowering, which should serve as a beautiful reminder to us all each year about the resilience and hope we have demonstrated during this time. All children and staff enjoyed planting these flowers, rain or shine and have enjoyed the first step in our school community coming back together once more.



And our congratulations to Mudeford Infant School - on their wildlife pond transformation!



Lockdown Project - Transforming the School Pond into a Haven for Wildlife By
Vicky Myers

When the school closed due to Corvid 19, we hunkered down at home and I wondered what we should do about the school garden. As coordinator of a small group of parents who volunteer to help with the gardens at Mudeford Infant School, at the very least I was keen to keep the learning garden growing fruit and vegetables over the lockdown period. Luckily, with the Head Teachers permission, we decided to regard it as similar to an allotment and continue gardening. I set up a Whats App group with some of the garden volunteers,

inviting anyone who was interested to continue our work, initially on a one volunteer per day basis with our children if we wanted, or if more than one volunteer was there, we had to follow social distancing guidelines. Coordinating at a distance meant the results were not always as expected, but we managed to keep the learning garden growing and we have almost finished improving the area around the school pond. Our project to make the pond area more attractive to wildlife was supported by funding from Dorset Garden Trust which paid for plants, tools, mulch, new hoses and a new hedgehog house. To make it easier for wildlife to get into and out of the pond we cleared the gravel away from the back of the pond and used the gravel we collected to create a new path to the bug hotel. Then we planted the area behind the pond with heathers, grasses, Buddleia, Salvia and Nepeta and other plants that encourage pollinators. We buried in an old water feature to create an additional wet area outside the pond where creatures could hide and drink. Then we mulched the area to stop the weeds and hold some moisture into the soil. Hopefully, we will soon be adding a log pile and burying some tree stumps to encourage stag beetles. As I write this, we are now in June and the school has reopened, but with smaller class sizes so children are only in for school for two days a week. Corvid 19 restrictions mean that our volunteers are no longer able to work directly with the children, however the school staff have been making the most of the outdoor space for teaching so children continue to benefit from the learning garden and pond area. As a parent who manages the school garden on a volunteer basis, I wanted to say thank you to Dorset Gardens Trust for funding our pond project. It will really help improve the quality and diversity of the work we do with the children.

It was marvellous to hear from **All Saints Primary School at Bishops Caundle**

Throughout the 'lockdown' staff have taken the opportunity to use our wonderful outdoor areas and get pupils more involved in nature. . During this time our staff and pupils have built raised planting beds, planting a variety of vegetables and flowers. In addition we have prepared and planted a wildflower area and, surrounding these, a number of tyres which have been planted with colourful and aromatic flowers, herbs and shrubs. Furthermore, we have enhanced and rejuvenated our pond area.

Gardening

Pond

More raised beds



Taking advantage of our superb new areas, pupils have also been involved in a number of nature based projects. These include building a wormery, hatching butterflies, searching for bugs and minibeasts and pond dipping...

From cherry tee...



...to cherry pie



All of our nature based activities are followed up with research and wider curriculum activities such as poetry, writing fact sheets, art, story writing & telling and cookery.

Minibeast hunt



Fruit picking



New wildflower area



Any bugs?



What has also been lovely is to be able to eat lunch outside (nearly every day), to explore and play (including in our forest school area) and to have more opportunity to be inquisitive and investigative about the wonder of nature. Our new and enhanced facilities have also enabled us to focus on the mental health and well-being of our pupils: all the more important in these unprecedented times.

The staff, pupils and governors of All Saints Primary School would like to thank the Dorset Garden Trust for helping to make our 'lockdown' period so much more inspiring and enriching.

Thank you All Saints and many congratulations!

WE HOPE YOU HAVE A WELL- DESERVED SUMMER HOLIDAY AND THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO COME AND SEE YOU AND SUPPORT YOU IN SEPTEMBER. IF YOU WISH TO CONTACT ANY OF US PLEASE REPLY TO schools@dorsetgardenstrust.co.uk

GOOD WISHES FROM THE DGT SCHOOL COMMITTEE