



RHS Press Pack

Nature's Haven Tea Garden

RHS Hampton Court – Allotment Section, Plot 671

Co-founders: Aleksandra Brown and Claire Charalambous

Contact Number: 07880775731 Email: info@natureshaven.net

Website: www.natureshaven.net Instagram: [natures.haven.garden](https://www.instagram.com/natures.haven.garden)

Based at: The Community Centre, 4 Marlow Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 7HY

The Tea Garden:

This is our first attempt at creating a show garden. The RHS event is an absolute highlight in our calendar and our volunteers, including the BCA students, have been busy sowing seeds and potting on numerous plants; maintaining and watering plants; preparing wood for the raised beds; collecting jam jars and preparing labels for the dried herbs; collecting frames to display recipes etc.

All the plants in the garden, both fresh and dried, can be used to create healing and therapeutic herbal tea infusions to soothe mind, body and soul. Not only can the leaves of Manuka bushes be brewed as a medicinal tea but the flowers attract the bees to produce Manuka Honey which can be used as a natural sweetener and potent antibacterial agent.

On the allotment we will be celebrating the nation's love of the humble 'cuppa,' two land girls will brew a cup of tea in a nod to the 80th anniversary of D-Day, along with star of Red Dwarf, The Brittas Empire and Nature's Haven's celebrity ambassador, Chris Barrie.





Nature's Haven:

At Nature's Haven, we understand that green spaces and gardens are more vital than ever as we continue navigating an unprecedented strain on our health and welfare resources in the UK. We aim to give people of all ages a place of refuge from the stresses and anxieties of our society. A safe space in which to decompress, be mindful, connect with others, learn and have fun.

Gardening can help everyone, regardless of age, ability, gender and culture. We can't guarantee solving or making issues disappear but it can certainly help us to process and deal with them. We strongly believe gardening gives us hope and faith in the future, a philosophy that needs promoting and nurturing.

We are completely volunteer led and provide opportunities and events to engage as many people as possible in our community, thus creating a feeling of connectedness. Our existing initiatives give participants the opportunity to explore the advantages of gardening health benefits, being in nature, growing / preparing their own food and connecting with others to create a true community hub that focuses on the mental and physical wellbeing of local residents and beyond.

Ultimately, our primary goal is to better the community, often through collaborations with other local community groups. We also work closely with the local Social Subscribers in facilitating their clients at our garden site. We are strongly involved with The Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) especially with their Adult Learning for Independence and Education (A.L.F.I.E) neurodiverse students for volunteering and education purposes. We are delighted to have these BCA students as part of our team of valued volunteers. We implement Social Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) programmes and concentrate on a person-centred approach, working either on a 1-1 basis, in small groups, for people who may require additional support, and in larger groups, where there will be more of a focus on social interaction.

Our most valuable asset is our amazing volunteers; they are the glue that holds our community together. Their range of qualities, skills, expertise, and diversity are so very appreciated and we are ever grateful to them all. Therefore our RHS Hampton Court Allotment Show Garden project is very much a collective project where everyone can get involved in the creative process, growing plants, and ultimate delivery of a truly exciting and imaginative garden.

At Nature's Haven, we offer many opportunities to get involved such as the volunteering, educational workshops, community gatherings/events. Currently our offerings include:

- 'Sow, Grow, Eat... Repeat'
 - A series of educational workshops for children and adults alike, helping individuals develop their knowledge of growing their own food regardless of whether they have a windowsill, balcony or garden. They can gain an understanding of the nutritional benefits of growing your own and eating seasonally; acquire knowledge about the healing power of fruit and vegetables; prepare and cook some of the produce grown.



- Corporate Volunteering Days
 - Our aim is to provide our corporate volunteers with a fun and rewarding day in the fresh air, with the opportunity to work hands-on in our beautiful gardens. During corporate volunteering days, participants experience a great team-building opportunity, whilst supporting the community and making a positive difference to the lives of people living with disabilities, wellness and health issues.
- 'Fireside chats' at our fire pit area
 - Here the community is warmly welcomed to hear guest speakers on a variety of topics such as nutrition, herbal medicine, wellness tools, gratitude nature walks, homeopathy etc. The firepit is also the perfect social gathering spot to indulge in hot chocolate and marshmallows after a hard days graft in the gardens.
- Other workshops
 - Other workshops include flower arranging, hanging basket and Christmas wreath making use of the plants in the garden. We also hold craft workshops including bug hotel construction, bird feeders, wind chimes

Feedback from our volunteers and clients has proven that Nature's Haven is facilitating a much needed therapeutic, social and accessible support system. We are seeing the many benefits of a sustained and active interest in gardening and these include:

- Improved mental health through a sense of purpose, achievement, improved memory, cognitive abilities, task initiation, language skills and socialisation
- The opportunity to connect with others, reducing feelings of isolation or exclusion
- Better physical health through exercise and learning how to use or strengthen muscles to improve mobility, co-ordination, balance and endurance
- Acquiring new skills to improve the chances of finding employment - learn to work independently, problem solve and follow directions
- Just feeling better for being outside, in touch with nature and in the 'great outdoors'. The sights, smells, textures, sounds and taste help us be present in the moment.

Collaborations:

NHS Frimley, Berkshire College of Agriculture, Waterside Inn (Roux), GoodGym, Maidenhead United Football Club, Goyals (work wear), Braywick Nature Reserve, Waltham Place, Green Skills Library, Travis Perkins, Solo Stove, Lavender Green, Windsor & Maidenhead Community Lottery.

Corporate Volunteering:

British Gas, Centrica, Travelport, MCS (family owned rental software solutions business in Maidenhead).

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