



A PIONEERING SHOW GARDEN



‘My name is Royce. Me and my friends have a learning disability and we have built this garden. Please come and see our garden and we can tell you about having a learning disability.’

Furzey Gardens: Reflective waters of inclusivity

653A

Press release: Immediate release

People with learning disabilities create garden at world's largest garden festival

A group of gardeners with learning disabilities have created a show garden at the world's largest flower show this summer after receiving huge support from the public.

After issuing a call for support in March, the gardening team have received over £10,000 through donations and a raffle, with the Royal Horticultural Society contributing £1,000.



The team from Furzey Gardens in Minstead have been travelling to RHS Hampton Court Garden Festival this week to build a garden that will be seen by up to 140,000 people over the show week from 1 to 7 July.

Many of the gardeners have spent a lifetime struggling against discrimination and lacking in the opportunities that many other people enjoy.

The garden will allow them to demonstrate the horticultural skills they have built over many years working at Furzey Gardens, which is run by local charity Minstead Trust. The gardens have been supporting people with learning disabilities for nearly 40 years, where they maintain the gardens and raise plants for sale in the nursery.

The funds raised have assisted with significant materials, transport and support staff costs required to undertake this ambitious garden build. Plant growing and buying costs will also be supported by these donations.

The show garden aims to help change perceptions in society towards people with learning disabilities. Many still feel socially left out and face stigma and discrimination in their everyday lives (Scior & Werner, 2015). Gardening can play a role in giving people purpose in their life and a chance to show what they can achieve.

The garden is inspired by a small waterfall area next to Furzey's popular lake area and features plants for which the woodland garden is renowned for. Local artist Shaun Stevens has created an artist's impression of the garden, which is named 'Reflective waters of inclusivity'.

Supported gardener Dan said: 'I'm just glad I'm getting involved with it, I'm just happy. Gardening makes me very happy',

Supported gardener Rhianne said 'I'm looking forward to telling everyone what we do here, what we like to do. When you're outside it gives you time to think what you're doing and it helps you to get out of your head'.

John Davies, Minstead Trust senior instructor, said: 'This is a really exciting challenge the guys are taking on, a chance for them to show what they can do if given opportunities that are usually not available to them.

'Many of them have been through really hard times in their lives and this is a chance for them to stand at the show at the end of this journey and feel really proud of what they have achieved. I hope people will support us so that we can change some minds around what people with learning disabilities can do if given a chance.'

Find out more about the garden at www.minsteadtrust.org.uk/hampton

- ENDS -

Notes to photo editors

Some of the Furzey Gardens supported gardening team that have helped bring the Hampton Court show garden to life.

Notes to editors

Furzey Gardens

Furzey Gardens is an informal woodland garden near Lyndhurst, which is open to the public. It is a social enterprise of Minstead Trust, providing training and work experience in an inspirational setting where people with learning disabilities can learn new skills in horticulture and hospitality.

Minstead Trust

Minstead Trust, established in 1986, is a charitable organisation whose aims are to support people with learning disabilities to achieve greater independence, lead fulfilled lives and live as full citizens in society.

Minstead Trust currently supports over 320 people in Hampshire, Portsmouth and Dorset. We offer people the opportunity to develop skills for work, skills for life and improve their health and wellbeing.

1. Work-based skills: training in practical skills in a range of work settings, including the expectations of a workplace such as time management, health and safety and customer service.
2. Health and well-being: physical and creative activities to promote health and leisure skills
3. Life skills: practical training in the skills of everyday living, both in the home and out in the community

Training and support is provided through day opportunities, support for people living in their own tenancies or our residential care home, respite short breaks and community pay-as-you-go groups.

Furzey Gardens: Reflective Waters of Inclusivity – plant list

Acer palmatum dissectum

Astilbe x arendsii, Sunny days

Astilbe x Arendsii, Happy days

Bacopa white

Brunnera macrophylla 'Jack Frost'

Carex Comans, Bronze

Dicksonia antarctica

Eleocharis acicularis

Fatsia Japonica

Festuca glauca, intense blue

Hosta, Wide Brim

Hosta Patriot

Hosta Coast to coast

Lamium maculatum 'white nancy

Ligularia, The Rocket

Lythrum Salicaria

Nymphaea, *virginalis*

Purple loosestrife: *Lythrum salicaria*

Rosmarinus officinalis, Blue cascade

Salvia farinacea

Trailing lobelia



Illustration by artist Shaun Stevens

About the garden

Our garden was designed by Andrew Bentley, Head of Horticulture at Furzey Gardens. It is a representation of the peaceful lake and waterfall area at Furzey Gardens in the New Forest has been built by gardeners with learning disabilities. They have used their horticultural skills to construct a pioneering garden featuring two tranquil pools linked by a cascading display of *Festuca glauca*, trailing lobelia and white *Bacopa*.

The ponds are surrounded by informal planting, including hostas, *ligularia* and fern. An *Acer palmatum dissectum*, Japanese Maple, stands tall showing off a vibrant leaf canopy, with fairy doors hidden among the planting for you to find.

Around the waters edge you will find pebbles containing the initials of people who learn and grow at Furzey Gardens. This garden shows the importance of celebrating every person and recognising they are an individual capable of great potential – if only they are given an opportunity to thrive.’

Background information on Furzey Gardens and Minstead Trust.

Furzey Gardens is 10 acre woodland garden, nestled in the heart of the New Forest, Hampshire. A haven of peace and tranquility, it is open to the public and it is run as a social enterprise of local charity Minstead Trust to support people with learning disabilities.

The gardens were first planted by the Dalrymple family as an informal woodland garden in 1922: containing botanically and historically significant plant collections from around the world with a wide range of trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials, such as *Acers*, *Rhododendrons* and *Primulas*.

In 1986 the Minstead Training Project was established at Furzey Gardens by Martin Lenaerts, a former cistercian monk with a gardening vocation, working with five young adults with learning disabilities. Horticulture is known to offer real benefits through outdoor physical and therapeutic activity, providing important work and social skills and an opportunity for meaningful activity.

Today the garden supports approximately 30 people with learning disabilities and 20 volunteer each week, working hard to maintain the Gardens and bring on plants in the plant nursery. The gardens are part of the Minstead Trust family which supports over 300 people with learning disabilities through a variety of services.

In 2012, Chris Beardshaw designed a garden for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and involved staff, students and volunteers to show what people with learning disabilities can achieve with appropriate support and ambition. The garden won a Gold Medal and an interpretation has been replanted at Furzey Gardens.

Minstead Trust provides training and support that improves the lives of people with learning disabilities.

This includes support services that help people to live in their own homes and to learn new skills in day opportunities. We also run employability programmes that support people to learn work skills and gain work experience that can lead to paid work.

Work experience opportunities are available across our social enterprises, which include Furzey Gardens, Hanger Farm Arts Centre, Lily&Lime and Minstead Lodge conference and events venue.

We support more than 300 people along the south coast of England, from the New Forest to Portsmouth.