

# Let Nature Feed Your Senses



## Getting growing

This is the story of two neighbours in a Somerset village coming together to help realise the dreams of a small group of people living in the local nursing home. The group's passion was to grow and eat their own food! In their long and full lives they had had gardens of their own, for some it was growing flowers, for most it was the pleasure of eating freshly grown fruit and veg that they longed for. For all of them it was the joy that comes from being outdoors, hands in the soil, hearing the birds and muscles tired from hard work, that they missed.

The activity coordinator, Helene Taylor, of Fosse House Nursing Home was a keen gardener and her new manager had arranged for some raised planters to be built. They were in the garden but empty when Sue Padfield, the farmer next door, came around in early Spring 2013 to say she had funding from the Let Nature Feed Your Senses (LNFYS) project that could help them get growing, were they interested?

Sue had been hosting farm visits for elderly people for the past four years and some of the residents from Fosse House had been to the farm before. They had enjoyed the experience of being on a working farm and many of them had been viewing the crops and the cows from the care home windows. Sue had noticed the home's beautiful gardens and wondered how she might be able to bring some of the farm to the home in this final year of the LNFYS project.

What follows is the result of a small group of passionate people working together.



## Getting started - what would you like to grow?

"In May I gathered as many residents as I could in wheelchairs around a table covered with sensory rich plants and herbs, seed packets, old gardening gloves, books, hand trowels covered with soil, gardener's string etc, and bought a rather expensive cherry tomato plant laden with fruit. There wasn't much response initially, there weren't many words spoken between us, but slowly the aromas, the textures, the vision of the jumbled mess of gardening knickknacks on the table began to awaken the residents. The grand finale was them pulling the cherry tomatoes and popping them into their mouths.

"The aroma and taste of home grown tomatoes instantly takes me back to being a child in Dad's greenhouse... fond memories.

"The sensory rich table offerings had rekindled something. Lists were compiled of all the things they wanted to grow to eat and also flowers to enjoy and attract wildlife." Sue

*Where's the best place to be inspired to grow vegetables?*



Iain said it sounded like a great idea but he had some reservations as to whether the kitchen staff would use the fresh produce.



Iain



Hilda, Joan and Helen listening to Mark's talk. Joan bought rocket and nasturtium seeds.

Sue and Helene organised a community mini-bus to take the group of budding growers to their local garden centre. Almost all of them used wheelchairs to move around so they needed a centre that would make it easy for them to get to the plants and find what they wanted. Sue had contacted Mark, the community champion at Dobbies, before they arrived and explained the project to him. Mark offered to do a little talk to the group on herbs and vegetables and what they each needed to grow successfully. Dobbies was inspired by the group's aspirations and donated them a huge range of plants to kickstart their project.

*"The residents had a truly fabulous time, enjoyed a garden care talk and returned laden with donated vegetable and herb plants. We now have a very positive group, excited about growing their own. Result!"*

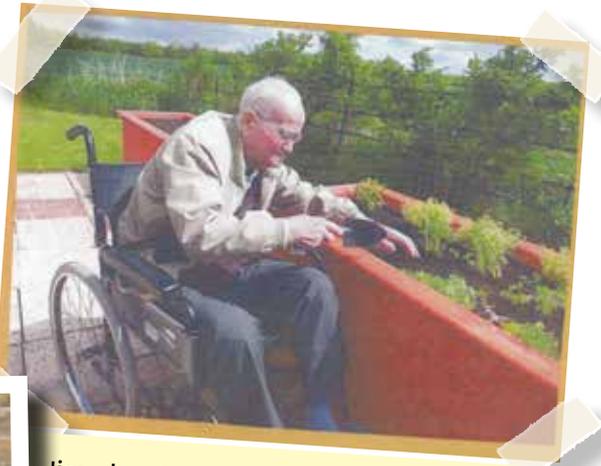
## From planters...

Helene felt the impact of the garden project quickly, "I mean, the mood in there is completely different. I used to get ignored by so many people when I'd try and talk to them, and I even got sworn at or completely blanked. Now they are engaging. They are actually shouting across the room and asking for my opinion."

Fosse farm in the background



Tomatoes against the south-facing wall



Jim planting out the Dobbies seedlings.

*"I think the enthusiasm of actually seeing something that we planted coming on and getting onto the table and being eaten and enjoyed, I think that is just driving him to keep going."*

"They have picked up on everything. They are coming out and saying, 'Have you seen this? This is growing now. We have got this. We have got that. We have got such-and-such coming on.' And they are taking so much pride in it. The mood has lifted. They are happier to get out. And so that enthusiasm has spread to so many other residents that I didn't even imagine it would touch - Iain, Paul, Jim."

## ...to plates



Brilliant! They are so involved. Brian, bless him, he is out here now. And he loves the weather. He likes to be an outdoors kind of guy. And he's out with the gardener on a regular basis.

Before, he would be staying in his room quite a lot of the time watching DVDs. He likes shire horses. So he used to watch his DVDs quite repetitively. We'd try and get him into the lounge to interact with others but, I don't know, I sort of felt I was failing him in some way. I'd never really got that interaction with him. But he loves the garden, absolutely loves the garden. He can't wait to come out here."

For supper the residents had cold meat, pickles and salad. Iain was very keen to ensure that the lettuces grown in the garden were harvested and used in the salad. He asked Jess, the kitchen assistant, to help him pick the lettuce. It was the first time she had picked a growing lettuce and she was nervous. Thereafter she was always asking, "What's ready to serve today?"



# Visiting the neighbours

In June, Iain, Paul and Helene popped over to the farm to see the calves, watch silage and hay making, view the huge farm machinery and chat with Jeremy, Sue's husband about today's farming methods. They felt the soil between their fingers, savoured the farmyard smells and observed deer and hares in the distance.



Iain and Paul discussing Sue's runner beans.



The calves meet Iain



Jeremy Padfield on hand for technical questions.



Paul recalls driving tractors



The smell of freshly cut grass was wonderful.



Sharing silage stories

*"In my day you had one tractor and five horses."*

Paul was a farmer most of his life and delighted in being back amongst the machinery, the smells and the business of the farmyard. He loved it. "It was wonderful. I really enjoyed it. It brought me back about, what, 40 years, when I used to work on the farm. But of course, it's all changed now with machinery. In my day you had one tractor and five horses. Of course, we had dairy cows. I used to start at 6 o'clock in the morning, get the cows in. I used to start milking them. I used to have a bloke come in at 8 o'clock, he was in his 70s, and he used to take over the milking because I had to go out and feed 120 pigs!"

*"One resident, just days before he passed away, spent time watering the farm vegetable allotment, his great niece told me she could think of nothing more fitting to do as he had always had a deep passion for gardening - the smile on his face that day was priceless." Sue*



# To market...

The success of the trip to the Garden Centre inspired another expedition. The weather was beautiful, sunshine with a gentle breeze, the day the group went to Frome markets. They were keen to see the fresh fruit and vegetables and the livestock. Going to the busy Frome markets was something many of them had not done for years and a wonderful outcome of the day was that many bumped into old friends they had lost contact with.

Glynnis (Rita's daughter) bought Rita green grapes, dates and peaches. Rita's face lit up when she saw all the fresh fruit, especially the dates as they are her favourite. Iain bought fresh peaches and enjoyed sharing them. Brian and Pat went straight to the fresh fish counter. Pat bought Brian a pot of cockles (his favourite) which he polished off in no time at all! Iain managed a bacon sandwich and an icecream!

*"They had normal conversations and saw the price of things."*

Being at the markets was stimulating and confidence building. The group left feeling they had done the sort of things they would have done prior to living in a nursing home. They bought and ate some of their favourite foods, browsed and bought plants for the gardens, had conversations with friends and were part of the busy atmosphere of their local market.

*"The residents needed courage to believe they could manage the outing."*



# The project gains momentum

Sue and Helene set up a sensory table in the dining room - this would give residents that are unable to leave the dayroom an idea of the season, an opportunity to smell and handle fresh herbs and flowers and to stay in touch with the progress of the garden. Relatives soon began to add to the fantastically rich display and brought boxes of their own home grown vegetables and fruit for the kitchen to use.

“Someone brought in mint for the table, the smell gets all around the home, it’s lovely. The residents look at what’s been brought in and the staff are picking up what’s on the table saying, ‘Can we have this upstairs?’ And asking about the different plants. Quite a few of the kitchen assistants have taken a real interest, ‘What can I harvest?’ ‘What’s ready?’ ‘Can you tell me what these are and how I use them?’” Helene

## Sensory Table



Before



A relative brought in plants when he saw the sensory table. He said, “Well, what can I bring you?”



Happy Fathers Day!

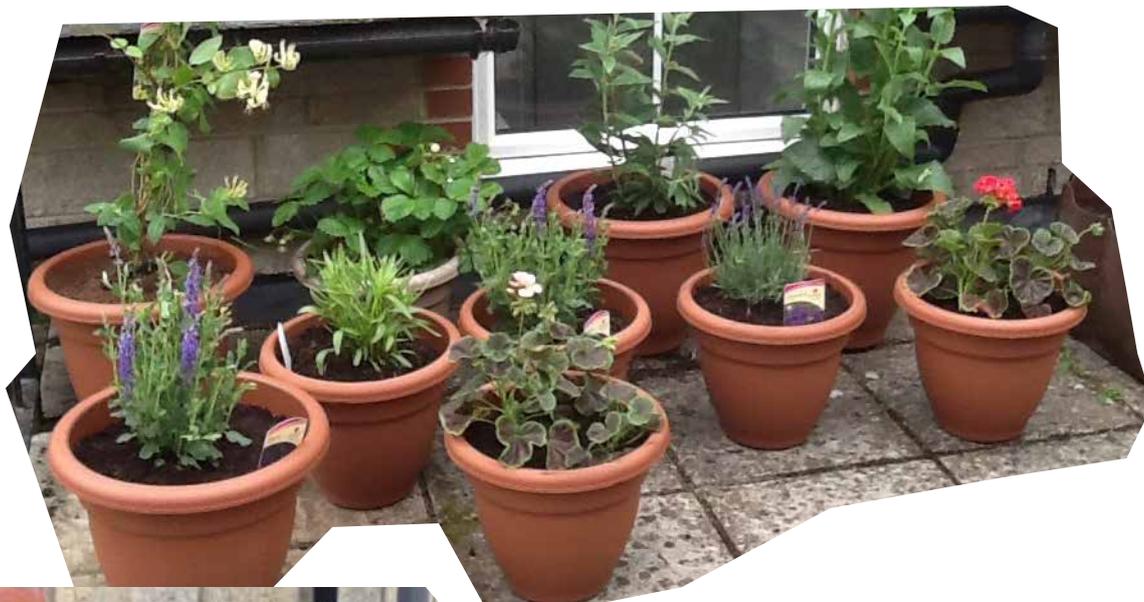


For Fathers Day Helene gave each of the men a small pot filled with seed compost and two seeds to plant. “We are having a growing competition to see who can grow the tallest sunflower!”



# 'Upstairs' residents join in

"Spurred on by an oncoming inspection of the care home from the gold standards award team, we noticed the patio area on the first floor of the home could benefit from a make over, Dobbies were very generous again in donating suitable sensory rich plants which bloomed all summer, providing fragrance and colour which encouraged the residents to venture out onto the transformed patio area, strawberries were an absolute favourite crop to harvest. Residents and staff enjoyed jolly conversations sat under parasols and a blue summer sky, surrounded by an abundance of buzzing bees and butterflies." Sue



## A few practicalities make it all possible!

To make the upstairs patio work for the plants and the people it had to have a water supply. A water butt solution, installed by Fred, the home's gardener and handyman. The watering cans were proving challenging for many of the frail residents who lived upstairs. Sue found some with a pump action. Perfect, now everyone could join in caring for the thirsty strawberry plants in that hot summer of 2013!

Helene made strawberry flapjacks for the residents with the upstairs strawberries.



# Good gardeners keep records!

The LNFYS team were keen for Helene and the residents to keep a shared diary of their "getting growing" exploits. They gave Helene a large scrapbook hoping she would add some notes about progress. The result was a very creative and compelling story of the first year, one that everyone is proud of. It also inspired some surprising results.

Helene found the effort worthwhile. "I think the journal has helped, because we could see where we were and how we have progressed. You know that is amazing because we could talk about it, but unless you have got evidence, people just tend to forget about things. But we have actually got it documented. So people could see the journey and realize all we have done. When people have donated money towards the scheme, they've actually sent a second donation having seen the pictures."

*"We had some amazing news this week. We have been sending out pictures and details of our gardening project to people who kindly donated money to Fosse House as a thank you when their loved ones have sadly passed away. One family has been so impressed with the work we are doing here that they have donated £500 to continue the good work."*

*Helene*



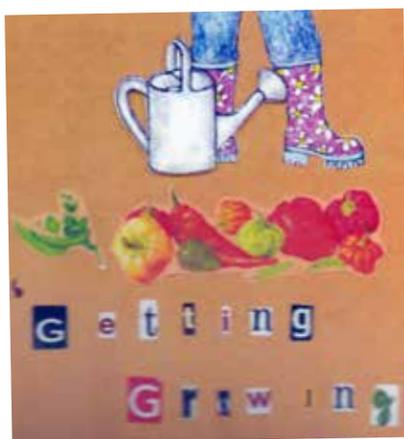
Jim always enjoys sharing the garden with his family.

## Aims of the journal

- A lasting record of the project
- A way of rekindling memories
- Share progress with residents confined to the indoors
- Share the project with sponsors
- A conversation starter with visiting family

## Unexpected outcomes

- Fundraiser
- Promotion
- Knowing the residents



"We have family members delving into it. From that, I am picking up stories that they might have said, 'Oh, Mum used to do this' or 'Dad used to do that.' That helps me immensely, and just the fact that families are engaging with it is so wonderful.

"I have had lots of comments about how nice it is to see something positive coming on in Fosse House and that we are getting people outside. Even people who don't have family here. We had some nurses here for a blood donor the other day. One was blown away by the scrapbook. She had never seen it before and was completely enthusiastic about the fact we are doing something with our residents and encouraging them to be so active outside."

# It takes a village to grow a garden



Four residents and their families went to the village Family Fun Day event. The local Village Hall Fund paid for a minibus. They picked up Iain, who had left Fosse House to live independently. Fosse House had a stall showing off the "getting growing" progress. Iain and Sue chatted to locals about the project. There was a lot of interest and encouraging feedback.



## Result!

Students from Downside, a local school, said they wanted to come and help with the gardening project.

## New challenge!

Bini, an Indian chef who runs a local cookery school, said she would buy excess produce from the residents for her cooking classes.



## Working on sustainability

Promoting the project at the village fair was an important way to gain wider support for the garden. Sue also wrote an article in the village newsletter and spoke to the parish priest. This was essential: LNFYS would finish at the end of 2013 and funds and helping hands would be needed. The Downside students would be great for helping with the tasks that were too physical for the residents. To help raise some funds Fosse House held a Harvest Auction and raised £135!

## And

Having seen the many benefits of the project, the care home manager made an allowance of £100 to the activities fund each month.

# The students arrive

The Downside students started their weekly hour-long visits by helping harvest the runner beans. One of them has a passion to be a film director and started filming Brian picking the beans and Iris slicing them. This precious film of the two generations contentedly working together was shown at the LNFYS national conference to great acclaim.



Rose painted her first ever picture, Brian looked on admiringly!



The lounge was transformed by colour and fragrance. Rosemary and mint from the garden were used too.



Eileen preferred to look through her family photographs.

“One lady with severe dementia was asked if she would like to join in with painting some autumn colours. She replied, ‘I’ll try.’ It was a special moment, I had only ever heard her say, ‘I don’t know,’ when asked such questions. Her painting was beautiful and is displayed proudly in the day room and on record in her care plan.” Sue

## The story spreads!

### Nature's legacy

A PROJECT to reconnect people of all ages with their environment and locally-produced food has inspired one group of students to take it in a new direction.

Sue Padfield, whose family farms at Stratton-on-the-Fosse, has been working with Let Nature Feed Your Senses for the past four years.

As well as encouraging youngsters to visit local farms, Sue decided to create links with the Fosseway House residential home in the village. She worked alongside staff to encourage the residents to learn to grow their own food



Sue with one of the residents during an art session at Fosse House

which the home's catering team now use. Dobbies Garden Centre in Shepton Mallet supported the project with donations of plants and equipment.

A stand at the village's fete in September – where a scrapbook about the success of the scheme was on show – attracted a group of students from Downside School, who volunteered to visit the home on a regular basis to make friends with the residents.

Sue said: “It's a wonderful outcome. Let Nature Feed Your Senses has been a fantastic experience for me and I was so pleased when the students approached me.”

Let Nature Feed Your Senses project, an England-wide project that connects people with nature through food and farming, is run by the Sensory Trust. Working closely with the organisation LEAF, it has been coordinating thousands of visits across the country for people who would not normally have the chance to visit a farm - all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

# Another partnership on the horizon

Bini Ludlow met Fosse House residents at the village fair and was enchanted by their 'getting growing' story. Sue arranged for Bini to introduce herself to everyone at Fosse House to discuss her idea that they could supply her cookery school with some fresh produce. She ran an Indian cooking demonstration for their pleasure! She cooked a spicy Indian omelette and a vegetable curry.

One of the residents, Vic, surprised everyone as the sights and smells of curry brought back his memories of living in India when he was in the navy. These were special times for him as he loves spicy food. He pulled his wheelchair as close to the table as he could and spoke about the wonderful street food he loved eating. He gave Bini's cooking a big thumbs up. Vic's wife had recently passed away - he said that the cooking demonstration had given him a new lease of life and he felt it helped him turn a corner. Vic gave a heartfelt impromptu thank-you speech to Bini.

"Brings back memories this. It is making my day!"



"I wanted you to see what I could do with your vegetables."



What spice is that?



# It's been a big year in the garden!

Getting growing grew all this in their first year!

## Upstairs patio

Salvia  
Honeysuckle  
Coreopsis  
Begonia  
Verbascum  
Strawberries  
Runner beans  
Yellow and red  
cherry toms  
Aubergine  
Sweet pepper

## Outdoors

Carrots  
Spring onions  
Basil  
Golden thyme  
Mint  
Sugar snap peas  
Rosemary  
Parsley  
Oregano  
Lettuce  
Mange tout  
Broccoli  
Radish  
Beetroot  
Tomatoes  
(black Russian,  
moneymaker & F1  
Oregano)  
Marjoram  
Mint  
Cucumber  
Potatoes  
Chard  
Endive  
Strawberry  
Rocket  
Nasturtium  
Sunflowers

## Meals

Lettuce for supper  
with cold meat and  
pickles  
Mint for mint sauce  
Thyme for seasoning  
Strawberries in  
flapjacks  
New pots with  
chicken casserole  
Spring onions in  
cottage pie  
Potatoes and chives  
in potato salad  
Tomatoes in salads,  
quiche, casserole  
Herbs with roasts  
Runner beans and  
butter  
Lots of fresh veg for  
dinner!

## Other

Mint to keep the flies  
away  
Rosemary for  
fragrance  
Flowers for pressing

# *And a big year for the growers*

When the project began no one knew what impact it would have on the people involved. Over the course of several months the project team interviewed staff and residents, asked Helene to fill in a lengthy survey and Sue to keep notes, all as a way of understanding what the impacts were.

What we did know from research was that several principles embedded into the growing project should have a positive impact on people's health and well being. And that all of the below naturally occurs when a group of people come together to do manual work to achieve a goal over time and get the opportunity to share with others eg: "getting growing". Some of the key research points included:

- Increased control through personal responsibility and choice affects physical and mental alertness, activity, sociability and general satisfaction in nursing home residents. (Langer & Rodin, 1967)
- More successful ageing occurs when a person feels a sense of usefulness and purpose (Butler, 1967)
- When physical effort is directed towards something we want when we attain it the reward is greater. (Lambert, 2008)
- Anticipating something pleasurable creates more activity in the pleasure centre of the brain than actually achieving the goal. Making with our hands is particularly important as moving our hands activates larger areas of the brain (cortex) than any other parts of the body. This type of deep pleasure and satisfaction through action is called by neuroscientists 'effort-driven rewards'. These provide not just a sense of emotional well-being but also an increased feeling that we can control our surroundings, which leads to more positive emotions. (Lambert, 2008)
- Sharing experiences increase their emotional impact. ( Bryant and Veroff, 2007)

## *A lot of positive changes...*

### *The atmosphere in the home changed and staff joined in*

"Much nicer environment to work in. The whole project has encouraged everyone to work towards the goal of gardening. The residents are so much happier and that in turn has a positive effect on staff and their working environment. Keen interest by several staff to start growing their own fruit & vegetables. They are enjoying engaging with residents about the garden. Encouraged to work more outdoors. Bringing the 'outside world' inside for all to enjoy."

### *Relatives have engaged in the project too*

"Jim's family bring in fresh produce from their own gardens (sweet peas, seed potatoes etc). They often sit and read the 'Getting Growing' journal together. Brian's wife Pat is very committed to supporting her husband. She has brought him gardening gloves and a 'Head Gardener' badge. Brian is very proud of the work he does for this project. Another resident's son heard about the project after looking at the sensory table in the downstairs lounge and so donated vegetable plants to help the project."

## *From Helene's notes on changes in the residents*

"Iain took charge of the project. He went outside every day to check and water the plants and he really takes notice of what's going on. Now he'll call me across the room, and say, 'Helene, have you seen such-and-such? Have you looked at the broccoli? We have now got three spears.' (Before the project we didn't speak to each other very much). His determination to do well continued through to his own condition. He became more positive and determined to walk again, helping to rehabilitate himself. He moved into independent living, I would say that the project helped this along."



*Brian helping Fred in the garden*

"Brian has changed enormously. Previously he would regularly try to leave the grounds and begin walking home. Being involved with the gardening project has helped him feel more settled, he helps the gardener and sees the care home as his home now. He spends as much time outdoors as he can helping and tending the garden. He enjoys chatting to the students and is more interested in what is going on now."

"Jim looks at the journal regularly with his family. He'll go through the book with his daughter. It's funny, because even though he's read it all, he always starts at the beginning of the book and then goes all the way through it again. It's lovely. Because his family will pick up on, oh yeah, we did this trip and we did that with you, do you remember? And he loves it. He really does love it. You can see just that pure joy of talking through everything with his children. Before, I wrote everything down in a little book for him but I didn't really get much interaction. Now with the journal, he's starting to come out with stories of what he used to do. He is proud of his achievement. He benefited enormously from his companionship with Iain, they often worked together tending the garden. They were a team."

*"I recently lost my wife, the gardening project has helped me focus on something positive"*

*"Our home grown vegetables taste so much better"*

*"He seems so much more calm, less argumentative"*

*"It's given me a purpose to get up in the morning"*

## Team work created the positive results

"Sue allowed residents time to express themselves clearly. She encouraged every resident to do their best and was quick to praise every effort made. She was so positive, friendly and approachable. She made you 'feel' like a long lost friend and couldn't do enough for you. Nothing was too much effort for Sue. She would regularly 'pop in' and see everybody, giving up her precious time. She showed so much commitment to the project. If she promised to do something – she DID IT!"  
Helene



With huge thanks to everyone



A final word from Helene...



"For so long, I have wanted to do a gardening project with the residents but never got very far with it. We needed funding, but we also needed enthusiasm and people to help us, which we were lacking on all scores. But I was really determined that we were going to do something with it this time. So before we even got involved with Sue and LNFYS, we had two raised beds built. So we had that ready. So there was sort of some groundbreaking beginning. But then when we were able to join with Sue, that was when everything just kick-started it!"

And we haven't gone back!

# FOSSE HOUSES



“ G e t t i n g  
G r o w i n g ”

*“Living is not enough,  
said the butterfly,  
“One must have sunshine,  
freedom, and a little flower.”*  
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN



Let Nature Feed Your Senses is a partnership between Sensory Trust and LEAF, supported by Natural England's Big Lottery funded Access to Nature programme. For more information [www.letnaturefeedyoursenses.org](http://www.letnaturefeedyoursenses.org)