

# The Healing Power of Plants

Two inspirational stories about how gardening has helped turn the lives of young people around.

In July we celebrated the 2017 winners of RHS School Gardeners of the Year – our annual competition to find the most inspiring gardeners in schools and groups across the UK. Every year hundreds of individual young people, teams and adults are nominated for one of our awards, each with their own story and journey. This year we found two exceptional people that show just how powerful the garden can be in transforming and improving the lives of young people. These are their stories.

## Fraser's story

Fraser White is a 10 year old boy from Dairsie Primary School in Fife. He is full of smiles and one of the most polite young men you could meet. But three years ago Fraser began suffering from severe anger issues. Fraser admits that everything about school made him frustrated and aggressive and he would regularly beg his parents not to make him go in.

"He struggled to control his temper and was generally mad at himself and the world" said Ruth Selbie, Fraser's class teacher. "In school we tried several strategies to help him, but it was his love of the outdoors and gardening that ultimately helped him learn to control his behaviour."

Fraser says that gardening "was like something that came from above" because it was calming, and helped him to clear his head. It's also helped him to make friends, which he never thought possible.

Today, Fraser is an amazing ambassador for his school and community garden, even giving up his Saturdays to help maintain the garden. He has forged links with a local nursery, passing on his skills and knowledge to the young children, and is helping to raise awareness of the bee decline and the impact it will have on the world.

Fraser is an inspiration and his incredible transformation into this confident and enthusiastic boy won him the title RHS Young School Gardener of the Year 2017. In his own teacher's words:

**"Fraser is a walking advert for the good gardening and caring for nature can do to a person."**



## David's story

David Nicol is a science teacher at The Good Shepherd Centre in Renfrewshire, a Secure Unit working with some of the most disadvantaged and underrepresented young people in Scotland. Many of the students are placed at the Centre by the Children's Hearing System or Criminal Justice System due to being a risk to themselves or others. The Centre provides these vulnerable young people with a safe place to live and positive life-changing experiences through education and skills development.

For most of the students at the Centre, a garden was something that other people had or which existed only in the realm of television. Through his incredible dedication, David has changed their perceptions completely and given them ownership of a garden they can be proud of.

David was nominated for RHS School Gardening Champion of the Year by the Education Manager, Tom Laurie. The award is designed to recognise adults within schools and groups who are committed to giving young people the opportunity to connect with nature and develop their skills through the power of plants. David, who went on to win the award, demonstrated incredible resilience, always going above and beyond to engage and inspire the students at the Centre.

Through his work, these young people now have an increased awareness of the environment, are growing and eating their own produce and have attained national qualifications in science and biology. Together, the students have also completed all five levels of the RHS School Gardening Awards and have successfully achieved the Green Flag Award from the national programme Eco-Schools.

"David has been an inspiration to our young people, opening the doors for them to a world of which they had no previous conception" says Tom.

**"He has been successful in establishing partnerships with local organisations which has provided our young people with the opportunity not only to undertake work placements, but also to enhance their citizenship skills."**

Through our resources and training we hope to give teachers and leaders the tools they need to unleash the therapeutic power of plants, giving young people a safe haven where they can de-stress, channel frustrations or find peace.

Our website provides nearly 300 downloadable resources covering topics and activities for all ages and abilities, as well as rural or urban settings. You can also join us on one of our training courses to pick up new ideas and share your experiences with other adults and teachers. Head to [schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk](http://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk) to find out more.

If you know a young person, team or adult who inspires others through their work in the garden, you can nominate them for one of our awards. Nominations will open in January 2018 when full details will be available on our website.