

and learn in nature

Award portfolio

Connecting people, plants and nature



Name of Participant or Group: The Green Gardening Club & Mon Eh Plants

Describe your GLiN project site:

Our project will be taking place in the greenhouse within the grounds of Rowanbank Clinic. Rowanbank is a medium secure forensic mental health unit, situated in Balornock, Glasgow. Our greenhouse is located inside our enclosed grounds and is in regular use with our client group taking part in Occupational Therapy and horticulture sessions. It boasts a spacious working area as well as eight outdoor planters surrounding the greenhouse. We also keep it well stocked with tea and coffee, purely down to how many clients we see day-to-day and the space is often utilised by clients as a chilled out place for sitting and chatting with a cuppa amongst the various plants and shrubbery. As our greenhouse is in use most days, it is kept tidy and full of plants and pots that are in various stages of growth. An area was set aside for our project both within the greenhouse and some space outside in our planters that should give us more than enough room to work with.

As Rowanbank Clinic is a medium secure unit, there are restrictions with regards to what can be used within the clinic (i.e. some gardening tools, aerosols, anything that may attract pests), so we may have to be inventive when brainstorming ideas for the project! (An example of this would be tasks such as "Make your own leaf mould" as restrictions within the clinic hinder us from using plastic refuse bags for anything other than rubbish).





Tick activities you will undertake for your GLIN project (Choose at least one from each section)

Section 1: Biodiversity and Nature

Y Provide food for pollinators, insect, birds and mammals		
N Provide water for pollinators, insects, birds and mammals		
Y Provide shelter for wildlife		
Y Conserve water		
Y Conserve natural resources (peat free compost)		
Y Reduce, reuse and recycle materials, especially plastics		
N Record biodiversity in your garden or greenspace		

Section 2 : Soil Health

Y	Keeping your soil healthy (no-dig, green manures, crop rotation)
N	Make your own garden compost
N	Make your own leaf mould
N	Applying environmentally friendly mulches
Ν	Top dressing & base dressing, environmentally friendly fertilisers



Tick activities you will undertake for your GLIN project (Choose at least one from each section)

Section 3: Plant Care
Y Pricking out, potting on and hardening off seedlings
N Thinning out seedlings
Y Planting out
Y How to water plants outdoors
N Basic shrub pruning
N Environmentally friendly weed management
N Environmentally friendly control of pests
N Environmentally friendly control of diseases

Section 4: Propagating plants beneficial to nature

Y Seed sowing
N Division
N Cuttings (soft-wood, semi-ripe or hardwood)
N Cuttings rooted in water
N Layering
N Collecting and storing seeds

Describe your GLiN project:

All of our clients have very limited gardening experience or even none at all. However, they are all keen to improve their knowledge and gain experience working within a horticultural environment. Some have spent time within our greenhouse, taking part in small tasks such as watering plants or taking cuttings, which they appear to enjoy.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, use of the greenhouse dwindled due to social distancing/client mixing and entire wards isolating from time to time. Because of this, many of our planters were left unfilled and there were no new plants within the greenhouse for a long time. Starting Grow & Learn in Nature will hopefully breathe new life into a greenhouse that had previously been filled with all sorts of plants and vegetables and was bustling with activity.

Time had been set aside to give the greenhouse a deep clean in preparation for GLiN and a dedicated area of the greenhouse was made available specifically for the project. Also some space had been cleared in our outdoor planters for us to utilise.

After liaising with our client group, we managed to get six people interested in taking part in our GLIN project. As we are limited with how many people can be in the greenhouse at the one time (due to social distancing requirements), the project would be split into two separate groups both with three budding gardeners in each. One group decided to called themselves "*The Green Gardening Club*" and the other group went with "*Mon eh Plants!*"

I met up with both groups to brainstorm and come up with ideas for the project and what



they would like to get out of it. The general consensus was that they wanted to improve their knowledge of horticulture and to gain first-hand experience carrying out tasks around the greenhouse and outdoors that would benefit the biodiversity of the grounds and local area. We had a look at the GLiN sections and decided on which ones we could carry out (bearing in mind the restrictions in place at Rowanbank Clinic).

"I'm really looking forward to starting this... I'm actually working towards something"

The first thing we decided to do would be to take photographs around the greenhouse and grounds for reference and so we would have a comparison to see the difference when the project was finished. Both groups came down one by one and utilised the camera, snapping pictures of anything that might be seen as relevant to the project. Photos were taken of the

work benches, outdoor planters and various other areas we would be utilising. Our clients appeared to enjoy working with the camera and it also seemed to give some a better idea of the type of work and different parts of the greenhouse we would be using.

With everyone ready to get started, we agreed that the first task we would take on would be "*Provide Shelter for*



Wildlife". We discussed various ways of doing this and our clients came up with some good ideas, building a birdhouse was suggested, crafting a safe place for hedgehogs was also put to the group, but we decided on creating bug hotels using recyclable materials as we have a healthy amount of insect visitors within the greenhouse. Both groups were tasked with bringing some recyclable materials down to the greenhouse and they did not disappoint. They brought milk cartons, shoeboxes, Amazon delivery boxes, juice cartons, polystyrene



cups and other recyclable bits and bobs as well as a re-usable plastic container that will house our recyclable materials, keeping them dry from the changeable Glaswegian weather. We then all constructed separate bug hotels using these items, with everyone doing well and showing how creative they can be. We placed them in areas around the greenhouse that receive the most insect traffic. Photographs were taken and we

decided to log any insect life inside them regularly for the rest of the project. Everyone seemed very pleased with their work and both groups left looking forward to any bugs that may take up residence within their respective hotels.

"I'll put my hotel under the table so they don't have to climb high to get to it"

The next task we wanted to tick off was "*Provide food for pollinators, insects, birds and mammals*", so again after a bit of brainstorming, we decided on cutting up apples and placing birdseed within the apple's flesh in order to attract more birdlife to our greenhouse. Once apples and birdseed were purchased, we set about carefully cutting the apples in half and placing some birdseed into the soft flesh and then placing the halved apples around the outside of the greenhouse in hope of attracting and feeding some avian visitors.

"I didn't realise flowers were food to animals and bugs"

As it was the middle of winter, most of our flowers had fallen victim to the cold and frost and, as a result, our plants and flowers weren't providing much in the way of food for pollinators. During January/February we began planting seeds for various flowers to provide



food for pollinators in the coming spring and summer. Flowers such as begonias, morning glory's, delphiniums and more were planted in propagators or straight into soil inside pots. The group seemed to enjoy the task of riddling compost and preparing pots and propagators for seeding.

We also planted vegetables inside pots in the greenhouse with the

view of harvesting them in late summer. Vegetables such as carrots, peas, salad leaves, basil, potatoes and tomatoes were planted both in pots and in our outdoor planters. We plan on utilising harvested vegetables in our OT cooking sessions which everyone seems excited about!

"Think about the money we will save when we're using our own stuff to cook with!"

When getting ready to plant vegetables in our outdoor planters, we did some research on

the benefits of adopting a "*no dig*" approach when working with soil. Neither I nor any of our participants realised the damage that digging in soil can cause, suffice to say we were all on board with adopting this approach wherever possible. With COP26 Climate Change Conference happening just down the road in Glasgow, it seemed fitting to utilise the no dig approach as a way of combatting climate change. This then led into a bigger conversation about small changes we can make around the greenhouse to reduce our carbon footprint and do our bit in talking global warming. We discussed and put into action different recyclable materials that we could re-use as well as limiting the amount of electricity we use day-today.

The groups both seemed to enjoy working with seeds and carefully pricking them out into the soil.



They all expressed an excitement about seeing the plants begin to sprout. Each time we are in the greenhouse, we are sure to take a note of growth since the last visit. Most seeds were planted around January-February and kept in the greenhouse to keep warm so growth has been slow but noticeable.

Bedding plants were purchased so everyone could get a shot of moving pre-grown flowers from propagators into bigger pots. Groups were given a choice of what they would like to



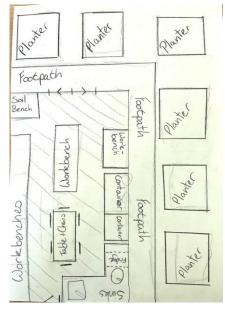
use and they wanted any selection of bedding plants. Pansies, hyacinths, primrose and violas were all purchased. Everyone was shown how to move these bedding plants into pots and then onto the outdoor planters once the warmer weather kicks in. We all took turns moving them and handling them carefully, ensuring we gave everything

enough room to grow and get plenty of sunlight during the day (if the plants require).

Next to tick off the list was clearing an outdoor planter for placing the bedding plants in once the temperature rises. The planters initially were in a bit of a sorry state. They had been left over the Covid-19 lockdown without regular care or maintenance and now were left baron looking and rather unsightly with moss and weeds growing in and around it. Firstly, we cleared all of the remains of the plants that were left in the planter. We created a

small map of each planter and used this to decide where we would be carrying out our work. Everyone was keen to get their hands dirty and appeared to enjoy removing the weeds and remains. The next step was to move the old soil out and fill the planter with new "peat free" soil. Utilising the spade and wheelbarrow, we took turns filling the wheelbarrow with soil and moving it over to the workstation and using the riddle to thin the soil down. The planter was then refilled and ready to be used when the weather clears up.

Now in April, some of our more hardy plants inside the greenhouse can begin to be placed outside as the temperature rises and sunlight is more abundant. Most of our bedding plants are beginning to flower and most of our pots with seeds have sprouted. The soil in these pots



were all pretty dry so we learned the best way of watering outdoors and everyone took turns generously watering each pot and planter. This is now part of our weekly greenhouse routine (given how wet the soil might already be).













Facilitator Feedback:

I had a great experience carrying out GLiN with our guys. As someone with very limited horticultural knowledge, I found myself discovering things about gardening that I wouldn't have known and have developed a real passion for working within our green spaces. It has also been brilliant seeing our clients enjoying working and mixing again after a very difficult two years of lockdowns and limited social mixing within our clinic. You can see how much this project has meant to them and brought a bit of routine back to their week as well as giving them an opportunity to socialise with peers in a nice and relaxed environment.

As far as carrying out tasks is concerned, I was pleasantly surprised how quickly our participants picked things up and how efficiently they worked as a team, it genuinely has seemed to bring them together as a group. Every session was different and the longer the project went on, daily tasks around the greenhouse became second nature and were carried out as part of the routine of being inside the greenhouse.

I would definitely do GLiN again in our setting. I think it has enhanced the participant's wellbeing during, what has been, an extremely taxing time for them.

Participant Feedback:

I spoke to all of our participants individually and discussed how they felt doing the course. Everyone that took part stated that they had enjoyed GLiN and enjoyed both the learning and physical aspects of the course. When asked, all of our participants spoke of how they want to continue learning about gardening and nature with some even wanting to seek future employment or volunteering in a horticultural setting.

Some examples of their favourite parts of the course are:

- Planting and moving plants into bigger pots
- Putting plants together inside planters
- Making bug hotels and checking on them
- Learning about local wildlife
- Taking photographs of project

Horticultural sessions are going to be continued within the greenhouse and so our participants can continue their learning and seeing how their plants get on throughout the year.

Overall, everyone had a good experience taking part in GLiN and have all gained an interest in gardening as well as improving their horticultural knowledge.



On completion of your GLiN project, make sure you have completed at least one activity from each section of the GLiN checklist: **YES**

Carried out 30 hours of GLiN activity: YES

What are your next steps? What is your gardening pledge for the future?

We aim to keep our greenhouse full of life and have it back to the way it was pre-pandemic.

Use recycled materials were possible.

Everyone involved in this project would like to continue to learn and continue gardening into the future, even using experience gained in employment or volunteer roles.

We will look to use vegetable and herbs that we have grown in our OT cooking sessions.

We plan on making trips to local allotments as well as larger sites such as Pollock Park and Kelvingrove.

We plan on learning more about local wildlife, their habitats and how we can make choices to help them thrive.

Signature: Paul McLellan

GLiN project start date: 21/10/22

GLiN project end date: 20/04/22