



The Birkby and Fartown Library Gardening Group

- ⇒ 39 sessions have been held to date
- ⇒ 63 individual participants have engaged with sessions
- ⇒ 2 new garden planters have been created
- ⇒ The library garden has been carefully maintained and improved for the whole community
- ⇒ New people have engaged with the library
- ⇒ One volunteer has gone on to find paid work and to do further volunteering around art and growing



Background:

“Do you happen to know anyone who likes gardening? We need something doing with the library garden, as there’s no-one to look after it...” - Jude Lynn, Kirklees Libraries

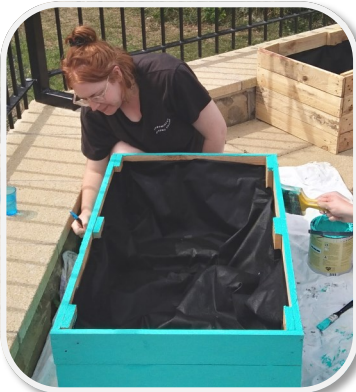
An impromptu chat with Kirklees Library Services resulted in S2R starting to run weekly gardening sessions at Birkby and Fartown Library. Anyone could come along and volunteer their time, skills and enthusiasm to help maintain the library garden. The library and garden opened during the pandemic but after a few lockdowns, the seeds previously planted by locals had gone awry and weeds had taken hold. Initially, S2R just planned to help with the initial set up of a volunteer group, but it slowly grew to be so much more and on Tuesday 26th April 2022, we held our first ever session in the library garden. Now sessions run every week with a raft of volunteers helping to maintain, nurture and grow plants in the garden. Over winter, the group utilised the ‘warm space’ to keep connected and offer horticultural-themed activities.



What We Do:

The group now meet every Tuesday from 11am - 12.30pm in the library garden and gardening volunteers with all levels of experience are welcome. Time spent in the garden produces positive results for the volunteers, the garden and also the local community. The volunteers help to tend the garden; weeding, dead-heading and general tidying. Some of them even bring plants that they have acquired elsewhere or grown at home to add to the garden. Skills, experiences, memories, trials and errors are all shared avidly amongst the group and they relish the discussion of ideas and future visions for the garden. All of the volunteers are encouraged to be self-led and to take the initiative. At each session, there is always a warm drink on offer and time is set aside for the group to connect with each other. We often have another activity on offer too, such as making seed-bombs, building bird feeders or learning how to make compost. In the summer, we upcycled two brand-new planters for the garden and also enjoyed a cook-up.





What Difference Has It Made?

- ⇒ A diverse group of people in Birkby are now engaged with both the library and the garden
- ⇒ The library garden is now maintained, nurtured, noticed and loved
- ⇒ People without growing spaces of their own now have the chance to increase their gardening confidence, be more self-motivated, have space to grow and have the opportunity to try out new ideas
- ⇒ The group has regular volunteers who warmly welcome newcomers
- ⇒ One volunteer has gone on to be employed by WOVEN as an artist-in-residence and is co-facilitating sessions for the gardening group
- ⇒ Some volunteers have joined in with other S2R sessions and have reignited a love of being outdoors
- ⇒ New connections have been made and new friendships formed. Some members have also supported each other to attend other S2R sessions and shared their social pastimes outside of the library group
- ⇒ Volunteers have donated their own plants, some of which have been grown from seed or cuttings, in their own growing spaces
- ⇒ Some volunteers have grown new plants in polytunnels at another S2R session and continued to develop active interests in gardening

What Our Participants Say:

"This is great! I thought it was just going to be a bit of gardening. I didn't know I'd get a coffee and it would be so enjoyable!"

"Being outside is the best therapy!"

"People who visit the library are really starting to notice a difference and have said how much better it looks out here!"

"I love meeting all the wonderful people who come here. It's a haven."

"I've come here on the right day because I'm suffering from depression and I need to do something like this."

"I'll choose some herbs. I'll take them home to look after and then I can bring them back when they are ready."

"So, I thought we could try a herb spiral in the centre. We'd need some bricks or rocks. I've seen it done and it looks really amazing."

"I've loved being part of the gardening group. The enthusiasm and support from the staff has been fantastic and helped us all to feel at home in the garden."

"I've enjoyed being outside and learning about the plants that were already growing in the planters, as well as the ones we've planted this year. It feels great to be part of a small, but growing(!) group, taking pride in this new project."

Find out more about this and other S2R projects at www.s2r.org.uk