

GROWING KIDS!



Four years ago in my role as a Methodist Minister my husband and I came to live in the village of Lepton on the West Yorkshire hills to be nearer most of our grandchildren who were growing up fast . We bought a cottage near the local village primary school they attended.

After just a few weeks a request went out from the school for a volunteer to head up a school gardening club for the children and my husband Mel, a gardener of some 40+ years agreed to have a go.

The group proved very popular with more than twenty children turning up for the first meeting. In fact numbers grew so much that soon there was a waiting list to join the club. In a fun way Club

sessions taught the basics of gardening including soil requirements, propagation, plant care and wildlife. Group sessions also included the children sampling any produce they'd grown, and new potatoes topped with their own made mint sauce proved very popular.

The following autumn the club members were learning so fast they'd grown enough vegetables to hold their own Soup Share and many villagers came to sample what they had made. The children were thrilled that through donations they were able to give money away to charity.

Sadly as Covid set in the school gardening club had to close for a while but the teaching did continue through Mel's gardening blogs and short videos which were watched not just by the children but by quite a few parents, many of whom had it seems become interested in gardening while in pandemic lockdowns. In fact, there was such an interest that one particular video on the simple skill of seed sowing received over 1,000 hits.



This year the school gardening club is up and running once more and the mini gardeners are keen to grow again.

This summer they've grown flowers under an RHS initiative set up to encourage gardening to help physical and mental wellbeing. Through this they were able to give over 200 healthy calendula (pot marigold) plants away to villagers in the local shopping precinct and at the Coffee morning at the Methodist Church bringing a smile to the faces of many as they emerged from the long difficult days of the pandemic.

With many of the normal school trips out being difficult, school visits to the Methodist Chapel became increasingly popular. Singing, story and crafts on a variety of themes, always followed by a sweet treat, as well as traditional egg rolling at Easter, have been well received.

In the autumn as part of the curriculum the school children are following the Dig for Victory theme leading up to Remembrance Sunday. A special visit to the Methodist Church is being planned and one thing the children will be taught is how difficult food rationing made the war years as part of their theme.

In the Bible gardens often form the backdrop to significant events, non-perhaps more relevant than in the creation story in the book of Genesis set in the Garden of Eden when we were charged by God to care for creation. Certainly, the village children in Lepton are learning quickly how to do that and their newly acquired skills are becoming a blessing not just for them but for many in our village.

Revd Sue Pegg - September 2022