

# HORATIO'S GARDEN

Improving the lives of everyone affected by spinal injury



## UPDATE ON WRAGS TRAINEE IN HORATIO'S GARDEN SCOTLAND FOR THE NINEVEH CHARITABLE TRUST, OCTOBER 2022

We are so grateful to The Nineveh Charitable Trust for the grant of £2,500 to help fund a WRAGS trainee in Horatio's Garden Scotland.

Horatio's Garden Scotland, located in the Queen Elizabeth National Spinal Injuries Unit in Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Glasgow, provides a place of escape for patients with spinal injuries from the whole of Scotland facing long, difficult stays.



During the last year, we have had two WRAGS trainees in the garden. Donna started in July 2021 and worked in Horatio's Garden one day a week. She left in January to take up another role and we now have Rose, another WRAGS trainee, as her replacement. Rose started in March and will be with us for a year. Trainees support all gardening requirements but also gain invaluable experience working with volunteers and engaging them in a variety of garden related tasks to benefit the gardens production over the year. The Head Gardener allocates a specific area for the trainees to have ownership of to develop their interests and skills. Donna chose propagation and Rose has taken responsibility for the vegetables growing in the kitchen garden plots. They have both developed confidence and plant knowledge in the placement to carry with them into future ventures and by assisting the Head Gardener, they provide continuity and skilled assistance which is appreciated greatly.

Each year we run patient surveys to measure the impact of Horatio's Garden Scotland. This summer's survey found that:

- **94% of patients said the garden improved their mental health**
- **100% of patients said the garden improved their wellbeing**
- **76% of patients believe the garden was helpful for their rehabilitation**
- **94% of patients believe the garden improves their mood**
- **100% of staff say patients benefit from having access to Horatio's Garden**

### Head Gardener Sallie Sillars' comments:

"Having a WRAGS Trainee in the garden is so helpful and getting the 'fit' right is always key. All I seek is someone who is willing to work hard and who has a passion for horticulture. Rose has fit this role very well; she also loves to share her newfound knowledge helping to build on existing volunteer development in turn.

Not only does she provide support to the needs of the garden she encourages me to keep a focus on the things that really count, from nurturing the parts of the garden that need a bit of TLC, to giving me the opportunity to develop my teaching skills. Creating interesting learning experiences for her training and for the volunteers

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is a key part of my Head Gardener role. This year I have begun to use a foraging method allowing for experiential learning that is interesting and fun, plus word association tricks for learning the numerous plant names, perfect for assisting at our Open Garden this year in which Rose took a key role as a tour guide.

Continuity is always helpful and her two day a week presence in the garden has allowed us to develop the garden and maintain it to a high standard for the benefit of patients, relatives, friends and staff, fulfilling our core aim with great pride. No two days are the same and being flexible to the need can be a hard thing to learn but Rose has kept focus and interest throughout, and the volunteers can rely on her support when needed. She has developed an interest in horticultural therapy, and she has begun to share her horticultural learning in patient workshops reinforcing her skills learnt in the garden.

She has taken on the development of the kitchen plots and has learned a huge amount about crop production, from seed sowing to harvest creating a sustainable year-long produce supply for the patients to use in kitchen skills and baking in occupational therapy sessions. We are about to come full circle and look at next seasons seed list based on what went well and what potential there is to develop the area for the future.”

**WRAGS trainee Rose’s comments:**



“I’m now over half a year into my WRAGS (Work and Retrain As a Gardener Scheme) placement at Horatio’s Garden Glasgow and it’s gone in a flash.

I started my placement at the end of winter and have seen the garden move through the seasons. In September I’ve loved seeing the autumn colours emerge and the magnificent structures left over from an incredible summer of growth.

I’ve learnt so much since beginning at Horatio’s. I’ve had hands on experience with a variety of plant propagation techniques, pruning, planting, plant care and maintenance, and plant nutrition. I’ve grown a lot of vegetables from seed, the star of the show being the Kohlrabi, with its vibrant purple alien-like form. I’m now looking forward to the annual autumn bulbathon to get the garden ready to look spectacular in spring next year.

I’ve also been able to get experience directly supporting patients through garden therapy. This has been a highlight for me. I’ve loved seeing how gardening can get people chatting and laughing together, in a green space that feels far removed from the clinical hospital setting. Head Gardener Sallie Sillars has been a huge support to me during my placement. Sallie’s an expert horticulturalist and garden therapist. She’s eagerly and patiently shared her knowledge with me and fostered my development. I feel very fortunate to have worked with her. Everyone at Horatio’s has been incredibly welcoming and generous. Not least the garden designer, James Alexander Sinclair, who’s encouraged me to have fun and be creative with my gardening.



The experience has been wonderful and I’m looking forward to working in the garden as it winds down further over autumn and into winter.”



We are so grateful to The Nineveh Charitable Trust for the generous donation towards a WRAGS trainee at Horatio's Garden Scotland. This has enabled the charity to continue supporting the mental health, wellbeing and rehabilitation of patients with spinal injuries.



*Pictures from Horatio's Garden Scotland*