



ASSOCIATION OF GARDEN TRUSTS REPORT

SOUTH WEST AREA EDUCATION FORUM CONFERENCE TYNTESFIELD 15 MARCH 2011

The Conference was held at The Sawmill, Tyntesfield, North Somerset (part of the former county of Avon). Eighteen delegates from six counties attended on what was a mild spring day.

Healthy Schools Coordinator, North Somerset

The first speaker was Shaun Cheeseman, the Healthy Schools Coordinator for North Somerset. Shaun outlined how the Healthy Schools Programme was a Government funded national initiative that started in 2000. Sadly the funding ceases later this year. The scheme resulted in a range of cross curriculum benefits. In addition, OFSTED were keen to look at the extent to which pupils in schools adopted healthy lifestyles and the setting up and running of Gardening Clubs was a useful way for OFSTED to gain the evidence.

The Healthy Schools Plus programme was a further initiative and was introduced as a pilot scheme in the south west. Under this scheme, schools set their own targets and decided on their outcomes. The main aim was to help combat obesity in schools as it was felt that if the children were involved in growing food then they were more likely to want to taste it.

Other initiatives that are available to schools include The Soil Association's Food for Life programme. This has helped to bring about a change of thinking in the provision and content of school meals. The criteria necessary to achieve this award is organised into bronze, silver and gold awards. Most schools can aspire to a bronze award. A local initiative is the Green Champions School whereby representatives from schools in North Somerset and the local education authority are working together.

Examples of various initiatives in local schools was given and illustrated how teachers, pupils and parents have worked together to create vegetable gardens and outdoor classrooms.

The Garden at Yatton Primary School

The second speaker was Janet Lamb, Deputy Head of Yatton Infant School and Y5 teacher. She described the difficulties that often beset schools when they were trying to set up gardens. The Centenary Garden at the school had been designed and created by the pupils. Bring a Bulb day, asking for spare shrubs and plants and seeking sponsorship ensured the establishment of this garden.

Sadly for all concerned, the garden was subsequently built over but, within the last few years, a new garden has been created which has been designed by the pupils. Close links have been fostered with the local Horticultural Society which has resulted in a supply of plants and advice to the school. Unfortunately the garden has recently been vandalised and so work has to begin again on recreating the garden.

National Trust

Our afternoon talk was by Annabel Smith and Katy Laidlaw who are involved with supporting and delivering educational activities at Tyntesfield. They described the Guardianship Scheme which was started in 1989 whereby the NT works in partnership with local schools. Under this scheme a school takes ownership of one area on a NT property. In the case of Tyntesfield, this has been the kitchen garden and pupils come in on a regular basis to cultivate and care for their crops.



Other education initiatives for schools were described including the Digital Photography project, Plant Hunters/Mini Beasts and Creative Writing Inspired by the Gardens.

The session finished with a short practical session that involved a couple of practical activities to help illustrate what the NT offers. Delegates went into the Rose Garden to take photographs that conveyed the spirit of Tyntesfield. Also, we were asked to write haiku poems (See below) which again reflected the mood of the Victorian estate and which was part of the NT Creative Writing scheme.

County Reports and Discussions

Juliet Wilmot chaired the discussion period that centred on an exchange of information on education matters

within the respective county gardens trusts.

HAIKU

EDUCATION CONFERENCE AT TYNTESFIELD
SOUTH WEST COUNTY GARDENS TRUSTS

Tyntesfield Gardens
Peaceful wandering with friends
Green and glorious

Low green hedges twist
Shelter lavender within
This green bastion

A seat on a step
Uniform shapes of rose beds
And smell of clipped box

