

FEATURE

Mires Beck NURSERY

A Place to Grow



As part of our ongoing series of features exploring the stories behind HTA member businesses, HTA Communications Manager Gill Ormrod visits Mires Beck Nursery in Yorkshire to discover how wildflower production goes hand in hand with therapeutic gardening.

Situated near the village of North Cave in the East Riding of Yorkshire, Mires Beck Nursery was established in 1985 by Richard and Irene Tinklin. Drawing inspiration from a project they saw following a trip to the States they set up Mires Beck with a dual purpose – conservation and therapy. As an applied biology lecturer and horticulture consultant respectively, the couple's vision was to produce wildflowers for conservation projects. As parents to a child with learning difficulties they also wanted to create a place where people could come and enjoy the therapeutic benefits of gardening and horticulture. These two aims go hand in hand at Mires Beck.

2019 marks the 25th anniversary of Mires Beck Nursery becoming a registered charity. In that time the nursery has come a long way from its humble beginnings centred around an old railway wagon and a single glasshouse. It now supplies wildflowers, herbaceous perennials, trees, herbs and phragmites to garden centres, wildlife organisations, community initiatives, regional councils and government departments on a commercial basis. Direct sales are made to the public and landscapers from the on-site plant centre.

Over 100 service users (known as trainees) with learning difficulties and disabilities attend the 14-acre site, coming in for between one and five days a week. Divided into work teams, trainees are involved in a wide range of tasks including sowing seeds, potting on, taking cuttings, despatching plants for retail, labelling, planting trees, establishing hedges, and developing flower borders. The conservation value of the site has been significantly improved with the estate team having planted over 6,000 trees, creating a large pond and planting wildflowers and hedges.



GROWING SUCCESS

At Mires Beck over 300 varieties of herbaceous perennials, 50 varieties of herbs, 100 varieties of wildflowers of Yorkshire provenance are grown. Over 35,000 common reeds (Phragmites) are grown on an annual basis and supplied to wildlife organisations and groups for conservation projects.

Young plants are bought in and grown on to help meet the required volumes for production with the range of herbs grown increased in recent years to meet demand from garden centres and farm shops. Tree production has been another area of growth with 28 varieties of tree grown from seed in root trainers, as opposed to being sold as bare root specimens. Local firm Jackson Food Group is celebrating 200 years in Hull in 2051 and in the run up to that date they are planting 200,000 trees in and around the city. Mires Beck have been tasked with supplying the trees and so are growing around 7,000 a year to fulfil this.

Mires Beck Nursery supplies garden centres and farm shops across Yorkshire and Lincolnshire but are looking to expand this area of work. They are especially interested in increasing their supply of wildflowers of Yorkshire provenance – an area that they have real specialism in.



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ENHANCING THE CONSERVATION VALUE

Staying true to the original vision of Richard and Irene Tinklin plans are in place to improve the conservation value of the site itself for the benefit of wildlife and to enhance the experience of the trainees working onsite.

The wildflower production side of the nursery is really what makes it unique. Growing only wildflowers of Yorkshire provenance the nursery works closely with organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, Environment Agency and Natural England to supply plants for habitat creation as well as supplying garden centres. It is a long process from the gathering of seed through to the selling of a plant – bluebells, for instance, take five years to grow from seed!

Sustainability is a key area of interest for the nursery. They are moving away from using black pots (after using up the ones they have in stock) and are also using POSipots on-site where they can. Their onsite borehole makes them self-sufficient in water requirements and all their plants are grown in peat-free compost. Only biological controls are used in the glasshouses, which are not heated.

RAISING PROFILE LOCALLY

Their plant retail area attracts loyal customers from the surrounding area but as they are a little off the beaten track, they are looking to raise their profile to attract more customers in the future. As part of this strategy they run courses and events through the year from willow weaving, wood carving and wreath making to pond dipping and crafts for kids' days. Attending local shows and plant fairs also helps to spread the word about their work. There is a separate 'Friends of Mires Beck' group who help support activities and raise valuable funds.

WHAT NEXT FOR MIRES BECK?

With the strapline of 'A Place to Grow' Mires Beck Nursery moves into the next 25 years with ambitious plans for its future. They are looking to secure funding to build a new anniversary building to provide bespoke facilities for the trainees that require one to one care. This larger building will also accommodate the needs of trainees as they get older. This will also free up the existing building for use as a small visitor café – helping to attract more visitors to the plant centre.

This first phase of development includes a greater emphasis on their conservation plan. An anniversary wood is to be planted to mark their 25th year with plans to use the land for community events and education purposes. They want it to be a place where children and people can come for health and wellbeing, in a way that expands what they are doing without losing the charm of the site. Phase two includes the development of a rural crafts centre, which would also provide a great teaching resource.

Such an inspiring place to visit Mires Beck Nursery delivers on so many levels – as a workplace, as a production nursery and as a place for wildlife and people to flourish and grow.

If you are interested in finding out more about the work of Mires Beck Nursery and the plants that they supply please contact:

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