

A place to grow...



The motto carved into the stone water feature in the gardens at Mires Beck Nursery at North Cave says it all... 'a place to go, a place to like, a place to grow'.

It's a mantra that not only applies to the extensive variety of plants produced there but also to the 100 or so service users who attend the nursery as part of their adult social care packages with East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Hull City Council.

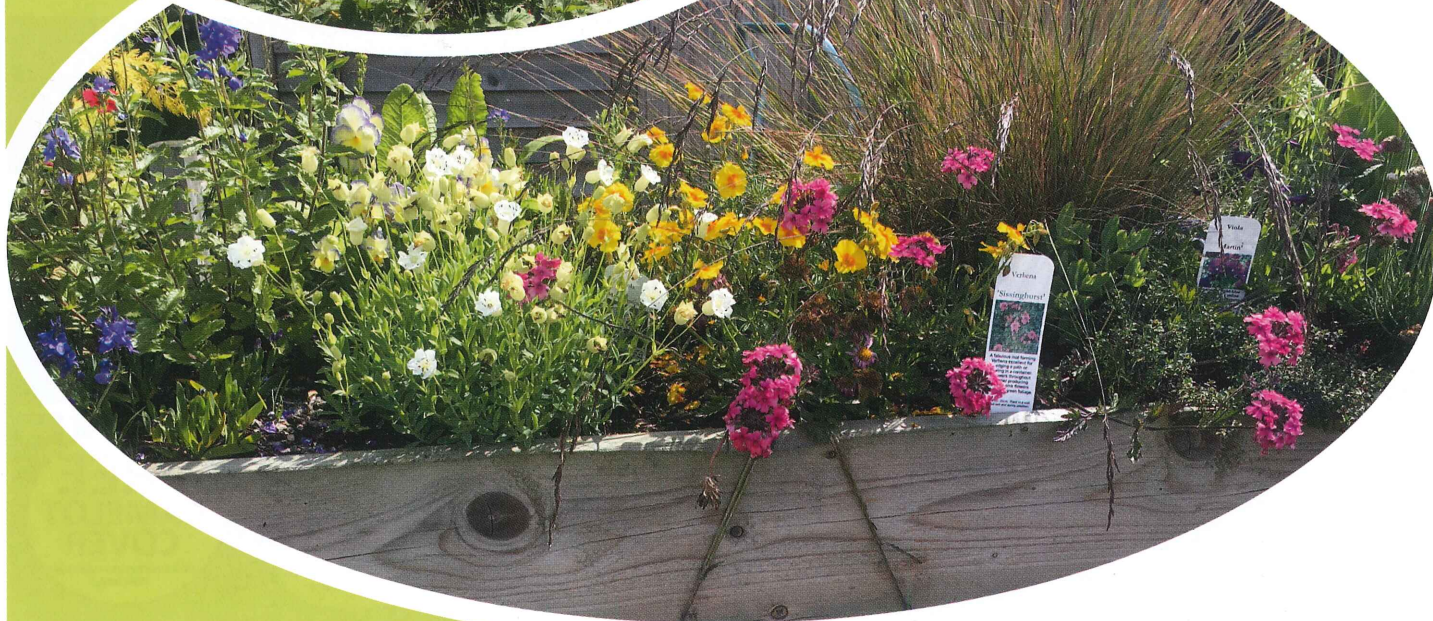
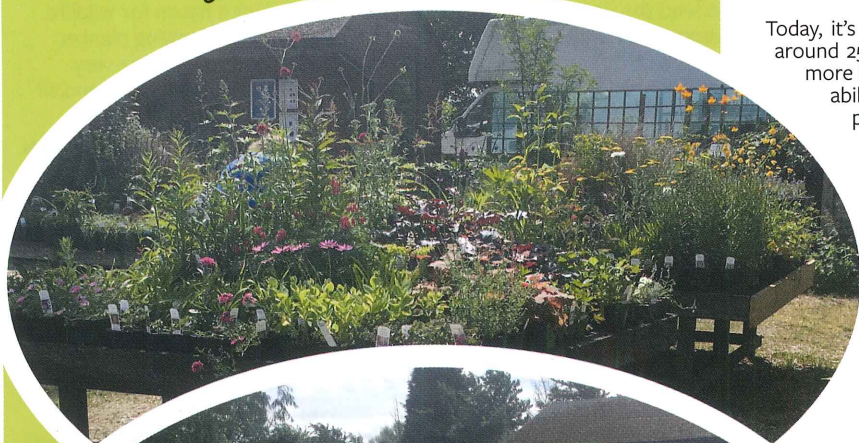
A registered charity, Mires Beck provides an invaluable opportunity for people with learning difficulties or disabilities to work in a horticultural nursery. It was established by the late Richard and Irene Tinklin, who acquired what was then a ten-acre site to the south of the village in 1985. Their aim was to cultivate wildflowers in an era when many native species were disappearing from our countryside at an alarming rate and, at the same time, create a place where people could enjoy the therapeutic benefits of gardening.

Today, it's a thriving business supplying plants on a wholesale basis to around 25 different garden centres across Yorkshire and beyond. Even more importantly, it also enables service users with differing levels of ability to enjoy simple gardening tasks, from sowing seeds and potting plants to taking cuttings, planting trees, establishing hedges and developing wild flower borders. Wherever you look on the site, there are teams of people working on different stages of plant production. Undercover areas and wood burning stoves in the greenhouses ensure that the operation can continue all year round, whatever the weather.

Over the last 21 years, the site has expanded across a further four acres, which were formerly part of the neighbouring quarry site, and is now occupied by a range of glasshouses, as well as facilities for service users to enjoy their meals and break times. It also comprises a combination of attractive gardens showcasing the variety of plants produced there, as well as areas of woodland, a large pond and wildflower meadows. There are plans to develop the facilities around the stunning Anniversary Garden further over the coming years to allow even more service users to attend.

Marketing co-ordinator Graham Elliott, who has worked at Mires Beck on a part-time basis for the past year, explained: "We have around 45 mostly part-time paid supervisors, team leaders and support workers here, as well as a team of volunteers. But the most important people here are our service users!"

All of the proceeds of plant sales are invested back into developing and running the site, and the team are always on the look-out for more volunteers willing to spare a few hours each week.





Steve Meays, who oversees the wildflower department, said: "Richard and Irene, who set the site up, were ecologists who wanted to produce a supply of wild flowers of Yorkshire provenance. That side of the business is still going strong today; we grow around 160 different wildflowers and supply nature reserves across the UK. We've recently produced more than 20,000 Phragmites, or Common Reed, plants for nature reserves as tiny plug plants."



In another area of the site are thousands of native tree saplings that form part of a long-term contract with William Jackson Food Group, which has pledged to plant 200,000 trees in Hull by 2051 to mark its 200th year in business. The William Jackson Trust paid for a new poly-tunnel at Mires Beck Nursery, and other set-up costs, as part of the project.



Support worker Steve Tuck said: "Our service users are involved in the entire process of growing and selling plants. It's tremendous fun working here, we take service users on day trips to other gardens too. I'm so thankful that I'm paid to do this. We're building people's self-esteem, as well as growing plants. It's about personal growth as much as anything, gradually building the confidence of our services users, as well as developing their skills."



"We're building people's self-esteem, as well as growing plants"

Mires Beck Nursery is open to members of the public and landscape gardeners for plant sales on a daily basis, from 10am to 4pm. Those who join the Friends of Mires Beck Nursery scheme receive a regular newsletter and a 15 per cent discount on plants sales. For more information, visit www.miresbeck.co.uk.

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