



The Maryhill Therapeutic Garden Information Pack

Who we are

The Maryhill Garden is a therapeutic garden project in Elgin, Moray, run by REAP Scotland. It's a new project suitable for people with low to moderate mental health support needs, mild physical disabilities (please note that the site doesn't have wheelchair access) or individuals experiencing isolation.

Our aim is to help people improve their mental, physical and emotional wellbeing through gardening and socialising outdoors in a beautiful, peaceful environment.

What are the benefits of therapeutic gardening?

Studies have shown that therapeutic gardening improves and builds resilience in mental health;



increases physical activity; reduces stress levels; develops social skills and encourages a healthier diet. In particular, we find that clients who benefit the most from therapeutic gardening are adults with anxiety and mild to moderate depression or those individuals experiencing isolation.

You can find out more about the benefits of therapeutic gardening here:

<http://www.thrive.org.uk/what-is-social-and-therapeutic-horticulture.aspx>

Project Structure

Our project runs for a year on a rolling basis, but there is the option for the client to shorten this to 6 months. Gardening opening times are **Tuesdays 2-5pm and Fridays 10am-12:30pm**. Session times are seasonal and dependent on day length.

Clients receive a 6 week trial period followed by rolling 3 month placements for up six months to one year. The 6 week period allows us and the client to assess whether the project is a good fit. Our therapeutic garden worker will also carry out assessments every three months, to measure the wellbeing of the client and collect feedback. At the end of their placement, we will provide signposting to other opportunities.

What happens on the day: We meet before the session's start for a brief check-in to see how everybody feels and to help the clients choose the tasks for the day. The activities on site can include: sowing seeds, planting, harvesting tasty fruit and vegetables, garden maintenance and cooking. Half-way through the session, there is an approx. 20 min tea break where we also offer a selection of healthy snacks and refreshments.

We are a permaculture-inspired site which means we work in harmony with the environment to be efficient, to care for nature and people, and to not over-consume resources. It can be as simple as how you organise planting of veg or using 'no-dig' techniques.

How do we support referred clients?



Clients are supported by the therapeutic garden worker and the gardener in the first instance. The project also has committed volunteers who have been approved for working with vulnerable adults by Disclosure Scotland. Clients are welcome to bring a support worker with them.

How to join the project

Referral Guidelines

If you feel the Maryhill Therapeutic Garden project can support your client, you can download a referral form from our website: <http://reapscotland.org.uk/maryhill-therapeutic-garden-2/>

or email Karen at: karen.h@reapscotland.org.uk to request a form, seeking the client's permission beforehand.

Once we have received your referral form, we may contact you for further information. If we feel that our project can support your client, we will be in touch with you to arrange an initial visit for your client to the project. We strongly recommend that clients attend this introductory visit with a friend, family member, carer or support worker. If we do not feel we can support your client effectively, we will contact you to let you know.

If a client repeatedly cancels or fails to attend the introductory visit, we would then close the referral. We would however welcome a re-referral at a time when the client may be more able to make the commitment required to benefit fully from a placement at the Maryhill Therapeutic Garden project.

When a client has been offered and accepted a place there is a trial period of 6 weeks to see if the garden matches their needs. An assessment will take place at this point, and if suitable, the clients will continue to work with our team. Every 3 months, there will be a progress meeting to help formally supervise their wellbeing. Again, failure to attend sessions regularly may result in the placement being withdrawn but re-referrals would be accepted in these instances too.

Suitable clients should have:

- Low to moderate mental health needs or a mild physical disability or be experiencing loneliness or bereavement
- Appropriate mental health support in place if relevant, i.e. community link worker, community mental health nurse, social worker, psychiatrist or GP
- Able to commit to one session per week (2.5 to 3 hours) for at least 6 months
- No history of physical violence towards another person for at least 12 months

Referral process

Referrals must be made by a mental health support worker, a GP or any other professional who can provide some background information and act as an ongoing point of contact. The Maryhill Therapeutic Garden project does not have the capacity to work with clients with high support needs. We assess this on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the client and their referral contact.

Initial visit

Once referred, the initial visit will be on a Tuesday afternoon or Friday morning. Clients are encouraged to bring a support worker, friend or family member along. It will last approximately 20 minutes, and include a tour, a chat with the therapeutic garden worker and an opportunity to participate in activities after the visit.

What to bring

Clients need to be suitably dressed for working outdoors all day, e.g. very warm clothes in winter, waterproof jacket for rainy days, sturdy footwear, and sunscreen and a sun hat in summer. Tools and refreshments are provided.



Covid-19 precaution measures and restrictions

We will comply with Covid-19 government measures for outdoor spaces. We will have a hand sanitiser at the site and participants will be required to use this at the start and end of each session. We will also ensure that the gardening tools are sanitized before and after each session. Our garden risk assessments including Covid-19 measures are updated regularly in line with the

Scottish Government guidelines. If client displays any symptoms of Covid-19 we would require that they do not attend the session as per current isolation times guidelines.

Contact Details for Referrals and therapeutic gardening enquiries

Please contact therapeutic worker Karen Higginbottom by email: karen.h@reapscotland.org.uk or call 07840908697.

(Please note Karen only works part-time on Tuesdays, Thursday morning and Friday morning but she will get back to you as soon as she can.)

Office Address: The Maryhill Therapeutic Garden Project, c/o REAP Office, 177 Mid Street, Keith, AB55 5BL. Telephone: 01542 888 070

Garden Location: Maryhill Gardens at the back of The Maryhill Practice Health Centre in Elgin, IV36 1AT. Follow the parking signs to the Visitors and Staff Parking. The garden is adjacent to the parking and you can park your car there (free parking provided).

A map can be found [here](#).

Public Transport

Bus: 10, 10b and 33c; get off at Maryhill House.