

COMMUNITY GARDENING



(Credit: Growing Together Devon)

When it comes to gardening Jill is something of a natural. Wherever she has made her home, from Singapore to the Andorran Pyrenees and now Honiton in Devon, she had conjured to life flowers, shrubs and trees – often against the odds. Owing to a respiratory condition she finds now herself attached to an oxygen machine. Thanks to the charity Growing Together Devon, she can still do what she loves.

When did you start gardening?

My mother spent a lot of time in the garden and as child it was natural for me to be there with her. In those days gardens were important to people's diet: it was how we got much of our food. We grew flowers and shrubs too, of course. My husband Mike and I lived in Singapore after the War. We'd only a small balcony so I got used to growing in pots – and I continued doing that ever since. I once grew an avocado tree in a container!

Has anything unusual happened when gardening?

Years ago while living in Andorra I was given two lemon pips. People said they'd never cope with the cold mountain air, but I grew the seeds into lovely trees. It can be done, but you have to stick at it!

“Gardening is enjoyable, and having plants nearby is relaxing.”

What happens during a gardening session?

We have table-top gardening sessions every two weeks. All materials are placed within reach and we're given support to sow seeds, plant on seedlings, and to plant out pots to keep for ourselves. There's usually lots of chatter. Some haven't gardened before, while others are very experienced. But it is good-natured and people help each other. We have tea and biscuits afterwards.

What are the benefits?

It keeps me doing something I love. I miss buying my plants at the Friday market in Honiton: I got to know the plant lady very well.

These sessions help me to grow plants outside of my flat window and the gardener comes and waters them and keeps them tidy. He stops to ask me about them. Gardening is very enjoyable, and having plants nearby is very relaxing.

Have there been challenges to overcome?

I'm attached to an oxygen machine all the time so I'm restricted in what I can do. That's why I can't go to the plant stall in town anymore. I'm also weak so need someone to do even basic things like watering.

What would you say to get others involved in gardening?

Try it. See if you enjoy it. Or, just sit in the garden and enjoy it too. Everyone likes a nice garden, even if they don't like the work!

More information

[Growing Together Devon \(website\)](http://growingtogetherdevon.org)

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