

How Does your Garden Grow?

In a whistle-stop tour, *Rehab News* catches up with just some of the organisation's many blooming great gardening projects.

IN SERVICES AND CENTRES the length and breadth of Ireland and the UK, the people who use our services are busy digging, pruning, sowing, mowing and weeding. They are discovering, in their droves, the joy and odd frustration of gardening.

Known throughout Ireland as the former Meath county football manager, Sean Boylan is also the owner of Dunboyne Herbs. Earlier this year, Sean donated a 700 square feet plot of land to the RehabCare Resource Centre in Dunboyne for the development of a fully-accessible garden. The garden is not only beautiful; it also produces a wide variety of fresh fruit and vegetables using a crop rotation system.

Julia Mumford attends the RehabCare resource centre in Dunboyne. "The garden project has been very educational; it's teaching us how to grow different vegetables and how to separate the root from the soil. It's enjoyable and everyone helps each other out with the things that need to be done. I'm more confident as a result and more outspoken!"

Also experiencing the benefits of gardening are people who attend the RehabCare Healing Opportunities and Peer Support (HOPS) centre in Dublin. Their allotment, the result of a community grant, is maintained by participants at the centre.

"Time spent at the allotment is therapeutic because you get to see the end result of all the hard work put into it," says Mick Sharkey. "We produce fresh, tasty, organic produce that is enjoyed by everyone at the centre."

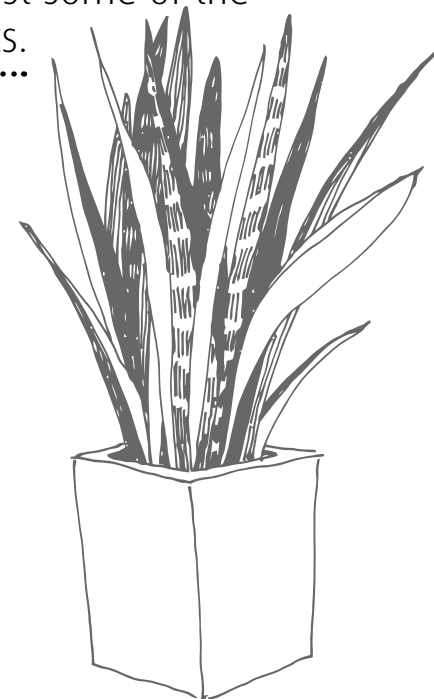
Meanwhile, students at the National Learning Network centre in Swords, Co. Dublin are the happy owners of a new garden of raised, accessible beds,

funded through 1 Day for Rehab and the support of local businesses.

Expressing her delight at the new garden, student Carmel Eshky, said, "The biggest benefit of our garden is that it is accessible to all, especially to those like me who have limited mobility. We do not have to sit at the sidelines watching others garden. We can just get on with what we love to do!"

The love of gardening can also be found across the Irish Sea. Participants of the Momentum Skills' Pathways Programme in Scotland are busy working on a garden project based in Bellahouston Park, Glasgow. Established in 2010, the project is part of a wider programme which helps people to rebuild their lives after sustaining a brain injury.

According to John Buddie, Employment Development Worker, the 12 people currently taking part in the garden project have benefitted hugely from it. "We've certainly seen people grow in confidence and in physical stamina too. They've also learned a range of



practical skills that can be of use in their everyday lives, helping them to better manage the effects of their brain injury."

The group have obviously also learned a lot about gardening. The project has recently been shortlisted in the Self Management Project of the Year Category at the Self Management Awards 2013. (Green) Fingers crossed for the talented gardeners! ■



Gardeners from RehabCare in Dunboyne pictured in their beautiful garden. (Left to right) Mick King, Carolyn Fitzsimons, Tom Harte, Programme Supervisor Sophia Maher, Julia Mumford and Glen Turner.