



Solstice Nurseries

'Growing People and Plants'

Annual Report

April 2017 - October 2018

Growing People...

The past 18 months have been extremely busy for staff and participants with our service providing training, education and work experience for 34 people. Two participants entered full time employment which continues to go well for them, another spent a few months on a work trial and we are supporting one person in work. We have had 5 new participants, some of whom will go onto undertaking a qualification and gaining sufficient experience to eventually become gardeners whilst others will regain enough confidence to move on to other kinds of training or return to study.



Training



Some of our participants continued with their VQ in Amenity Horticulture which involves assessments in theory, but more importantly in practice. Again, the external verifier was impressed with the quality of training in a real commercial setting, and the ability of the trainers to work with people with a wide range of abilities. We welcomed another 2 small groups of Occupational Therapy students from RGU who find the placement at Solstice beneficial because they are working alongside our participants and gain first hand knowledge of the challenges that people with severe mental health issues face.

The staff team of 6 members have undertaken training and development in online courses mainly concerning our work with participants. Four staff attended a one day course in Managing Difficult People, 4 members and 2 volunteers gained a First Aid qualification and 4 of us braved a workshop regarding General Data Protection Regulations.



Growing people and plants

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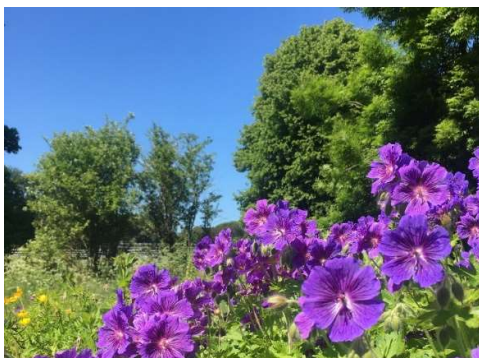
Solstice Year 2017/2018

Volunteers

We were lucky enough this year to have some great volunteers who wanted to help the Solstice team. A huge thanks to all, especially those who helped with the weeding in the run up to open days.

Board Activities

Our Board of Directors are from a wide divergence of working backgrounds and kindly volunteer their time and expertise to Solstice with old and new members working well together to ensure that there is appropriate governance. This period involved updating many of our working policies and procedures which are then compiled into a staff handbook and one for participants. We also spent time in January and February completing a tender to secure a place on the framework for Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire which means that we are one of the services that people can choose to attend a placement for their well-being and development.



Events at Solstice

In 2017 we held a lunch combined with a participant feedback session to gather information which has been collated to inform a social impact report that will be published later this year. The resulting feedback was positive and showed that the work that Solstice is doing makes a difference to people's lives. A Burn's lunch and the annual Christmas meal were both well attended and enjoyed by all. We were invited for a tour of their site by our neighbours

at Beannacher ending with much appreciated coffee and cake. Our participants found the visit very interesting with Christopher from Beannacher providing a lot of information on the history and start up of their project.

Open days continue to be successful in terms of widening our customer base and raising awareness of the service that we provide.

Thanks to all our customers old and new who came along, and also a big thank you to the Maryculter Trinity Church Guild who make a fantastic job of providing refreshments on Open Days, and share the profits with Solstice. In turn, we help to support the local community by sharing a percentage of income from sales made at 2 of the local schools, Lairhillock and Banchory-Devenick.



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Solstice Year 2017/2018

Solstice attended a new event 'Aberdeen Gardens and Outdoors' in April at Crathes Castle. There was a better turnout than expected and it was an ideal opportunity to network with



other businesses involved in gardening and design. Many companies including Solstice are benefiting from the upsurge in interest in gardening, and having a 'designed' outdoor space in which to 'staycation' or invest in the property. We are fortunate in having close relationships with a number of garden designers who use our nursery to purchase plants for their customers.

Growing Plants...

The nursery has had its busiest year since opening with orders from garden designers, and of course, a constant task to keep on top of the watering in the wonderful dry summer. The weather has been difficult for some plants that usually fare well in our climate, but terrific for others such as roses which have outperformed themselves. Top selling shrub roses this year have been 'Gertrude Jekyll', 'Queen of Sweden' and 'Bonica', and in climbers, the spectacular 'Paul's Himalayan Musk', 'Etoile de Holland' and 'Alfred Carriere' have stolen the show. Hydrangeas have seen a come-back after going out of fashion with 'Sarah Bernhardt' and 'Shirley Temple' being the most popular specimens, and our nursery manager suggests that you look out for the new inter-sectional tree peonies which are bred from a herbaceous peony crossed with a tree peony and are self-supporting. They are expensive but worth looking out for – maybe as a gift as they have good names such as 'First Arrival', 'Love Affair' and 'Magical Mystery Tour'.



Bees

This year we were lucky enough to meet a local beekeeper looking for somewhere to house some of her hives. We now have four beehives on site and enjoy seeing the bees around the site pollinating the flowers. Thanks to Alison.



Christmas Wreaths

Once again, we had a successful season of wreath making and selling in 2017. We attended sales at Lairhilloch School, Maryculter Trinity Church, Cults Parish Church, Royal Cornhill Hospital and Summerfield House. We also held our own Christmas Fair at Solstice and once again it was a success.

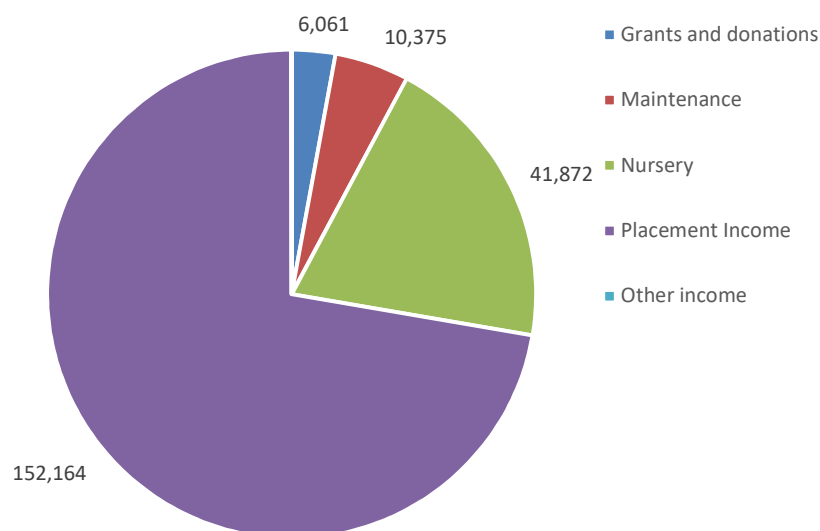
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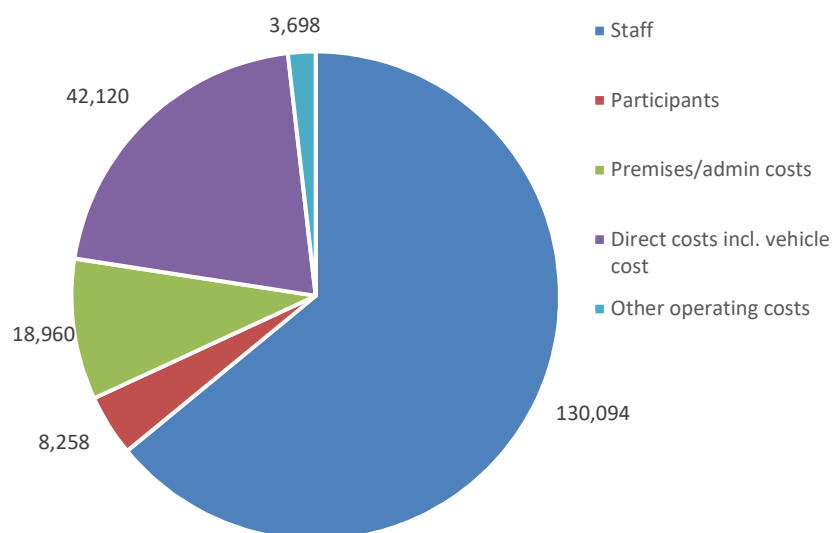
The year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

Where the money came from:



£210,501

Where the money was spent:



£203,130

Surplus: £7,371

Who is who at Solstice Nurseries

The Board Directors

Chair: Susan Kirkwood
George Parkinson
Jackie Berry
Victoria McCann
Alan Gall
Brian Sherret
Janice Nicol
Serena Arif
Richard Ward
Jackie Reynard

The Staff Team:

Business Manager:
George Parkinson
Nursery Manager
& Head of Nursery:
Jackie Bibby
CPD Manager
Victoria McCann
Maintenance Coordinator
Ritchie Slapp
Administration
Coordinator/Nursery
Assistant:
Joanne Brown
Administration/
Bookkeeper:
Dianne Brown

Members of:

- Andrew Lees
Horticultural
Scotland
Directory
- The Federation of Small
Businesses
- Social Firms Scotland
- The Hardy Plant Society
- The Heather Society

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