



NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN / WINTER 2016

Umberslade Nurseries is part of QAC Enterprises Ltd owned by Queen Alexandra College - a national college and charity for people with disabilities. Our students visit Umberslade and play a vital role in maintaining, planting and harvesting produce, whilst also learning about horticulture, experiencing the outdoor environment and having fun!

We are open to the general public, with 'The Potting Shed' tea room serving delicious cakes, and our retail outlet offering lots of things gardening based along with cards, gifts and trinkets. Our Moroccan Yurt is available for party and activity hire, and we also run a number of community focused workshops.

Umberslade's Nature Watch

Thanks to donations from the John Lewis Spedan Foundation and Brian Shaw Memorial Trust we have started work on developing our 'Nature Watch' Project. As part of this, in September we welcomed our friends from Gro-Organic back to work with students over two weeks, to design and build a nature village along the main pathway. Lots of fun was had by those involved, with lots of creative ideas coming out of it – including a mini elephant house, race track and fairy garden! Over the next few months we will be buying a range of resources and equipment for people to use to learn more about local nature and the environment and will also be installing a series of habitat houses and CCTV so we can see the life across Umberslade. Some of our students will also be taking part in workshops with The Field Studies Council, to help them understand more about the natural world and what we can do to protect it.

Half Term Fun!

During October half term we tailored our activities to appeal to a younger audience. We hosted a day of Forest Schools taster sessions with participants taking part in a range of outdoor based skills and challenges before making marshmallow sandwiches in the earth oven! Halloween saw the tea rooms being taken over by pumpkins, crafts and spooky puppets as people came to our Halloween Fun Day, with the earth oven being used to make spooky pizzas! Lots of fun was had, and following feedback and further interest we hope to be able to offer Forest School sessions and similar workshops to schools and families more regularly in 2017.



Community Workshops

In our last newsletter we told how we were going to launch workshops aimed at people aged over 55 and/or people with dementia. Our 'Growing Minds' workshops have been extremely popular and we have worked with over 30 people with dementia – supporting not only them but people close to them, including carers, family members and friends. We regularly receive enquiries from professionals and individuals as to how they can join the group, and we are currently looking at ways we can expand the project to reach further afield to support more people. Our 'Over 55's' group is also popular, with people enjoying a variety of crafts the team put on for them, along with the all-important cuppa and cake element! Both groups will be busy as we move into spring, with more outdoor based activities taking place.



Friends of Umberslade

We're excited to announce our Friends of Umberslade scheme is up and running. From as little as £6 you can become one of our 'Friends' and be part of our adventure, helping us develop and grow. You will not only be a customer, you will be part of the Umberslade community helping us provide for students, visitors and other groups who use our site.

As well as this you'll get access to special offers, discounts and events especially for our Friends. Money raised through the scheme will be used towards buying equipment and resources for the site, or towards running projects and activities with the groups and individuals who come along. For more information about how you can join, please contact Sarah Caldwell on scaldwell@qac.ac.uk or 0121 428 5064

Festive Fun

We kicked off the festive season with our first Christmas Craft Fayre, transforming the top polytunnel to showcase a range of local crafters and stalls. We were delighted to welcome dingy group Dynamix to join the fun and entertain visitors with some Christmas songs. Facepainting and puppet shows were also in store as Santa returned, taking up part time residence in our Yurt throughout December weekends. We took over £1000 across the site on the day which was fantastic; tree and wreath sales were so high we sold out and had to order more to last the rest of the month. A big thank you to everyone who came along and helped make our Christmas period a jolly success!



Date for the Diary!

Please mark Saturday 18th March in your diaries, as it's the date of our Spring re-opening and we'll have lots of activities and entertainment in store for you! We're really looking forward to a variety of events happening in 2017 and plans are underway for us to host community events every month, including open days and workshops. More information about these will be shared as and when dates get confirmed.



Volunteering

Umberslade is a big site and it takes a lot of work to keep things going and get things done...

we really couldn't do it without the volunteers that come and work with us.

We love welcoming groups of employees from local Zurich and DWP offices to site to help with various tasks. Whether this is painting our outdoor woodwork in time for our summer event or making the polytunnel and yurt look festive for our Christmas period, it really does make our life easier. Earlier in the year a team from Amey spent three days with us as part of their corporate social responsibility initiative, helping transform the top field. Thanks to their hard work and generosity we now have the first stages of a path and seating area, with more work being done this year to complete it. We still welcome a group from Community Payback every Sunday, providing the much needed manpower for some of the more labour based activities and grounds maintenance.

As well as corporate volunteers, we also have a team of regular volunteers who work at Umberslade, helping things run smoothly in the shop and tea room. Jim, Luke, Roisin and Aneesa are all ex-QAC students, working with us as part of work experience placements. Dawn, herself an ex-Zurich employee is the angel of The Potting Shed, looking after visitors and running Thursday's craft workshop and helping with other events and ideas!

We're always looking for more volunteers to get involved and support us, so if you're interested in volunteering with us, please get in touch!



Thank You!

The work we do and opportunities we offer are all down to great ideas, lots of hard work and the support we receive from individuals, volunteer groups, and companies. We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who supports us, in particular the following groups:

Funders (providing financial support)

John Lewis Spedan Foundation * Brian Shaw Memorial Trust

Companies (providing volunteers and/or in-kind donations)

Zurich (Birmingham) * DWP (local offices) * Community Payback * DWP * Amey * Rawlings * Toggi * Holbeache Farm * John Lewis (Solihull) * Mr Fothergills * Adhesives Direct

Get Involved!

If you would like to know more about how you can get involved at Umberslade and the activities on offer then please get in touch - 0121 472 4894 or nstitt@qac.ac.uk

You can also follow us on Facebook (Umberslade Nurseries) and Twitter (@Umberslade_QAC).



Umberslade Nurseries is part of QAC Enterprises, run by Queen Alexandra College, registered charity number 1065794. QAC raise money for College and provide excellent work opportunities for our students. For more information about QAC and our other Enterprises please visit www.qac.ac.uk