

#TeamWilder Communities in Action

CASE STUDY: West Bowling Youth Initiative

The West Bowling Youth Initiative team with Sarah from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust



Tell us a bit about your group/community

Our group meets at Bowling Old Lane Cricket Club. It is much more than a cricket club; we try and meet the needs of the local community. We have lots of community projects such as distributing food parcels, helping people get into work, a women's craft group and we are especially interested in supporting young people in our community. On a Tuesday afternoon a group of young men meet to support each other with their mental health and this group have been working on the wildlife garden and other green projects.

How did you get started on your #TeamWilder journey?

On a Tuesday in late summer, we all sat around a table one day with Sarah from the #TeamWilder team and we chatted about things that were important to us. Sarah had brought in lots of plants from the streets outside and we listened to her stories about the names of the plants and how they can be used as medicine. Everyone had a chance to tell stories about their experiences in nature – someone had just come back from the mountains in Morocco, someone else told tales of sleeping out under the stars while on pilgrimage, we talked about our grandparents who farmed and worked closely with



“ We started a plan to transform the space, transform ourselves and transform the community.”

the land. We all knew that we wanted to make a space that captured these positive feelings that we had about nature, the wild and belonging. We found a space in the grounds that had been used as a dumping area for rubbish – it was perfect, the space would be dedicated to celebrating our feelings of connection and solidarity with all living things. It had a feeling of sacredness and spirituality. We started a plan to transform the space, transform ourselves and transform our community.



What actions have you taken for wildlife in your community and why?

Our plan for the space was to create a wildlife garden. We used the #TeamWilder toolkits and the Wildlife Gardening Award specification to work out how many different actions for wildlife we could fit into our garden. Growing some food was important to us so we planted raspberries in a shaded corner, we dug a hole and used the earth to make our herb spiral, and we lined the pond, which filled up really quickly with rainwater. Not all the herbs have been used for cooking, we left some coriander to flower for pollinators and there were lots of hoverflies visiting it all summer.

We have just planted some fruit trees in the wider area – apples, plums and pears. The trees were donated by a guy called Alan from Fruitworks who came and showed us how to plant them and look after them. Because it has been getting cold in the winter, we put up bird feeders in some mature trees. We check them every week and clean them and refill as necessary.

When we counted up all the things that we are doing we realised that we have qualified for a Wildlife Gardening Gold Award! We are going to put the sign up in our garden for everyone to see.



What resources or support have you used along the way?

Our plans for the garden included a place for people to sit, but when we thought about it, we didn't want to buy a plastic bench – it would look out of place in the garden that looked so natural. So, Sarah put us in touch with a local organisation The Coppice Collective – Lewis just lived down the street! Using a small grant that we applied for, we spent six weeks with him learning about green woodworking and making a bench and some other garden furniture. We used willow sticks and tree logs to make the bench, and we also created a coffee table and mini stool using hazel sticks and logs.

There were lots of useful resources on site already. A tree fell down, and instead of wasting the sticks we created a dead hedge as a habitat for creatures to come and live there. It also made a barrier so that it was clear where the garden starts. To finish this barrier, we found lots of rocks on the other side of the site and wheelbarrowed them over to make a dry stone wall. A volunteer for Yorkshire Wildlife





Community Gardens. It has been great finding out all the things that you can get for free when you tell people what your plans are. You also get to meet new people and organisations who care about wildlife – our community has been growing as our garden has grown.

Has your group empowered or involved others as part of your journey?

We created the wildlife garden as a space for people in our community to come and enjoy themselves. We hope that it will inspire people to make changes in their own gardens.

Trust, Norman, lent us a booklet to read and we slowly but surely built a little wall. We want to get some plants growing in the cracks and we turned the top of the wall into planters to grow flowers.

We have plans to make an information board to go outside our garden for people to read and discover how they can create a garden for themselves at home, at school, at work or in a community setting.

Bradford Council's parks team have been very helpful. We visited their depot in Peel Park and they let us have free woodchip and logs for our garden. We even got some free herb plants from Northcliffe Environmental Enterprises Team who work with adults with learning disabilities. The pond liner was donated by Wibsey

One thing that has been important is learning about how to safely use tools. We have done a lot of woodworking, using chisels, drills, draw knives and saws to make things for the garden. Building skills has really built our confidence and made us realise that we can take on new projects.





One project that we worked on was a recycling project, making useful things for the garden and the centre out of reclaimed materials. We decided to expand the group and invite anyone from our community to join and learn new skills. Chris got involved through our recycling project. He was on a visit from Kenya and really enjoyed his time with us; we have connected with people from different types of backgrounds and interests.

We had a chance to go on Bradford Community Radio to reach lots of people and share our story, to empower others to feel free to come and build relationships and learn new wildlife skills. This went really well and we took an opportunity to go on BBC radio too.

It is really good when we have visits from people so we can show them what we have achieved. In the summer

a student from Leeds university, Abigail, spent a day with us. Sometimes it is hard to see what you have achieved but seeing people's reactions makes you feel proud.

What differences for wildlife have you noticed as a result of your actions?

In the summer we had a lot of pollinator activity, bumblebees all over the borage, hoverflies visiting our flowering herbs, and there was a lot of excitement when we found two new species of native ladybirds – they were so small! We are hoping that we will start to see some life in our pond soon as it is looking clear and healthy.





People who visit our garden are always impressed with the transformation. Some people find it a peaceful place to sit and some people smell, taste and pick the herbs. Our women's group like to come out and have some tea and chat, it makes a nice change from being inside and they want to get more involved.

Has being part of #TeamWilder changed the way that you or other people in your community feel about nature and your local area? If so, how?

"Being part of this project has helped me learn so much about nature. This is the first time in my life that I have thought about this, I have learnt about trees and plants and insects."

"This project has helped me learn new skills and built my confidence up to learn more about nature and wildlife."

Have your #TeamWilder actions left you or members of your community feeling physically or mentally healthier?

"The project has made me come out of my comfort zone, I ate wild food for the first time." Issa

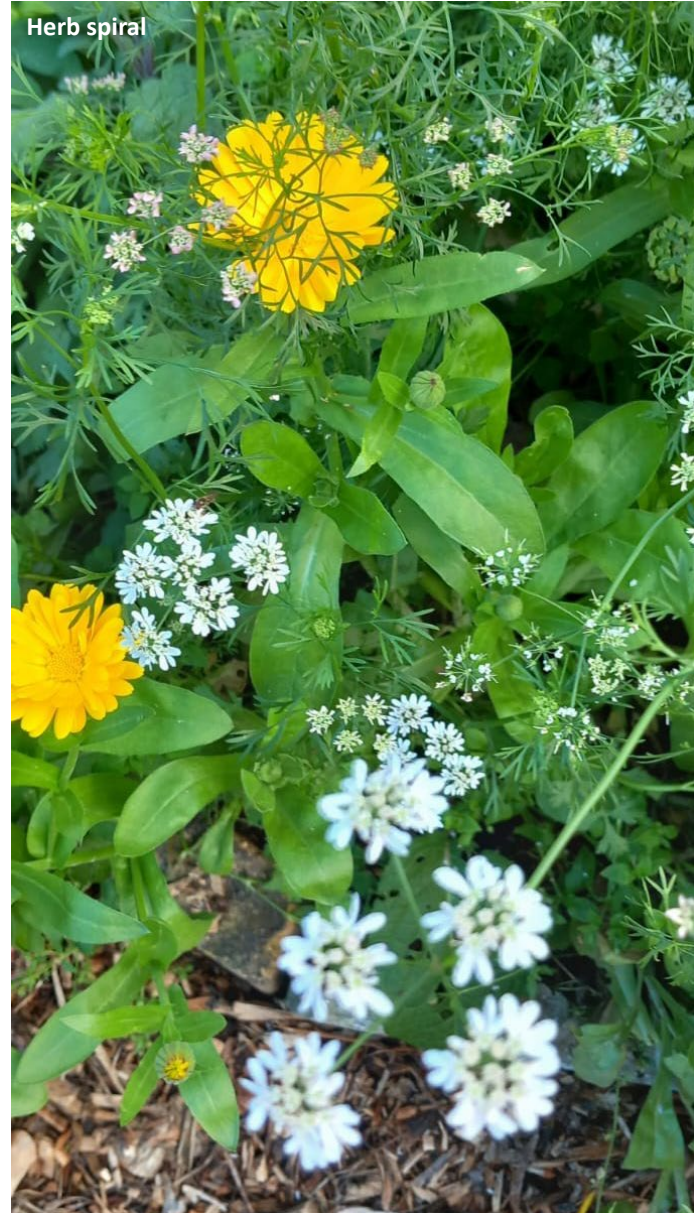
"I do feel a lot better and helpful, it feels different and good to help out with the garden." Hamid

"The sessions on a Tuesday make me feel happy and content. It has improved my mental health and I appreciate nature more too." Shamus

"I always look forward to coming to the sessions, I feel welcomed and happy to build new relationships with new people. Also, I have got to have fun opportunities and to travel to different places." Ahmed

Have you faced any challenges or barriers in taking your action for wildlife? If so, what were these and how have you tried to overcome them?

Some of our plants died in the hot weather with the hosepipe ban, so to overcome this we installed a water butt to the downpipe to collect and reuse the rainwater from the roof. We are also planning to build a raised bed for our climbing plants as they got overwhelmed by tall wildflowers in the summer. We want to do some vertical gardening because we have three walls!





“ I have learnt how to socialise with new people that I have never met, it really helped to have tasks that needed me to work together with others. I have formed strong relationships, and I feel I can talk freely to my peers and associates.

Hamid

Has your group formed any new connections or relationships?

As part of Bradford 2025 we were part of a city-wide climate conversation called the Ark Project. We made a video in our garden to apply for a small grant to buy some food and host the conversation, it brought lots of people from our community together.

This went so well that one of the young men was given an opportunity to take part in an event at Lister Park, in The Beacon where he spoke in front of 200 people.

On a trip to Cliffe Castle in Keighley we got a chance to learn about peatlands and be part of planting a mini peat bog. We also met an artist called Nasim who gave us some tips on drawing and gave us a sketch book to use in our garden. This helped us understand the importance of using peat free compost in our garden.

A few of us went on a trip to a campsite where we met with lots of other youth leaders. We cooked food on a campfire and explored the woods. It helped us to realise that there are lots of people like us just starting this journey, we belong to a community wider than the place where we live and work.

One new group member is Mary; she has an allotment and we have learnt a lot from her. She also campaigns about the allotments, and it is inspiring to see photos of her outside City Hall with a placard.



“ Taking part in a ‘netwalk’ in the Yorkshire Dales has been a highlight for me. I met a new woodcrafter called Luke who later helped us with the recycling project.

Ahmed

What do you plan to do next?

We really want to make a board to explain to people what our garden is about. In a shaded part of the cricket club, we are going to create a stumpery. We will collect logs, stumps and branches for this task and plant it with ferns and other plants that like the shade. It is going to cheer up this neglected space and turn it into something useful for our wildlife.

Contact us or find out more: [wbyi.co.uk](https://www.wbyi.co.uk)