

A cultural garden for the Jinnah Day Care Centre

Involving users and staff in greening an outdoor space

Black Environment Network (BEN) had been working in Manchester for some time, developing environmental projects with ethnic community groups. The BEN worker was approached by the staff and users of the Jinnah Day Care Centre to help them create a cultural garden within their grounds.

Making it happen

Using contacts within the environmental sector in the city, BEN arranged a meeting between the Day Care Centre staff and Groundwork Manchester to discuss the idea and how it may become a reality. Working together, it emerged that the garden should meet the following needs:

- to be environmentally friendly
- to provide a social setting for the staff and users
- to be low maintenance
- to reflect an Islamic context and presence
- to empower services users to take the lead

Enabling participants to become engaged

From his experience of other cultural garden projects, the BEN Development worker was able to suggest plants that would connect to the countries of origin of the Day Care users, or have a link to Islam, to give the garden greater meaning. This stirred fond memories of significant plants amongst the users and staff and prompted further ideas of what they would like to see at the Centre. Plants chosen included olive and fig trees, and the special date palms that provide fruit for breaking fast at Ramadan. A selection of herbs was planted for the kitchen, and a honeysuckle for fragrance. Birdfeeders will tempt birds into the garden.

Consideration also had to be given to what the Centre could manage to put into place and how the garden would be maintained. It was agreed that large containers and pots would allow wheelchair users to have better access to both appreciate and to tend the plants. The large pots and baskets used were made of re-cycled materials and locally sourced.





Working in partnership

Roles and responsibilities were agreed. Groundwork Bury and Jinnah Day Care Centre jointly researched plants, suppliers and costings, and BEN consulted Centre users to create a garden layout that would work in the small space and give access for all.

As the plants and trees arrived the hard work of creating the garden was carried out by the service users and local volunteers supported by Groundwork Bury and the Centre management team. All the effort paid off and the newly designed and greened space provides a welcoming area for everyone to sit and share their stories and watch the plants grow.

The new garden was launched on August 14th, the anniversary of Pakistan Independence Day in the presence of the mayor and council officials and community leaders.

The Future

This process was very important for everyone connected to the Day Centre. They now have real experience of working in partnership with BEN and another environmental organisation. They have planned and realised a cultural environmental project that benefits the Centre and will continue to improve the well being of staff and visitors alike.

FACTFILE

- **Funders:**
Big Lottery Fund
Jinnah Day Care Centre
- **Partners:**
Groundwork Bury
Jinnah Day Care Centre
BEN
- **Target:**
Elderly Asian men from the Manchester Muslim community
- **Numbers:**
25 volunteers were involved
- **Key Points:**
 - Identifying an environmental project that would benefit the participants has given this community group successful practical experience of working in partnership with BEN and the environment sector
 - Incorporating cultural aspects into an environmental project is significant
 - Taking time to stimulate participation, consult and involve participants is key to successful and ongoing involvement



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