

Warden pear growing at Shuttleworth College

Projects in Bedfordshire, Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex will provide training in woodland management, develop volunteers' natural heritage skills and improve the biodiversity of a community wildlife garden, reconnecting people of all ages with the natural heritage on their doorsteps. Volunteers and local people will be at the heart of all four projects.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England, said: “These four latest projects vary in size and location but what they all have in common is a celebration of the region’s wealth of beautiful woodlands, gardens and wildlife. It’s thanks to National Lottery players that we can continue to raise awareness of such biodiversity and help local people protect it for future generations.”

The Bedfordshire Old Warden Pear

Shuttleworth College has been awarded £8,400 to explore the heritage of the local culinary Warden Pear, believed to have first been grown at the Cistercian abbey near the village of Old Warden in Bedfordshire in the 14th century.

Warden pear pies were a Bedfordshire speciality, baked overnight in traditional bread ovens. DNA testing will distinguish specimens of the Old Warden pear from other culinary pears; then tree grafting and propagation will bring the pear back to life. Workshops, talks and learning materials will allow members of the local community to get involved with this tasty bit of local heritage.

Commenting on the award Paul Labous, who is leading the project on behalf of Shuttleworth College, said: “It’s very exciting that we have been awarded the HLF grant, especially in this 400th anniversary year of William Shakespeare and his reference to a Warden Pie in *The Winter’s Tale*."

Green Fingers

The Green Light Trust have been awarded £29,000 to deliver training in traditional woodland management skills to support the recovery of two historically significant woodlands in Suffolk: Frithy Wood, Lawshall and Castan Woods, Martlesham. Adults recovering from mental health problems and dependence on drugs and alcohol will work alongside young people who have been excluded from schools to develop natural heritage skills. Training in coppicing, pollarding and other forestry skills will allow a new generation of ‘higglers’ - Suffolk’s historic term for a forester - to preserve the county’s ancient and beautiful woodlands.

Ashley Seaborne, CEO of the Green Light Trust, said: “With this grant we hope to prevent the loss of important skills and knowledge used to manage small woodlands by recording the craft of the 'Higgler' in a booklet which will then be used as a teaching aid and to encourage interest in working in the sector.”

Gardening for Wildlife Workshops

Trust Links Ltd have been awarded £10,000 to provide natural heritage skills training for 50 vulnerable adults, and to build upon previous HLF investment in the Growing Together community garden in Westcliff, Southend, to improve the biodiversity and help the local community to learn about the natural world on their doorstep. As well as providing practical skills, the project will create important habitats for wildlife such as bug houses, bird boxes, bee boxes and hibernacula.

Matt King, Chief Executive of Trust Links, said: “We are delighted to receive this funding from HLF to provide opportunities for local adults with mental health issues to engage with nature and local heritage. The Growing Together gardens are a haven for wildlife in the midst of a densely populated urban area; through the Wildlife Workshops we will enhance the gardens further and share ideas for gardening for wildlife throughout the community. In addition this project will improve mental wellbeing, physical health and build social skills.”

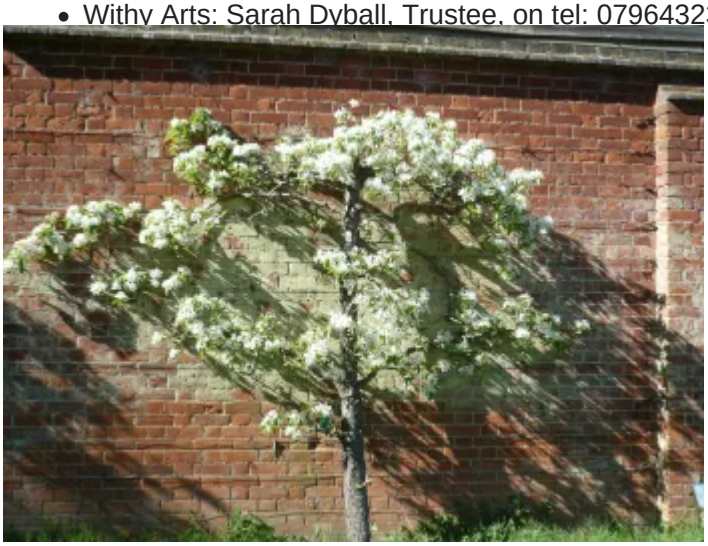
Reawakening the Ludham Dragon

Withy Arts have been awarded a grant of £6,900 to enable artists with learning difficulties to learn about the heritage of St Benet’s Abbey, and develop basketry skills to produce an interpretation of the story of the Ludham Dragon, an integral part of local folklore. The project volunteers will explore the ruins of St Benet’s and the surrounding landscape and learn about traditional willow weaving and basketry techniques to bring this fascinating piece of local mythology to life. The project builds on the recent HLF-supported conservation project at the Abbey, and demonstrates HLF’s ongoing commitment to the heritage of the local community.

Lorna Reevell, who worked on the project, said: “We're so excited to be using this new medium to learn about and connect with local folklore and with traditional crafting techniques."

Further information

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Discovering the East of England's natural heritage