



CELEBRATING Cultivation Street

David Domoney reflects on this array of wonderful community projects

There's never been as good a time as now to truly revel in the joy of gardening and that is exactly what the Cultivation Street community does. Looking back on some of the winners, it's easy to see how the cash prizes and recognition has encouraged them to grow their gardens even bigger and better.

Saffron Acres is a community project that has been involved for over five years and, in 2019, they bagged a huge win as the overall Midlands winner. Project manager Laura Gray comments: "One of the best things about being part of Cultivation Street is that it is so inclusive! We have a really wide range of volunteers, from young people looking for something to do in their community, adults with disabilities, older people; everyone is welcome. We can all work together, learn from each other and grow together."

Growing gardens

Of course, the winning doesn't stop after the cheque is cashed. For many, it's a confidence boost for the years to come. In 2017, Kenny McCubbin and his team at Shettleston Community Growing Project won the highly competitive 'Community Garden of the Year' category, receiving £10,000 worth of National Garden Gift Vouchers. After winning, they purchased new potting sheds, a greenhouse and lots of picnic benches for use around the community garden and food growing area.

They decided to make the winnings last over three years, also donating some of

their winnings to local organisations such as schools and local nurseries to allow them to buy seeds, plants and tools.

Kenny said: "The whole project looks completely different after winning. The winnings took a lot of pressure off our finances and could then be diverted to the maintenance projects. It was a real privilege to win. Not only Shettleston, but the whole local community have greatly benefitted from it, both in big changes you can see but also in small changes in and around the local community."

Teams that work

One of the best assets to Cultivation Street is our fantastic Garden Centre Ambassadors network. They represent Cultivation Street to their local schools and communities, giving planting lessons, offering friendly advice and being incredible advocates of the competition. Despite these uncertain times, these experts are still helping customers, local schools and community gardeners. Gary Bissett, who won Ambassador of the Year 2019, spoke to us regarding what he and his colleagues at Inver Garden Centre are doing despite the closure.

Gary said: "As the lockdown continues, people will need their gardens as a distraction as it is a great way to relax and look after your mental and physical health".

Memory lane

Each year the campaign sees hundreds of entries, breaking new records, and has given away a total of over £140,000 in

prize money over the years. Throughout its eight years, across the many categories, Cultivation Street has seen over 100 winners. Of its 750 plus entries, there have been projects spanning in size; from alleyways to acres and, no matter their size, they have been able to grow through Cultivation Street. This year will be no exception.

Onwards n' upwards

Angela Haylor, one of the founders of The Wonky Garden, a 2019 winner, is entering again this year and had this to say about the changes they've made during lockdown:



"We've scaled down but have access to two key sites and run a WhatsApp group for core volunteers to share progress and 'to do' lists. By sowing at home and getting plants to maturity and then transplanting them to site, we hope to avoid losses. The idea is to have lots of cut flowers and produce to share with our community as a way of bringing smiles to local care homes, food shelters and hospices in due course."

Regardless of the difficulties facing us, gardeners and nature-enthusiasts are still enjoying the rewards of gardening and the 2020 Cultivation Street campaign will continue to support fantastic projects who are still helping so many in their communities.

To enter your garden in Cultivation Street 2020, sponsored by Miracle Gro®, visit the website, cultivationstreet.com, and send us your details so we can welcome you with open arms.