

Thyme's Tables

Pursuing the idea that mighty oaks start off as little acorns, a group of local green-fingered enthusiasts, backed by Swoffers, is helping local primary and secondary schools to discover the joy of gardening.

Herbs in old containers, sensory gardens in an orchard and the creation of a quiet area are just some of the imaginative horticultural projects in the sights of local schoolchildren.

Pupils at five schools have received £200 each, courtesy of Swoffers Estate Agency, to enable them either to create a garden at school or revamp an existing area.

The enthusiastic youngsters are being helped by teachers who are adding to their workload, either in school time or through after-hours clubs, so that the children can learn how to garden.

The green initiative is part of St Peter Port's Floral Awards.



Organisers and douzeniers Pat Child, Katina Jones and Christine Goodlass have added a schools section and are delighted with the reaction to their idea.

'We already have businesses taking part in making St Peter Port more beautiful and we just felt that a schools category would have lots of benefits. It involves the children in gardening and growing and can also boost their pride in their school and the parish,' said Pat.

The four competition categories for this year are commercial premises, such as shops, offices, banks and garages, hospitality premises, private gardens with road frontage (any size) and the schools.

Pat explained that the Douzaine had such a good response to last year's events that it was decided to build on it and expand the scheme.

The initiative relies on a mixture of voluntary help and financial support from companies such as Swoffers.

The Douzeniers were 'thrilled' with the level of interest from youngsters. The breadth of ideas for how to use their £200 has also pleased them.

Oakvale is planning to make an alpine and bog garden, having acquired two very large sinks free of charge courtesy of the E-cycle column.

St Peter Port's secondary age pupils want to rejuvenate the inner quad area so that it can provide an attractive and restful place in which to have lunch.

Amherst's young pupils are going to get to grips with a revamp of their quiet area and Notre Dame Catholic Primary is developing a sensory garden. The latter

received their cheque from former pupil Matthew Henry, who is now Managing Director of Swoffers.

'It's a brilliant school and I think the idea of involving the children in looking after the outside space is terrific,' he said.

Notre Dame pupils already enjoy a selection of old variety apples and pears each autumn from trees planted when part of the site was a convent. 'The nuns put in quite a selection of fruit trees and we make a point of giving pupils the chance to try all of the different flavours when the crops are ready' said Notre Dame head teacher Peter McGovern.

Another incentive for adding to the Town's floral appeal through this added category is that the parish is also working towards entering The Blue Diamond Group Floral Guernsey Community Competition 2007.

This competition is designed to encourage all sectors of the community to work together to improve and regenerate their local environment through imaginative planting of trees, shrubs and flowers, attractive landscaping, conservation and recycling projects and cleanliness initiatives.

Blue Diamond has also donated special children-size gardening tools to all of the schools involved. Le Friquet Garden Centre Manager Tony Ingrouille said the company was very happy to help youngsters discover the joy of gardening.

Any keen gardeners, amateurs or professionals, who would like to lend a hand with some design ideas or practical help (and who do not object to being security checked by Police to enable their involvement) would be welcomed by the young gardeners. Their efforts will be judged by a panel including Matthew Henry in early July.

