

T^ogether

Spring 2018 **Issue 22**



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Green spaces...
Can they help manage your pain?

The fight for fortification...
Why we're backing flour power!

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Shine
Spina bifida • Hydrocephalus
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Why green spaces will make you smile

Television presenter, garden designer and writer, Mark Lane, is a firm believer that green is good for you.

Today, Mark Lane's busy career covers garden design, television presenting (with the BBC at the RHS Flower Shows and BBC Gardeners' World), writing for magazines and being a charity ambassador. But it wasn't always that way.

Following a car accident 15 years ago, resulting in surgery that was complicated by his spina bifida, Mark's mobility was greatly affected.



Mark tells the story:

"I now use a wheelchair permanently. I felt like I had hit a brick wall. I didn't know what to do. I went through a 10-year rehabilitation and severe depression and was bedbound. So I know what it is like to go through tough times.

"Fortunately, my partner Jasen was there to pick me up. He has been my rock. I was also referred to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital which changed my way of thinking. While there I did horticultural therapy. I enjoyed being outside, the beauty of the landscape, sowing seeds."

When you've had enough, think green...

Mark, who has also had a successful publishing career, continues:

"Studies have shown that spending 20 minutes looking at greenery can reduce the need for pain medication by up to 70%. It has certainly helped me reduce my morphine intake. Being outside touching plants grounded me. I forgot about everything that was going on physically and mentally.

"The horticultural therapist encouraged me to explore garden design. I soon realised this is my calling. I dream, eat, live everything about plants and design!

Mark, now the 'Health, Wellbeing and Community' ambassador for the environmental community charity Groundwork and an ambassador for the gardening disability charity Thrive, reflects:

"There is always a way to create an accessible space. You just need to think logically and 'outside the box'. Levelling a surface, moving or widening a path, creating turning points, using stabilising mesh on grass so wheels can cross safely - that kind of thing, and to fit people's budget. There is no reason why a person in a wheelchair can't do everything - with raised beds and tables, long handled tools, appropriate borders..."

Advice for Shine members?

"For me it's about pacing. Don't think you have to get everything done in a day. Take regular breaks. Break down your day into bite sized chunks and realise that the world isn't going to end if you don't get that done by the end of the day!

"It's also important to be open, honest and clear and explain what you need so that others understand, and to make the most of the friends and support out there. My long standing partner Jasen and friends know me well. They give me a hand with site surveys and look out for me when I need to rest and recharge my batteries.

"No matter how bad or dark things can get there is light at the end of the tunnel as long as you persist and tap into support from organisations such as Shine and gain joy from activities such as gardening.

"Seeing someone smile - creating a garden to make someone smile and want to go outside and forget their pain for a few moments - that means everything to me."

Mark would love to hear from Shine members about how accessible you find the places you visit. Further details at www.accessiblegardens.org.uk or email reviews@accessiblegardens.org.uk

 @MarkLaneDesigns