

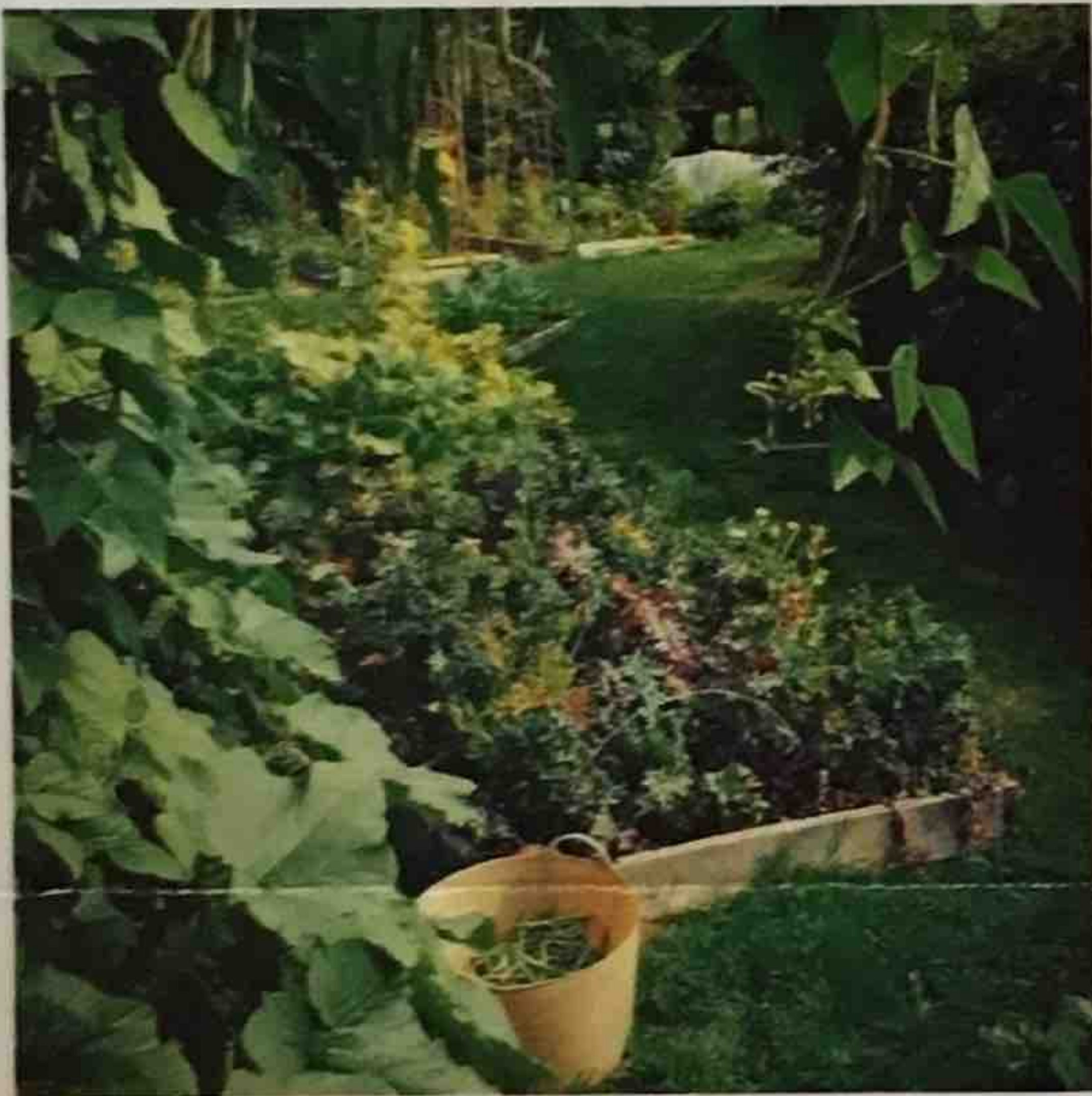


December 2018

Dear Patrons,

It seems hard to believe that 2018 is nearly over. So much has happened here at the Study Centre in this, our 50th year!

The Big Grow has been our flagship project during 2018 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Centre and to create a rich and productive focal point for the children's learning about where their food comes from.



Inspired by Patrick's Patch – the educational kitchen garden in Beaulieu that is open to the public, we wanted to create a similarly varied, productive, colourful and engaging garden here on our site. From a humble "fruit and veg patch" at the end of 2017, head gardener Adam and his team have created a stunning kitchen garden that has provided mountains of fresh produce for our visiting children and helped them to learn so much about the food they eat, as well as the conditions needed to grow it. All this has been achieved despite the very challenging growing conditions during 2018!

Adam, David, teams of dedicated volunteers and our visiting children have been out in all weathers to help plan, construct, dig, sow, water and harvest the huge variety of fruit, vegetables and herbs that are now

grown on site. We had so much produce over the summer months that we were able to sell our excess via the farm shop in Tatchbury. Members of the local community who have attended recent composting courses have also been able to learn in the new garden and we ran a very successful course on how to set up a school garden with teachers who were inspired by what we have created here at Minstead.

We are delighted with how much we have achieved in under a year – all of which has been made possible by generous grant funding from yourselves and a range of local and national funders, as well as a partnership with Fairweathers Garden Centre who supply us with equipment and woodchip, and Fiddlers Estate in Beaulieu who helped us with lots of seedlings this year.

Looking ahead, the next stage of the project is to recruit an outreach worker who can work with local schools to inspire and help them to create their own learning gardens.

In July many of you came along to our 50th B'Earthday celebrations to enjoy an afternoon of food, drink, music, dance, art, crafts, history and science... or just to soak up the atmosphere and enjoy the amazing weather. It was a wonderful day, with many visitors – old and new – coming to help celebrate.



Jane was featured on BBC Radio Solent in the run-up to the event and we collected all sorts of stories from people about their recollections of visits to the Study Centre over the years.

We have running a busy programme of community events at the Centre this autumn – from singing and dancing workshops to Christmas willow craft and wreath making – many of which have sold out. We received a grant from Hampshire County Council earlier in the year to run a series of composting workshops and were delighted that all four of these were very well attended.

Patrons' funding has provided subsidised visits to the Centre for Hollybrook School in Southampton, St Augustine's School in Weymouth and Newlands School from near Wokingham. All of these are schools that haven't previously visited the Centre and we hope that they will now become regular visitors.



Staff News

Big changes are afoot here at the Centre – after 28 years, both Jane and Chris are retiring from the Centre, having taught thousands of children how to live more lightly on our fragile planet. Words cannot do justice to the impact they have had on so many children and they will be hugely missed by the rest of the team at the Centre as well as by the many teachers who have come to know and trust them over the years. Chris retires on 21st December and Jane will retire at Easter 2019. A new Head of Centre has already been appointed and will work in parallel with Jane from Christmas to Easter. James Dawkins is moving to the New Forest from Cambridge, where he has run outdoor education centres for a number of years. He brings with him a strong sustainability ethos and we look forward to welcoming him and his family to the Centre.

Dates for your diary:

Our next major event is a Ceilidh at Minstead Village Hall on Friday 1st March 2019. This will include music, dancing, dinner and a raffle. Tickets will go on sale early in January so save the date for what promises to be a really fun night!

Thank you once again for your continued support for Minstead Study Centre – with the funding and support you provide we are more able to plan for the future, and make transformative projects like "The Big Grow" a reality.

With very best wishes

Kate Chapman - Fundraiser