

## **Plants Grow Here – Episode 98 Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show pt.2 Transcript**

**Georgia Tracy chats to Daniel Fuller about the great work that happens at Kevin Heinze Grow, what therapeutic horticulture is and the benefits of gardening to both our mental and physical health.**

**DF = Daniel Fuller, Horticulturalist and Podcast host.**

**GT= Georgia Tracy, Kevin Heinze Grow**

DF - I'm here with Georgia Tracy from Kevin Heinze Grow, so how are you going today?

GT - I'm going really well, thanks Daniel

DF - So can you tell me a little bit about what Kevin Heinze Grow is?

GT- Kevin Heinze grow today, is a disability service. We are a very unique organisation, in that we work with people with disabilities, but we use therapeutic horticulture, so that's our platform, working with people in the gardens to meet their developmental goals and to teach them about gardening.

DF - Loving seeing some horticultural therapy here, I think it's a big growth area and I've been volunteering in the careers hub and we've been talking about it like it's the wild Wild West, because there's no real framework there that's existing. I know a lot of people are working on it, would you like to speak on that?

GT – Sure, look I think a lot of people are working on it, I think it's happening in neighbourhood houses all around the country. It's a lot bigger or has a bigger sort of uptake I think in America and in the UK. Why it hasn't sort of taken off so vigorously perhaps in Australia is, it's hard to say really but I think the thing is that a lot of people are doing it but it's not very cohesive. Everyone's doing it a little bit differently and working with different populations. They're still doing good work but perhaps we don't have a sort of a central kind of force. However, having said that, there is Therapeutic Horticulture Australia which is the sort of representative body I suppose for this sort of work and they're a fairly recently established group. They do a conference every year so if people are interested I'd say definitely look them up.

DF - Love it. Ten or 11 years ago or maybe even 12 years ago now I was working in a sales role and I was depressed and my wife told me well what can you do, you need to you need to change. So you know I was like well I can do gardening so I got into that and it's really done wonders for me. So I think it's fantastic that you guys are out here spreading that word. What are some of the things that horticulture can help people with? like how does that help people?

GT - OK so gardening/ horticulture whatever you wanna call it, being in nature, but being active in nature is really good for people's mental health. So, stress and anxiety are huge problems in our society today we all know that anxiety and depression are one of the leading causes of disability in the country. In fact, internationally, globally. What gardening does specifically I think his lowest people's cortisol levels, their stress levels and makes some people a bit more reflective. I mean I can't really speak to the science of it, but I mean a lot of people can and there's a lot of research out there but I think that the key thing is being active in a garden helps people to manage their feelings, and I think it helps people to really to grow like psychologically to feel more resilient to life stresses, and to you know plant something for tomorrow. So sowing the seed for what comes later. It's a meaningful activity that is hugely beneficial for people at all ages of life.

DF - Speaking from my own experience it's meditative, it's healing and obviously you know there's no silver bullet for mental health issues, this is one of the tools within a toolbox but I think it's an invaluable one.

GT - Look I agree. In the UK I understand there's a thing called social prescribing. It's something that should be happening here in my opinion. What it means is that people will go to their GP with depression, anxiety or some other mental health condition and they may receive medication which is fine, but they may also receive a prescription for social activity like gardening. So what that involves perhaps is that people will come along to a garden centre, work with other people to grow some fruit and veg a couple of hours a week. Something like that, who knows exactly what it would look like here in Australia but I can imagine a day where that could happen and it could be hugely beneficial. It's a preventative healthcare measure, it would save people having to go on medication for very long periods of time and it would instil in them an interest in a healthy activity that's going to reap huge rewards for them psychologically for the rest of their lives.

DF - I completely agree. I imagine that someone listening to this podcast right now who's never heard of therapeutic Horticulture. Is it as simple as gardening? Is that we're talking about here?

GT - Look I think it's a try it for yourself. I think go out and have a go planting something, sit under a tree. If you're stressed don't turn to social media, don't turn the TV on maybe spend time with friends but you know sit under a tree, walk around on the grass, go and buy some seeds at your local nursery and plant them and then watch them come up over the course of the week and look I tell you, tell me if you don't feel better after those activities because I think that don't overthink it just try it out and see if it works for you - it certainly works for me and it works for a lot of the people that we work with at Kevin Heinze Grow.

DF - Absolutely. Look, take headphones out as well you won't hear me saying this often but as a podcaster you should definitely listen to podcasts but take your headphones out when you're trying to heal your mind in the garden because yeah you might think it

is a wasted time, that yeah you actually have to go through it, you have to experience it for yourself.

GT- I think that's right, so just try it out and see, if you feel better just spending some time in nature. If you are someone with specific let's say developmental goals or if you have a disability and you want to have more social interaction or if you're an older person maybe with an ABI or if you're just an older person who is socially isolated, try and find somewhere local to you that's doing therapeutic horticulture or just gardening- call it gardening. Therapeutic horticulture kinda sounds bamboozling for some people. But if you can find an organisation it's providing some short courses try it out for yourself, learn a few skills and then maybe transfer those skills to your own home and maybe do it with your family and your friends .

DF - Thank you so much for your time and keep up the good work.

GT - Thank you so much Daniel lovely to meet you.