



Rebecca Marshall

Terry Marshall and his great grandson Jeremy reaping the rewards of their weekly gardening sessions together.

Terry Marshall, long-term supporter of Garden Organic, is known to thousands of organic gardeners who may have heard him talk, perused his articles in the gardening press, or delved into his books on organic tomato growing.

Terry has been gardening organically since he could walk, apart from a relatively brief foray into commercial tomato production at the start of his career. Even that experience just confirmed his beliefs that organic was the way to grow, because: “organic growing sustains the soil, which produces crops free from chemical taint”. Making tons of compost on the commercial nursery where he worked brought the impoverished soil back to life.

To counter criticism that organic growing was ‘unscientific’, Terry built up his scientific knowledge about the way plants grow. Always an experimenter, he contacted Lawrence Hills (founder of HDRA/Garden Organic) in 1958, in response to Lawrence’s request in The Observer newspaper for gardeners to join his experimental work on Russian comfrey.

Terry has been a regular participant in our members’ experiments ever since he joined HDRA in 1973 and says: “I have been a member of HDRA/Garden Organic for so long because I believe in the work that it does. From soil building to seed saving, as seen at Ryton, it works. I could go on and on.”

Working for many years as a freelance professional gardener around Bingley, Terry used organic-only methods. Also, as an

active member of the West Yorkshire Organic Group, he has been giving talks to promote organic growing for nearly 30 years. A sure fire way to convince the audience of the benefit is, in his experience, to take along produce to taste. He is well known for turning up with bags of his own tomatoes, at almost any time of year, or perhaps some tasty soup made by his wife Jennifer.

Terry’s family, an organic gardening dynasty one could say, illustrates the benefits of passing knowledge down through the generations. He still grows on the plot that his father cultivated on the Cottingley Bridge allotment gardens, where his grandfather also had a plot. This is where he learned his first skills. Terry’s son David now cultivates most of his father’s own allotment, but Terry is joined regularly there by his great grandson Jeremy, already a keen grower at the age of seven. Terry says: “When we see the faces of children as they pick and eat something that we have taught them to grow, we know we have shown them the best way to garden – the organic way.”

- For a copy of Terry Marshall’s book on ‘Organic Tomatoes’ (send a cheque), made payable to ‘Terry Marshall’, for £5.99 (post paid UK) to 14 Ghyllwood Drive, Bingley, Yorks BD16 1NF.