

The Sprout garden – a gentle space to help repair minds and souls

# Healing through planting

Health | Suzanne Robson

FOR Bill Bray, nurturing Thornbury's Sprout Community Garden and selling his wares at the market is more than just a fun weekend pastime.

The craftsman, who has depression, wouldn't miss a chance to be out in the sun tending to the flourishing garden or telling locals about his garden decorations at the Sprout Community Market held on the first Thursday of each month.

"I've been there since day one," he said.

"I like Sprout very much and wouldn't miss the opportunity to be there."

The Thornbury garden and market was created by Mind, a not-for-profit health service helping people recovering from a mental illness.

Through programs at the garden, kitchen, workshop, market and office, participants have a chance to develop personal and vocational skills through horticulture and business with a sustainable focus.

Those involved have a mental illness, are at risk of homelessness or recovering from drug or alcohol issues.

Mr Bray, who makes piography (wood burning) garden decorations, said he had benefited greatly from his time at Sprout.

"It has improved my mental health and made me more responsible and trustworthy," he said.

"I enjoy the company, they are really good people."

Market co-ordinator Zanni Waldstein said the market, which started earlier this year, included 20 to 35 stalls operated by participants selling preserves and arts and crafts alongside locally made

## THE MARKET

The Sprout market runs from 3-7pm on the first Thursday of each month at Sprout Community Gardens on the corner of Clapham and Watt streets, Thornbury.

If you are interested in having a stall or volunteering, contact 9484 5565 or email [zwaldstein@mindaustralia.org.au](mailto:zwaldstein@mindaustralia.org.au)

or secondhand goods from the wider community.

"It's quite a relaxed model ... there is a lot of healing and learning and recovery-based stuff that happens through just being in the garden and working with plants," she said.

"It opens up the opportunity for people to do things at their own pace ... it is gentle, very organic, and it is also giving people life skills too."

Ms Waldstein said all fresh produce must be organically grown on site or from local backyards within 100 miles of Sprout.

Sprout recently received an Inner North Community Foundation grant of \$15,000 for a new training program teaching six stallholders how to increase their sales.

The Sprout market at Thornbury. Fresh produce from the community garden is sold along with arts and crafts.

Picture: MARK WILSON N10NL510

