

Martin Rawlings

Location: Chiddingstone, Kent, South East England



Hopes for the Future



To get more people into outdoor education



To become a 'Hedgehog Champion'



To see a UK food growing revolution

Rural Youth Project Involvement

Martin attended the Rural Youth Project Kent & Medway hack as it was being hosted at Bore Place, where he is an intern. It gave him a chance to meet other young people in the sector.

Background

A qualified languages teacher, Martin Rawlings chose a different path from his life in Manchester when he joined the team at Bore Place, Kent in February 2022. He is currently undertaking an internship with the aim to get more people into outdoor education.

Bore Place aims to get young people to connect with nature and how food is produced, and gives disadvantaged children access to nature, healthier paths and careers. Martin's goal is to help people of all ages reconnect with nature and where food comes from.

"If you help people to reconnect with nature, they'll be more inclined to protect it."

Martin's next challenge is to become the 'Hedgehog champion of Bore Place' by doing something to help struggling population of hedgehogs. The term came from the People's Trust of Endangered Animals who are encouraging the public to count and record hedgehogs in their area.

Martin has experienced a struggle that a lot of young people in rural areas can resonate with, the struggle of knowing where to be.

"I do like city living but when there, I crave nature and the outdoors and then when I'm in the countryside, I miss the number of shops and cafes on my doorstep."

Martin found the Rural Youth Project Ideas Hack really intriguing and enjoyed that it showcased people across the industry from large scale farmers down to small market gardeners.

"It was great to connect with all the young people taking part and learn from people with diverse backgrounds. I met so many interesting people. It definitely helped to promote and encourage people into the horticulture and fresh food sector. Such a broad group of people coming together is really important as it allows networks to be built."



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- Martin Rawlings

Background

Martin credits the hack for showing him how much passion that is in the industry and inspired him more than ever to buy local, and support local farmers and growers. The hack gave him an education on food quality, freshness and why local is better.

“The passion from the youth hack changed my views completely, it won me over to support local as much as I can. This summer I’ve committed to buying local Kent fresh fruits and get vegetables from the market gardener here at Bore Place.”

Prior to the hack, Martin knew there were less people actively involved in the industry but wasn’t aware that it was a big issue.

“The sector, in general, gets a pretty bad wrap, whether it is justified or not, it is vital work and it’s important that everyone gets involved.”

During the pandemic, Martin applied to pick fruit at large fruit farms but found there to be a lack of opportunities, however, since attending the hack he knows that is not the case and would encourage people who want to get involved to do so.

“There is actually a lot of work in the industry, partly because of the loss of migrant workers due to Brexit, but young people are so needed.”

Martin would love to see a food growing revolution in the future starting with everyone knowing where food comes from and striving to grow food in their gardens, community allotments, school gardens or even fruit trees in the streets.

“We are so detached now from our basic survival skills. I think it’s very important that everyone knows how to grow food and I’d like to see it embedded into the curriculum to inspire a culture of eating better, nutrient dense foods rather than takeaways and fast foods. It’s quite exciting, there’s a lot we can do.”

Martin is a real champion of the industry who gained a lot from the Ideas Hack and feels it even lit the torch for him to start his own small-scale farm or growing enterprise.

Solutions

1. Through his internship at Bore Place, Martin inspires young people to get outside and connect with nature.
2. Martin has set up hedgehog tunnels at Bore Place to monitor and preserve the number of hedgehogs.
3. Better education of where food comes from to inspire people to grow their own.



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