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Growing numbers of schools are signing up to create own allotments

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An initiative which saw an abandoned school field turned into a thriving allotment which was tended by pupils is growing - with a Norfolk-wide roll-out to other schools.

Nine secondary schools have signed up to the Papillon Project, which looks to build on the allotment scheme which was run for five years at Reepham High School.

Largely created using things people throw away - from fly-tipped toilets to 150 tyres and even canoes - the project made use of all sorts to show children how to grow their own food.

The scheme showed that establishing their own allotment and growing their own food helped to improve students' sense of physical and mental well being.

Matt Willer, who set up the allotment when he was a teacher at the school, won the Royal Horticultural Society's School Gardening Champion of the Year 2018 and an Eco Hero award.

He has now left his day job at Reepham to found the Papillon Project charity, with the objective of taking the idea into more schools.

The vision is to get children and young people in the county's secondary schools, along with the teachers, support staff, parents and members of the community to create their own allotments.

He said: "I want to inspire children and young people to learn to grow their own food for their school and their community.

"We will work with schools and sixth-form colleges to create and develop an allotment growing area which the students will design, create and develop themselves.

"The Papillon Project is also about creating a shared responsibility and forging a community of volunteers from



amongst staff, parents and the wider community."

The new initiative has the backing of BBC Radio 4 Gardeners' Question Time guru, Bob Flowerdew.

He said: "Our children can only benefit from familiarity with nature and the ways it sustains us and our food.

"In a world of much division, gardening is a common good, something we can all agree that our children should experience, can learn from, and most of all will surely enjoy."

The Papillon Project was launched on Friday at Sprowston Community Academy in Cannerby Lane.



Matt Willer is marking the launch of his new charity The Papillon Project at Sprowston Community Academy

Pictures: BRITTANY WOODMAN