



Triangle Community Garden

created and cultivated by people of all ages and abilities at Ransom's Recreation Ground, off Grove Road, Hitchin

Annual Report 2008-09

More Inside:

- Growing Ability
- Vandalism update
- Events review
- Questionnaire
- Bob Flowerdew's Talk
- Autumn activities
- Pavilion update
- Future plans
- Permaculture
- Anniversary Celebrations
- New workshops
- Treasurer's report



Core group member Rachel (right) and helpers, moving the soft fruit in the spring.

NEW Autumn Workshops:

'Weaving for Pleasure' –

a creative weaving workshop for beginners
October 31 10am-3pm

'Hedgerow Basketry' –

make a coracle basket from hedgerow materials
November 28 10am-3pm.

Filling fast, book now!

See website for details

Welcome to our annual report. This year has been a very busy and productive one for the Triangle Garden, and we have travelled a long way towards achieving a number of our goals. This report touches on the highlights of the year, some of the struggles we have faced and the lessons learnt. It also looks forward to what we hope will be happening next year when the Garden will celebrate its tenth birthday!

Community volunteer activities

Our monthly volunteer days have been well-attended this year and we have made great progress at the Garden and allotment. Projects have centred on creating **more colour and seasonal focus** in the Garden and making it look more attractive all year round. A decision to move away from renting plots at the Garden following a spate of vandalism last year, has allowed us to develop the planting throughout: creating bold accents of colour, form and scent in different places throughout the year. These will become more apparent as the planting matures and further areas are planted up next year. Here are some of the improvements we made to the Garden last year:

➤ To make the new planting more effective we moved the **soft fruit** – gooseberries, redcurrants and blackcurrants, into one of the sunnier sleeper beds where they fruited well later in the year.

➤ In a second sleeper bed we successfully grew several **dye plants**: woad, coreopsis and weld, which have now been harvested and made into blue and yellow dye at our September dye workshop.

➤ In the third sleeper bed we grew flowers to **attract bees**, from seeds donated by Buzzworks, Hitchin's community bee garden.

➤ We also constructed a series of new **raised beds at the allotment**.

➤ Last autumn the **willow maze** benefited from a severe pruning and new plants were planted in the gaps to make it dense and bushy.

➤ In the spring we cleared the pond, built a new **pond deck** and planted hazels, dogwoods and other native shrubs with wildlife value.

➤ To open up the Garden more for **play and adventure** we created a woodland glade, made the log stepping stones more accessible and laid some winding bark paths through the shady planting.

➤ This year we established a **plant swap box** so people who use the Garden can donate and/or make use of spare plants.

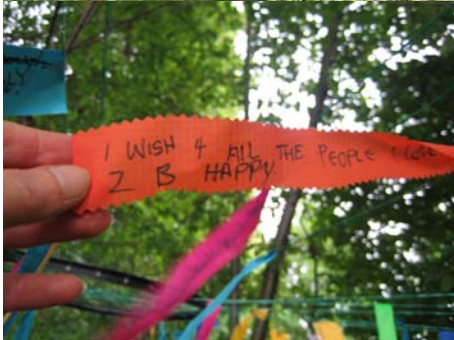
➤ In July the central Triangle Garden **mosaic** was renovated. It now looks fabulous and gives the garden back its focal point!

We would love more people to come to our **Friday afternoon sessions** – it's still a very small group. If you are free then it's a lovely time of day to garden, chat, catch up with friends and make new ones. As well as being sociable, these weekly sessions make a real difference in keeping the Garden looking good, and complementing the work that our Growing Ability gardeners do during the week.

Thanks to everyone who has helped on the Triangle Garden this year – we hope you had a good time in the process, and if you did, tell your friends about us!

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

The Triangle Community Garden is a non-profit-making project enabled by Hitchin Community Gardens. For more information please contact us on 01462 621585, email us at triangle.garden@ntlworld.com or write to Vicky Wyer at Hitchin Community Gardens, 23 Priory Way, Hitchin SG4 9BJ.



From top: laying out the raised beds at the allotment; growing beans in the new beds with Growing Ability; the new pond deck; the wishing glade at Open Day; colourful wishes.

Growing Ability takes off

Thanks to the track record of our previous all-ability gardening project and the success of the Growing People Project's horticultural therapy work at Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living, our partnership project: **'Growing Ability'** is up and running and has now attracted solid funding for the next two years.

Growing Ability is more than an all-ability gardening group – its sessions are geared towards improving the self-confidence, self-esteem and quality of life of the adults with learning difficulties who take part, through gardening and horticulture. The project, run by a qualified horticultural therapist, provides a structured programme based around the support needs, abilities and personal development aims of each individual involved.

One weekly session has been running since June 2009, working mainly at the allotment growing vegetables, but also keeping the Garden watered. This has been funded by a grant from Luton Airport Community Trust. Two more half day sessions are planned to start in October, with up to six places in each. Funding for this level of provision has now been secured to 2011 from the Herts Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Team.

Volunteers are very welcome to help on a regular basis – it is a couple of hours very well spent out in the fresh air, helping others and learning too. A CRB check will be necessary. Experience of learning difficulties is useful but not essential: free training is available. Volunteers please contact John Cliff on 07764 940812.

Vandalism on the decline?

Vandalism has been lower this year than last. We're not really sure why but we have been active at the Garden most Friday afternoons which may be a factor. Although people still use the Garden for evening get-togethers on a regular basis, the broken glass seems to be less frequent, and once or twice rubbish has actually been bagged up by those involved – more of that please!!

Public-spirited passers by are very good about helping to clear up any mess that's left lying around, but we do still have the odd troubling incident like the widespread debris left after a child's birthday party. We welcome people of any age getting together or hanging out at the Garden – it is there for the community to use – but people need to make sure they respect the hard work that maintains the garden and ensure that it is left in a respectable state for the next people to enjoy. Bottles are left lying around and do get smashed, and the broken glass puts children at risk of nasty accidents. Please spread the word... "Put the litter in the bin!"

Events for 2008-09

Last autumn we held our sixth **Apple Day** in Hitchin town centre, with plenty of support from local food and environment stalls. Michael Clark from Tewin Orchard, a long term supporter of the Triangle Garden, was on hand to give invaluable advice on apple identification and apple tree maintenance, to a busy flow of interested people.

The **Triangle Garden Open Day** on Sunday June 28th was possibly our best yet – with fantastic weather and a great turn out. Highlights were the pond dipping, veggie sculpture, Asian food, homemade ice-creams, the wishing glade, the stocks, and of course the welly wanging! Thanks to core group members Rachel and Sandra for all their hard work in organising the day, and to our stall holders, volunteers and cake bakers for their time and effort.

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Questionnaire

On the Open day a short **questionnaire** asked visitors to comment on their use of the Garden and how they felt it should be developed in the future. The results were very positive and informative, giving the core group an opportunity to consider the wishes of local people in the development of *their community garden*. We know there are many of you out there who haven't yet seen or completed the questionnaire so we are attaching one here for your completion. Please take a few minutes to fill it in and return it to us – as a community garden, we want your views to inform everything we do – but for that to happen, you need to tell us what you think!

Bob Flowerdew's gardening wisdom

More than 150 people gathered to hear Bob Flowerdew's talk, organised by the Triangle Garden at Woodside Hall in July as part of the Hitchin Festival.

"Go forth and sharpen your hoes!" was Bob's sound advice. "If you tend to think of gardening as a chore," says Bob, "then you'll never enjoy it, but if you take some simple steps to make it easier for yourself, then you'll actually look forward to it".

More common sense tips from Bob followed: Don't take on too much at once, don't grow vegetables you haven't already tasted and decided you like, and take some time to fix those irritating things, like the low branch that hits you when you mow under it!

One of the UK's leading experts in organic gardening, Bob maintains that the importance of being organic is not just that organic food can taste better but that a diet based solely on non-organic food, is actually bad for you. His view is that the way conventional farming erodes the health of our soil, means that non-organic food lacks many of the nutrients, vitamins and minerals we need to stay healthy. He is a strong supporter of the Soil Association which campaigns for planet-friendly food and farming and raises awareness of the connection between soil, food, the health of people and that of the planet.

The event raised almost £700 for the Garden, and was supported by local florist/gift shop Town Garden, in Sun Street, and the peat-free compost manufacturer Fertile Fibre.

Activities for this autumn

As well as our programme of autumn volunteer days which will include a **bulb planting session** in November (see website for dates), we will be celebrating **Apple Day** again this year on 24 October in Hitchin town centre. We have also embarked on a series of autumn craft workshops starting in September with **'Natural Dyeing'** using the woad and coreopsis grown at the Garden this year. This was a very successful informal workshop run by local experts Susan Dye and Ashley Walker. For a review of this workshop and details of future ones go to our website.

Core Group Members 2008-09:

Vicky Wyer	Chair/coordinator, H&S officer
Katy and Joe Adams	Secretaries
Margaret Byrne	Treasurer
Sandra Wilkins	Site contact
Rachel Cottley	Maintenance and growing
Rosie Rigg	



From top: Bob Flowerdew with core group members Vicky, Sandra and Margaret; Rosie handing out questionnaires at Open Day

Pavilion Conversion Update

We are pleased to announce that the Triangle Garden and North Herts Council have successfully secured £25,000 from WREN (a landfill tax charity) which will be matched by £58,000 from NHDC's own budgets to renovate the pavilion in Ransom's Rec, providing new sports changing facilities at one end and a community hub at the other. We are seeking a further £50,000 from Biffaward (another landfill grant-maker) to reach the total needed to carry out the refurbishment and conversion of the building.

Plans are in place to create a workshop/classroom/meeting space with kitchen and refurbished toilets. These will replace the currently disused changing rooms where we currently store our tools.

The conversion will make much better use of the building, enabling us to run activities, workshops, meetings and schools visits from it, as well as providing a wet weather space for Growing Ability sessions. **Please get in touch if you think you can help in any way.** This development could transform the area: providing a community focus for activity and wellbeing.

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Workshops and courses for 2010 at the Garden:

We hope to run the following courses next year:

- Introduction to Permaculture
- Permaculture Design Course
- Growing food sustainably in a small garden
- Growing and caring for fruit trees in small spaces

These last two courses will seek to demonstrate ways that people can make their own gardens more productive, however small, without needing an allotment.

For more information on these courses please check our website over the coming months.



From top: the Garden in 2000 seen through the willow 'arch'; the arch as seen from the sensory garden in 2003

Can you help?

We currently have core group vacancies for enthusiastic people with an interest in the environment and community, who have some time to spare to help us make the Garden a thriving local activity hub.

Please contact Vicky on 621585 if you're interested in joining us.

Future plans

Next year will be the Triangle Garden's **tenth anniversary**: work started on the ground back in 2000 with the creation of our willow entrance arch. We'll be celebrating this anniversary with some exciting new projects that we hope will engage more people and groups within the community to take an interest and an ongoing active part in the Triangle Garden. More on this below.

We are taking this opportunity as a core group, along with opinions and ideas gathered from the questionnaire, to review the future **vision** for the Garden: what it could be and do, how it engages with the community and how we can build **participation, sustainability and resilience** into the way the Garden is managed.

We are also looking at how we can improve the sustainability of the Garden itself in terms of minimising the work needed to maintain it, maximising what participants can get out of it and making the task of caring for it more attractive to volunteers. In our initial exploration of these issues we have been drawn towards the principles of sustainable living or 'permaculture'.

What is permaculture?

Permaculture is about **creating sustainability by learning from nature's patterns**. By looking at how natural ecosystems work and how they achieve their balance, diversity and resilience, we can develop our own sustainable solutions to the problems that we face on a local, national or global scale.

Permaculture is based on a philosophy of cooperation with, and respect for nature, for the earth and for its people. It doesn't seek to turn its back on progress, but takes sustainability as a key factor in determining how technology can best be harnessed. Its principles can be applied to all aspects of life.

Tenth Birthday Celebrations

We plan to start an **archive project** describing the evolution of the Garden over the last ten years from its beginning as an idea in the heads of a few local 'guerrilla gardeners', to its current embodiment as a community resource, provider of therapeutic horticulture and potential permaculture centre.

We'll be continuing our programme of introducing **more seasonal interest and colour** to the Garden and through our permaculture design course we'll be using **permaculture principles** to determine how we can minimise maintenance and maximise attractiveness, productivity, and participation at the Garden.

We also hope to re-establish the **spiral mound**, and develop a **mosaic trail** around the garden, with input from local art students, artists, schools and community groups. Other aims are to create a series of **hazel arches** over the stepping stones, to introduce **more soft fruit**, to build bigger **better compost bins** in a less prominent location and convert the existing ones into planters.

We plan to introduce **more permanent signage** at the entrances and within the Garden, giving people information about the features, planting and wildlife, and telling them what's on and when. We would like to create a **sheltered seating area/pergola** off the sensory garden where people can sit and enjoy the planting.

We hope you'll join us next year to help put some of these ideas into action.

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Triangle Community Garden Financial Report for the year ending August 2009

Treasurer's Report

We have had another **successful year** with our main events, Apple Day, Open Day and Bob Flowerdew's talk not only providing funds to continue to develop the Garden, but also introducing new people to the Garden and its aims. We have finished the year with a surplus which will enable us to celebrate our tenth anniversary next year with some new projects.

Grant funding for the Garden consisted of £261.00 from the Waitrose Community Fund which was used to purchase the raised beds for the allotment (thank you to Waitrose and to everyone who "voted" for us) and £250.00 from NHDC to pay for the architect's fees for a feasibility study for the pavilion development.

We are hoping that Apple Day, which is coming soon, and our new workshop venture will continue to generate funds for next year. All profits from events and workshops go to improving the Garden for the enjoyment of the community, and financing the volunteer activities that we run.

In June the **Growing Ability** project began, initially providing one session a week for people with learning difficulties, and this is set to grow as we have secured a further £30,000 from the JCT over the next three years.

Future plans include forming a company limited by guarantee and achieving charitable status.

Margaret Byrne
Treasurer

Hitchin Community Gardens

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st August 2009.

	£	£	£
Balance b/f 1st September 2008			629.17
Income			
Produce sales and donations	52.55		
Open Day	188.92		
Bob Flowerdew's Talk	673.00		
Apple Day	430.80		
Interest received	1.22		
Grants	511.00		
Total Income		1,857.49	

Expenditure

Materials and Equipment	513.72		
Subscriptions and Insurance	238.50		
Training	148.80		
Administration, Publicity and Website	167.49		
Cost of unsold stock	8.40		
Sundry	252.97		
Total Expenditure		1,329.88	

Surplus of income over expenditure **527.61**

Balance c/f at 31st August 2009 **1,156.78**

Represented by

	£
Current Assets	
Bank	1,210.43
Cash	62.97
	<u>1,273.40</u>
Less current liability	
Received in advance for workshops less expenses to date	116.62
	<u>1,156.78</u>

Growing Ability

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st August 2009.

Luton Airport Grant **3000.00**

Expenditure

Materials and Equipment	106.24	
Subscriptions and Insurance	166.71	
Training and Wages	880.50	
Administration, Publicity and Website	36.65	
Total Expenditure		<u>1190.10</u>

Surplus of Grant over Expenditure **1809.90**

Balance c/f at 31st August 2009 on Luton Grant **1809.90**

JCT Grant **2000.00**

Balance c/f at 31st August 2009 **3809.90**

Represented by

	£
Bank	3809.90

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