



Triangle Community Garden

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

Annual Report 2009-10

More inside

- ✦ Permaculture
- ✦ Workshops Programme
- ✦ Triangle Garden Talk
- ✦ Growing Ability
- ✦ Growing Clearer Minds Project
- ✦ Ransom's Pavilion
- ✦ Governance
- ✦ Training
- ✦ Treasurer's report
- ✦ Accounts

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2009-10.

This has been a very busy year for the Garden and its many projects and also represents the Garden's tenth year of existence! We have come a long way from those first days when a few local residents looked at a patch of nettles in the corner of the Rec and approached the Council for permission to take it on as a community project.

Community volunteer activities

Over the past year we have used our volunteer Sundays to make improvements to the Garden in response to feedback received from our questionnaire in summer 2009. What most people liked about the Garden was its peacefulness, its plants and flowers and the element of discovery and exploration it provided for children. Views on the Garden's safety and child-friendliness were overwhelmingly positive but people were less enthusiastic about the level of information provided and litter. In response we have:

- Put up four new **noticeboards** at the Garden, allotment and pavilion thanks to funding from Veolia Water, via the Herts Community Foundation
- Planted a large variety of **bulbs, flowers and shrubs** throughout the garden
- Introduced **new features** such as a bug hotel, and a special place for our Christmas tree
- Made **improvements** to our 'secret glade' and stepping stone walkway
- Made more frequent visits to the Garden to make sure **litter** is not left lying around.

Other changes have been the introduction of new compost bins built by Growing Ability, native irises planted along the river, the completion of our pond dipping deck, and a new way through between the central circle and the outer path system. We have also started to erect a pergola and raised beds at our allotment to show what can be grown in a small space. These new beds have been designed to be accessible to people in wheelchairs or who have problems with bending.

We have seen a steady flow of new volunteers at the Garden over the last year which has been great, and we have met lots of interested park users on our Friday afternoon gardening sessions which run during British Summer Time.

Our next task is to consult with the community about what you want to see happening at the Triangle Garden, at the refurbished Pavilion and in the Rec. generally. We have plenty of ideas but we want to make sure that what we do is going to be used and valued by people. Please download a questionnaire from our website and return to us at 17, Florence Street, Hitchin SG5 1QZ by the end of November 2010.

Vicky Wyer, Chair and acting coordinator.



Barrowing weeds with Growing Ability

Please join us for our

AGM

Thursday 25 November
Ransom's Pavilion,
Alexandra Rd, Hitchin
7.30pm – 8.30pm

AGM will include a short slide show and talk on **'Growing Ability'** by project manager John Cliff.

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 triangler.garden@ntlworld.com or write to Vicky Wyer at Hitchin Community Gardens, 23 Priory Way. Hitchin SG4 9BJ.

Workshops Programme

Autumn 2009 saw the start of our new **craft workshops** programme, where people can learn traditional skills using natural materials, guided by local experts. Last year participants enjoyed dyeing with woad, hedgerow basketry and weaving willow plant-supports.

Here's what people said: 'very enjoyable and satisfying', 'I was so pleased with my basket I gave it to my sister-in-law'.

In 2010 we also ran several half-day **veg growing workshops** focusing on growing in small spaces, and planning your plot, with a mixture of theory and observation of a variety of allotment plots and practices.

Here's what people found most useful: 'being shown around the allotments' 'individual advice on success with different veg', 'very helpful tutors'

All our workshops are widely publicised in advance with a discount of up to 20% for earlybird bookings providing a good concessionary rate.



Alys Fowler, centre, with members of the core group

Triangle Garden Talk 2010

To go with our emphasis on 'growing your own' we were delighted to have **Alys Fowler** present our annual talk, part of the Hitchin Festival.

She spoke and showed slides on her adventures in 'polyculture' - mixing vegetables and fruit in with garden plants. She was both enchanting and inspiring, and demonstrated a wealth of scientific knowledge and hard-won experience. Here's what people said:

'It was fabulous, really enjoyed it. Took my husband who is not so keen on gardening, he actually really enjoyed it too. I've now gone out and bought her book!' 'Brilliant- the best Triangle talk yet'

Permaculture at the Triangle Garden

Last year we embarked upon an exciting journey into the world of permaculture.

For the uninitiated, permaculture is about reconnecting the way we live, to the way the planet needs us to live in order for both to have a healthy future. Our consumption in the west is way out of proportion to our needs and our waste is unjustifiable. Permaculture Design teaches us to stand back and observe what we do, and look again at how we can make positive changes - to live a life more in tune with the ecosystem on which we depend.

The Triangle Garden ran a number of permaculture events including evening talks, introductory weekend workshops and a full 12-day design course(PDC). Altogether over 30 people took part, with five members of our core group attending an intro weekend and three doing the full PDC. Core group participation was funded by a Grassroots Grant from North Herts CVS/Herts Community Foundation. During the course we built a good relationship with a permaculture group from Cambridge who are part of the Transition movement, which emerged to address the challenges we face as we reach the end of cheap oil. Our tutor was the inspiring and highly experienced permaculture expert, Hannah Thorogood.

The Permaculture Design Course was spread over five months, one weekend a month, and included a visit to the Apricot Centre for Sustainable Living, an organic fruit orchard in Essex, and Lauriston Farm, a biodynamic farm on the Blackwater estuary. We were delighted to have Michael Guerra, local practitioner and author of the Edible Container Garden, as a guest tutor for one of the workshops. During the course we learnt about observing and reading the landscape, surveying a site, what's in soil, growing food the natural way, minimising effort and wastage, cheap effective ways of harnessing renewable resources and cutting environmental impact, how to build communities and reap the benefits of greater trust and collaboration, how to carry out a permaculture design on your own site or project, and how to implement it.

Half way through, students did a group permaculture design on the Triangle Garden, which not only confirmed a few of our own ideas for the site but also threw up a whole load of interesting new ones. We plan to incorporate a number of them into the design of the Garden in future years, including rain-water catchment, a shelter, a tool-store and a forest garden.

We plan to register the Triangle Garden as a Permaculture LAND (Learning And Network Demonstration) project, enabling it to become a local centre for promoting permaculture principles. More courses are in the pipeline...

Vicky Wyer

Here is some feedback from some of our PDC students:

'I learned lots of design skills' 'The visits to permaculture and biodynamic sites were a great complement to the classroom learning' **'Very inspiring'** 'Awesome!'

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Growing Ability

Growing Ability is a social and therapeutic gardening project for adults with learning disabilities which is jointly run by the Triangle Community Garden and Growing People. It was started in June 2009.

In the last year the project has grown from one half day to four half day sessions per week and we are now working with 23 adults (our gardeners). Our work, over the last year, has concentrated on the allotment where we have been building raised beds, paths and compost bins. The final raised beds and pergola should be finished soon. Gardeners have grown a variety of crops and there are plans for a fruit garden for 2011.

We held a very successful Growing Ability Open Day in June; those attending included current gardeners showing friends and relations round, some potential gardeners, support and social workers, our funder – the Joint Commissioning Team, plus a group from a similar project in St Albans.

The following day the project had a stand at the 'Ways to Work' Fair in Hatfield where there was considerable interest in our work. Some of our gardeners also ran the tea stall at the Triangle Garden's Open Day – although sales were limited as temperatures soared into the 30's!

Some highlights of the year:

- One of our gardeners secured part time work at a local garden centre;
- One of our gardeners has progressed from only staying 5 minutes to actively engaging in tasks and occasionally working independently;
- The new container (tool shed) arriving has made sessions so much easier...

The project has achieved a tremendous amount in a relatively short time thanks to the hard work of our gardeners, volunteers and staff. My thanks to you all. We are now looking at our plans for the future – our highest priority being to secure funding to ensure that we not only continue but are also able to expand.

John Cliff,
Project Manager, Growing Ability

Triangle Garden Core Group 2009-10

Vicky Wyer	Chair of trustees, and acting project coordinator
Margaret Byrne Rosie Rigg	Treasurer, bookings clerk, and trustee Workshops, community engagement and trustee
Sandra Wilkins Rachel Cottey	Events, health and safety and trustee Environment and events
John Wyer	Trustee and sponsor – joined autumn 2009
Frances Bogie	Advisor – joined autumn 2009
Katy and Joe Adams	Secretary and vice secretary – moved away spring 2010

We are currently looking for voluntary help with the following tasks: clerking/minuting of meetings, PR, webmastery, administration, graphic design, lettings, and general help with organising events. If you'd like to help please do get in touch.



Growing Ability gardeners growing peas and making pesto

New project: Growing Clearer Minds

This new project is a collaboration between the Triangle Garden and Mind in Mid Herts, and focuses on encouraging people who have experienced mental distress, to enjoy and benefit from nature and green spaces within their local community. It has been funded through Ecominds, a Big Lottery Fund, with Mind as lead partner.

It will take the form of three twelve-week projects designed to improve participants' confidence and self-esteem and help them become more involved in their communities. Sessions will be based initially at the Stevenage Wellbeing Centre from September and then at the Triangle Garden in 2011. The project will include workshops, demonstrations, visits, and guest speakers plus involvement in practical activities such as willow weaving, mosaic making and growing fruit and vegetables.

Rosie Rigg

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Training

As well as attending training on permaculture and visiting a forest garden in London last year, individual core group members have attended the following courses or workshops:

- Emergency First Aid at Work,
- Business Planning,
- Legal Foundations,
- Structures for Social Enterprise,
- Health & Safety/Employment Law
- 'Your Carbon Counts' and
- Engaging & Consulting your Community.

From top:
The sea-container being craned in, having fun repairing the central mosaic, and looking for ladybirds,



Governance

The core group of trustees have this year undertaken a fundamental review of the structure and management of the organisation, which has just celebrated its tenth anniversary. Having successfully partnered Growing People to launch Growing Ability, the core group have now been focusing on producing an overarching vision, business plan and funding strategy for all the Garden's projects, with input from a specialist consultant who has broad experience of working with community gardens and city farms. This has been funded from a Grassroots Grant via North Herts CVS/Herts Community Foundation and is ongoing into 2011. We have also had valuable help from a Business Link advisor.

The key outcomes agreed so far are that our organisation should:

- Become a company limited by guarantee
- Become a registered charity
- Seek funding to employ a paid project coordinator to roll out the benefits of the Triangle Garden and its projects to more people and groups
- Create two distinct tiers in the core group – one for governance (trustees) and a sub-group for management – and recruit more members for each
- Adopt the Policy Governance model – allowing greater autonomy for the management sub-group and future project coordinator

The visioning process helped us to crystallise our aims and purpose: these can be found on our website. The next stage in this process is to consult with the community and stakeholder groups to ascertain need/demand for our ideas and use the results to prioritise future projects.

Ransom's Pavilion

Work on the refurbishment of Ransom's Pavilion was started in July 2010 after many months of hard work trying to secure funding. In the end we and North Herts District Council (NHDC) successfully attracted £25,000 from WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental – a landfill tax charity) towards the total cost of £150,000, the balance of which was met by NHDC. This paid for refurbishment of the southern wing: new home and away changing rooms, and the northern wing (ours): a new workshop/classroom plus a small kitchen, toilets and storage out the back – all accessible to wheelchair users.

At the time of publication the work has been successfully completed and the Pavilion formally opened and in use.

We are very grateful to NHDC and WREN for funding the project, and to all who supported us in our drive to see it through. Particular thanks go to Stephen Sears of NHDC for directing the project, Mark Scott of Architects Wastell & Porter, the builders at Modplan, and to Bowles & Wyer (a Landscape Company based in Tring) who donated a small sea-container which they craned onto our allotment. This allowed us to store our tools securely while the refurbishment was going on, and provided a much needed shed for Growing Ability to use into the future.

Vicky Wyer

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Treasurer's Report

We have had another successful year. Our fund raising events: Apple Day, Open Day and Alys Fowler's talk gave people an opportunity to find out more about the Garden and its aims. Our programme of workshops which was new for this year has also been a great success.

We would like to thank the following who provided us with grants and other financial help during the year:

The Joint Commissioning Team Innovations Fund for a grant of £14,000 for Growing Ability 09-10;
Herts Community Foundation and North Herts CVS for awarding us a £5000 Grassroots grant to enable the core group to undertake permaculture training and provide funds for specialist business planning and funding consultancy, necessary to enable the group to continue to develop the Triangle Garden;

Hitchin Area

Committee (HAC)

for a grant of £800 to buy new pop-up gazebos;

Veolia Water for a grant of £627 for badly needed new noticeboards;

Bowles & Wyer

for providing the container for use as an allotment tool store and for raffle prizes;

Town Garden

for sponsoring Alys Fowler's talk and for providing raffle prizes; and

S & K superstore, Growing People and Church Farm, Ardeley for raffle prizes.

Margaret Byrne

Hitchin Community Gardens: Consolidated Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st August 2010.

	Triangle Garden	Growing Ability	Total
	£	£	£
Income	7105.25	14000.00	21105.25
Expenditure	2584.79	10976.33	13561.12
Surplus of Income over Expenditure	4520.46	3023.67	7544.13
Consolidated Balance Sheet as at 31st August 2010			£
Fixed Assets			1246.00
Current Assets			
Cash at Bank and In Hand		12374.81	
Less Current Liabilities		1110.00	
Net Current Assets			11264.81
Net Assets			12510.81
Funded by	£	£	£
Balances b/f	1156.78	3809.90	4966.68
Surplus for Year	1620.46	3023.67	4644.13
Balance of Grassroots Grant	2900.00		2900.00
	5677.24	6833.57	12510.81

Growing Ability: Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31st Aug 2010

Balance b/f 1st September 2009

Luton Airport Community Grant	£2,013.26	
JCT Grant first installment		£1,796.64

Income

JCT Grant second installment		£14,000.00
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Expenditure

Materials and Equipment		£540.71
Subscriptions and Insurance		£178.87
Training and Wages	£1,593.20	£8,361.50
Administrative Expenditure and Publicity		£270.24
Sundry		£31.81
Total Expenditure	£1,593.20	£9,383.13

Balances c/f at 31st August 2010

Luton Grant	£420.06	
JCT Grant		£6,413.51

Represented by

Balance at Bank	£420.06	£6,413.51
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Notes to the Accounts

Note 1: Grants breakdown

In addition to the Grassroots grant of £1200 for core group permaculture training, the Garden also received the following grants in the year ended 31st August 2010:

- A Grassroots grant of £3800 for specialist business planning and funding consultancy
- A capital grant of £800 from the Hitchin Area Committee for the purchase of new gazebos
- A grant of £627 from Veolia Water for the purchase of new noticeboards.

Note 2: Fixed Assets

At Cost	Equipment
Balance b/f	
Acquisitions	1557.50
Disposals	
Balance c/f	1557.50

Depreciation

Balance b/f	
Charge for Year	311.50
Eliminated on disposal	
Balance c/f	311.50

Note 3: Depreciation

Equipment is written off in equal instalments over five years

Note 4: Deferred Income

Capital Grants for equipment are written back into the accounts over the life of the assets

Note 5: Unspent Grant monies

£2900 of the Grassroots grant remained unspent by the end of the financial year. This must be used for specialist business planning and funding consultancy and be spent by April 2011.

Triangle Garden: Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st Aug 2010

Income

Produce sales and donations	£12.00
Open Day	£255.06
Talk	£1,042.81
Apple Day	£372.95
Workshops	£545.82
Permaculture course - Administration	£270.00
Permaculture course - surplus from fees charged to non-core group participants	£476.68
Interest received	£12.93
Grants (note 1)	£4,117.00
Total Income	£7,105.25

Expenditure

Materials and Equipment	£377.64
Subscriptions and Insurance	£241.38
Training and tutor fees	£1,328.08
Administrative Expenditure and Publicity	£326.19
Sundry	£0.00
Depreciation	£311.50
Total Expenditure	£2,584.79

Surplus of Income over Expenditure	£4,520.46
Balance of Grassroots Grant (note 5)	£2,900.00
Surplus for Year	£1,620.46

Triangle Garden Balance Sheet as at 31st August 2010

Fixed Assets	Cost	Depreciation	Net
Equipment (notes 2 and 3)	£1,557.50	£311.50	£1,246.00
Current Assets			
Bank		£5,471.64	
Cash		£69.60	
		£5,541.24	
Current Liabilities			
Deferred Income (note 4)		£1,110.00	
Net Current Assets			£4,431.24
Net Assets			£5,677.24
Funded by			
General Fund b/f			£1,156.78
Surplus for year			£1,620.46
General Fund c/f			£2,777.24
Balance of Grassroots Grant (note 5)			£2,900.00
			£5,677.24

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