



Triangle Community Garden

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

Annual Review 2014-15

More inside

- ✦ Growing Ability
- ✦ Growing Gang
- ✦ Growing Health
- ✦ Growing Ability profile
- ✦ Treasured Spaces
- ✦ The Garden
- ✦ Friday Garden Club
- ✦ Events & Workshops
- ✦ Who's who
- ✦ Treasurer's report
- ✦ Accounts

Welcome to our Annual Review for 2014-15

What a year it's been for the Triangle Garden! Amazing things have happened in this, our 15th anniversary year, including the culmination of our Treasured Spaces project, the launch of our new website, our new-look e-bulletins and some exciting new collaborations coming together.

I still remember sitting around our kitchen table in 1999 with the founder members of Hitchin Community Gardens, before we even had a site in mind, discussing what we wanted to create and why. We wanted to create a place where people could get together to grow stuff, learn stuff, share skills, build a sense of community and help each other. When we found the patch of nettles and saplings in the corner of Ransom's Rec, that is now the Triangle Garden, little did we know what a journey we were embarking on, and where we'd end up.

There is so much potential in community gardening, so many great ideas and offshoots, that it is very hard to know where to stop. And as with every garden, in the early spring, everything seems possible! It is only when you reach the frenetic activity of early summer that you realise what you've let yourself in for! We have learnt to pace ourselves, and not to take on too many initiatives, however wonderful they may sound. So this year, while concentrating on fulfilling the Treasured Spaces project (left), we temporarily dropped our workshop programme, and we held a birthday celebration evening at the Garden instead of the annual gardening talk. We hope to bring both back in 2016, plus a spring Quiz Night! And as always – you can help!

We're delighted with our new website and e-bulletins and owe a huge debt of gratitude to Robin Clarke and Tobias Lekman for the time they have donated in getting these and our document-share site up and running.

In terms of collaborations, we have been helping Hackspace in their new initiative to install a laser cutter at the Pavilion for community use. And we've been talking to local culinary evangelists CookeryEatery about setting up an after-school supper club at the Pavilion, using our allotment to make the link from growing to eating. Exciting times!

Our core team has been undergoing subtle changes: our beloved and wonderful Treasurer Margaret has stepped down from the role, to concentrate on her other Triangle Garden posts of bookkeeper, payroll person and booking clerk for our workshops and Pavilion hires, plus other incidentals like grandparent duties... how does she do it?

And as we welcome our new Treasurer, Tom Palmer, we bid farewell to trustee Frances Bogie, who has been an unfailing source of legal know-how to us for many years. Read all about our year inside...

Vicky Wyer, Chair of Trustees.



Please join us for our

AGM

Weds 7 October
Ransom's Pavilion,
SG5 1RB, 7.30–9.30pm

Light refreshments

All welcome!

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Hitchin Community Gardens is a charity No 1145243, company limited by guarantee No 07676360.

For more information please contact Liz McElroy on 07887 725962, email liz@trianglegarden.org or write to Liz McElroy, Triangle Garden Project Manager, c/o Htci, 27 Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HP.

Our Growing Ability Projects

Growing Ability, Growing Gang and Growing Health are our three projects for adults with learning disabilities. **Growing Ability** is a social and therapeutic horticulture project based at our allotment and the Triangle Community Garden.

Growing Gang is our community-based gardening work-experience scheme which currently tends our allotments at Ransom's Rec as well as helping with the maintenance of the Triangle Garden. The gardeners also maintain the small garden outside the Church House St Mary's in Hitchin.

Growing Health aims to promote active, healthy living. Sessions include physical exercise to build up fitness and stamina, and shared support around healthy eating and weight management.

There are now five Growing sessions running each week with a total of **23** regular 'gardeners' (service users). 2014-15 has been a year of productivity, impact, success and opportunity...

Success: In October 2014 a new Wednesday group was formed. All the groups have generated ideas for an exciting and rewarding year of activities; planning and growing their own produce as well as growing in confidence, self-esteem and friendships.

All of the groups followed the development and creation of the new Treasured Spaces Pollinators Garden. Watering, tidying and sweeping the area have been weekly activities. Two members have played a larger part: last year Katherine was involved in making part of one of the mosaic panels, and this year Sean helped with planting, watering and weeding the area. Sean has become an active member of the Friday morning Garden Club as well as the monthly volunteer Sunday group. This year both Sean and Katherine attended the official Garden Opening evening.

Productivity: In June Andrew, Marc, Helen, Susan, Sean, Jeremy and Katherine were all involved with our first Market Stall at Hitchin Market. They raised £75 and are keen to do future stalls at the market. Sean, Jeremy and Susan helped at Apple Day 2014; and our gardeners have been involved with growing produce and helping at our Summer Open Day. Special thanks to Andrew and Katherine who helped to set up and dismantle the event.

Impact: Members across the groups have reported that they have "enjoyed meeting [my] friends", "love working", "enjoyed organising and doing things on my plot" and "Liked working with others". Members have said they have enjoyed coming to the groups and have attended regularly.

Our gardeners have had the opportunity and been involved in many local community events:

- Groups have been involved in making bookmarks for the Physic Garden Book launch and its silver jubilee celebrations.
- Produce grown by Growing Ability gardeners formed part of our stall at Holy Saviour church's 150 year celebrations.
- All gardeners have grown at least 3 of their chosen crops with successful and rewarding results.
- Groups have regularly had lunches made from their produce including ratatouille, rhubarb crumble, potato salad, courgette soup, pumpkin soup, vegetable curries and a strawberry cream tea.



Some Growing Ability/Growing Health Statistics for 2014-15:

- 1 new group started.
- 1 gardener left.
- 3 new gardeners joined.
- 3 wonderful new volunteers joined.
- 3 gardeners visited Benington Lordship to see the snowdrops.
- 4 of the 5 groups walk half a mile around the Rec each week.
- 4 members of Growing Health joined the library.
- 5 gardeners visited the Gardeners World Live show at Birmingham's NEC
- 8 members visited Wyevale Nursery to buy seeds and to have lunch.
- 20 members attended our annual Harvest BBQ.
- 23 members attended a Christmas party.
- 14lbs lost by 6 members of Growing Health this year

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Hitchin Community Gardens is a charity No 1145243, company limited by guarantee No 07676360.

For more information please contact Liz McElroy on 07887 725962, email liz@trianglegarden.org or write to Liz McElroy, Triangle Garden Project Manager, c/o Htci, 27 Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HP.

Our Growing Ability Projects cont'd

All groups have now switched from biscuits to fruit or vegetables at break time (although we still enjoy a piece of cake on birthdays!)

Discussions on weight management, portion control, constipation, diabetes and associated problems, the importance of hydration, exercise and mindfulness, have all led to a greater understanding of health issues for gardeners attending our Growing Health sessions.

Opportunity: The chance to swap our second allotment plot for one next to our base plot has given us the opportunity to build more raised beds, to support those who find bending difficult, also enabling the project to develop and offer more growing space for new gardeners. Sleepers left over from the Treasured Spaces renovation work will be used to make the higher beds.

As part of their community fundraising initiative, the Hitchin branch of Santander raised £600 for our projects. The money raised has been earmarked for a new polytunnel which will enable us to extend our growing season and grow a better range of produce.

And finally as always a huge Thank You to everyone who has enabled and supported The Project to be what it is today. Thank you to the wonderful staff and volunteer team we have; Avril, Charlotte, Rachel, Yolanda, Karen, Hayley and Francis and gardeners' support workers. Finally thank you to Vicky, Margaret and the Trustees, Committee members and volunteers for their commitment and dedication towards the Triangle Garden and its projects.

Liz McElroy, Project Manager



Top: Sean helping to plant the Pollinators' Garden with Garden Committee Chair, Emma Reynolds (left). Above: Katherine chatting about her 'nightlife' mosaic panel with the artist, Jane Visick (right), at our special celebration evening in July.

Growing Ability profiles: Katherine and Sean

In August 2014 **Katherine** was asked if she would like to attend a mosaic workshop with local mosaic artist Jane Visick. Katherine was unsure but said she would give it a go. At the workshop, Katherine discovered previously unknown skills and abilities which enabled her confidence and self-esteem to grow by the minute: she enthused throughout the whole 3 hour session. We asked her about her experiences:

Katherine, what has the new Treasured Spaces garden meant to you? "It looks good – my [mosaic] fox stands out to me". Asked why that was, Katherine said, "Because I made it".

How did you find making the mosaic? "It was quite difficult at first and it was hard to get the actual pieces and colours into the fox: it did get easier – I got better at it and then I found it easier"

What is your favourite part of the new garden? "I like the new [sleeper] walls – they are much better because I can sit there and have a picnic." "I like looking at the insects: the bees, wasps and butterflies." "I really feel happy when I am there."

Sean has a particular interest in nature and wildlife and is extremely knowledgeable. He adds an extra dimension to gardening sessions by highlighting the exciting world of nature which is often missed. He will seek out newts; look for dragonflies and take photos and insist that others share these amazing sights. His enthusiasm is infectious. Sean has said how proud he is of the improved Triangle Garden and how he loves coming down and meeting new people at volunteer sessions. We asked Sean about it:

Since the new garden has been redeveloped you have been attending more garden volunteering groups, why is that? "Because I've always got an interest in gardening. It's interesting to see it from the beginning to where it is now"

What is your favourite part of the new garden? "All of it"

How has coming to the garden and volunteering helped you? "It has meant my self-esteem is much better. You do more things with the public"

What have you enjoyed the most about the new garden? "Doing all the planting and preparation. Meeting new people."

Thank you to Katherine and Sean for talking to us.

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Hitchin Community Gardens is a charity No 1145243, company limited by guarantee No 07676360.

For more information please contact Liz McElroy on 07887 725962, email liz@trianglegarden.org or write to Liz McElroy, Triangle Garden Project Manager, c/o Htci, 27 Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HP.

The Treasured Spaces Project:

How it all came about: After a trip to Cambridge Botanical Gardens, the garden committee was inspired to create a pollinators' garden, to replace the exhausted sensory garden surrounding the central meeting space. But there seemed little hope of starting something new, when the surfacing was becoming more and more weed-ridden, and the sensory garden log walls were rotting after 10 years in the ground. Our mosaic was also beyond repair due to frost damage and the whole central area was looking really dilapidated. New planting was not going to be the answer.

Then in spring 2014, several things fell into place to create an unmissable opportunity for us. Groundwork informed us of their new Treasured Spaces scheme for protecting or enhancing much-loved community environments. Mosaic artist Jane Visick appeared at one of our volunteer sessions, offering to create a new mosaic for us, involving the community in the design and creation, as a freebie to promote the launch from hobby to career of her community mosaics enterprise. And the good residents of Benslow held an Open Gardens event that raised £1200 for the Triangle Garden. The Treasured Spaces funding offer was to treble any funding raised by ourselves in the year ending September 2014, so we set ourselves a funding target of £5000 and got busy!

We drew up plans for a new central meeting space, which included raised sleeper beds (doubling as seating), new poured concrete surfacing, a new mosaic, pergolas for climbers, pollinator-friendly planting, and a demountable waterproof shade-sail for outdoor classroom sessions. We had to rein in our plans initially as we were overstepping our £15,000 budget, but Groundwork subsequently increased their offer to £20,000 allowing us to include a new pond gate, extend the pergolas and revert to the paving materials we had originally proposed.

Having two landscape architects, two garden designers, two ecologists, a horticulture therapist and an experienced environmental project worker within our various committees is quite handy when it comes to projects like this, but being able to draw on the freely-given advice of my colleagues at Bowles & Wyer on pricing and construction was invaluable.

We were also very lucky to have the skilled team at Pat McCarthy Landscapes to carry out the work, the same guys who delivered our tardis of a shipping container to our allotment several years back. After a delayed start, due to soggy ground on the Rec, work got underway in May this year and was substantially completed by our Open Day in June. Volunteer teams planted the raised beds shortly afterwards and the contractors returned to erect the pergolas and shade-sail posts prior to our completion and anniversary celebrations in July.

The new permanent surfacing, raised beds, pollinators' planting and pergolas have transformed the meeting space into a really special place, with the finished mosaic taking centre-stage. We are looking forward to putting it to use as an outdoor classroom next year!

More than anything else this project has been about collaboration – people coming together to achieve good things. Our mosaic encapsulates this perfectly, with its eight panels each designed and made by individuals or groups linked to the Triangle Garden, each depicting an aspect of the flora and fauna found there. Coordinated community creativity at its best.

Vicky Wyer, Chair of Trustees



From the top: our beloved old mosaic did not stand the test of time, works begins, laying the paving pattern, planting in and pergolas up, guests admire the new mosaic at our 15th birthday celebration evening.

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Hitchin Community Gardens is a charity No 1145243, company limited by guarantee No 07676360.

For more information please contact Liz McElroy on 07887 725962, email liz@trianglegarden.org or write to Liz McElroy, Triangle Garden Project Manager, c/o Htci, 27 Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HP.

The Garden & Forest Garden:

The Garden Committee's aim is to develop, enhance and maintain the Triangle Garden as an environmental and educational resource for the benefit and enjoyment of all. We meet every month or so, to plan and prioritise goals and tasks for our weekly and monthly volunteer sessions, as well as developing resources for use by groups and individuals visiting the garden.

This year has been mainly focussed on our Treasured Spaces project (described earlier) but we have achieved modest success elsewhere as well. Under the limes we planted hellebores, cyclamen primroses and more drought-tolerant ferns, which seem to be surviving the annual onslaught of cow parsley in the spring.

The Friday Garden Club have been busy improving the beds around the 'oval lawn', using plants moved from the old sensory garden. This has brightened up the area wonderfully, introducing lots of flower to this sunny part of the garden and creating a great first impression on entering through the willow arch. Ideally we'd like to get some edibles in here now.

The arch itself has been given a drastic haircut in order to get it back under control, but is still a difficult element to maintain, requiring brave people up ladders. The hedge has been allowed to grow tall this year, but plans are afoot to try and lay it, bringing it back down to a sensible level.

Meanwhile, the Forest Garden has been gradually establishing itself. Garden Club have given it a new front hedge of shrub roses and many of the trees and shrubs have borne fruit for the first time: we've had our first apricots, almonds, quinces and fourberries (similar to large blackcurrants). On the back of this success NHDC have agreed to us extending the Forest Garden along the rest of the river bank. Watch this space!

The Garden Committee

Friday Garden Club:

The Garden Club has continued to meet every Friday for the last year, excluding holidays and bad weather. Volunteers have carried out various, regular maintenance tasks and have also learnt new skills. Amongst these are how to prune soft fruit bushes and how to take lavender cuttings.

Members have participated in trips to Cambridge Botanic Gardens, The Edible Garden Show and Hitchin Lavender. Volunteers were active participants in the work to prepare and replant the new pollinator beds. Numbers have varied, but the group has two or three core members who attend regularly, with others attending when possible. The highest number attending one session has been seven. One of the main aims for the following year will be to increase the core numbers who attend regularly.

The community who visit the garden whilst we are working there have commented on how good it is looking.

Steve Granger, Garden Club session leader



Top: Garden Club members save selected plants from the dilapidated old sensory garden.
Above: Representatives of Waitrose Hitchin, NHDC and our Garden Club at the unveiling of our new Forest Garden interpretation sign in July.

For hire

Affordable community space, for workshops, craft activities, meetings or children's parties.

- from £15 per slot: morning, early afternoon, late afternoon or evening (£30 for private hire)
- fully wheelchair accessible,
- main room 8 x 8m (26' square)
- kitchen 10 x 6m with electric urn,
- toilets, incl baby changing,
- free carpark nearby, off Nightingale Road

Ransom's Pavilion

overlooking Ransom's Recreation Ground, Alexandra Rd, Hitchin SG5 1RB
5 mins walk from the station. For more info visit

www.trianglegarden.org

call Margaret on 01462 459144 or email margaret.trianglegarden@gmail.com

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Hitchin Community Gardens is a charity No 1145243, company limited by guarantee No 07676360.

For more information please contact Liz McElroy on 07887 725962, email liz@trianglegarden.org or write to Liz McElroy, Triangle Garden Project Manager, c/o Htci, 27 Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HP.



Top: Open Day visitors relaxing on the grass. Left: volunteers selling bee hotels at our plant stall. Below: dog show fun with Greys Rehoming



Events and Workshops:

This year we reined in our workshops programme slightly to allow us to concentrate on our Treasured Spaces project and ensure its success. We hope to return to a fuller workshop programme in 2016.

September 2014 saw the addition of a Teddy Bears' Tea Party and Bake Off to our Heritage Open Day event, with very positive results: a good turn-out, great feedback and an excellent donations total for a small event.

October was busy as always: Apple Day and Halloween were their usual popular selves and our autumn Bat Walk was well-attended and enjoyed by all.

Once again in June we collaborated with GRWE Greyhound Rescue and Berry House Vets to host a fun dog show at our Open Day, to the delight of local dog walkers. As well as the CTC-led family cycle-ride, Barking Mad dog agility demo and Garden City Samba carnival drummers, we also had a little show from the Lesnick School of Ballet. This year we had our own plant stall run by our Growing Ability gardeners which was a great success.

Instead of our annual talk we held a celebration at the Garden in July to mark the completion of the Treasured Spaces project, phase 1 of our Forest Garden and the Triangle Garden's 15th birthday!
The Events Committee

Who's Who 2014-15: Triangle Garden Trustees

Vicky Wyer	Chair of trustees, publicity coordinator, Community Projects committee chair
Margaret Byrne (right)	Treasurer, Bookkeeper and Bookings clerk, F&G and Pavilion Committee member
Tom Palmer	Treasurer from October 2015 (Margaret will continue in her other roles above)
John Wyer	Trustee, Finance & Governance (F&G) committee member
Frances Bogie	Trustee, F&G committee member, Child Protection Officer
Natalie Sutterby	Trustee, Community Projects committee member
Louise Wills	Trustee, Events committee member
Gareth Hills	Trustee, Garden committee member
Sarah Rhodes	Trustee, HR advisor

Non-trustee Management Volunteers

Emma Reynolds	Garden committee chair
Rachel Cottey	Events committee member
Kate Hendry	Events committee member
Melanie Coath	Garden committee member
Dominic Coath	Garden committee member
Brigid Bassindale	Events committee member (joined June 2014)

Triangle Garden and Growing Ability Staff

Liz McElroy	Project Manager and session leader for GA, GG and GH, Safeguarding Officer
Avril Frost	Support worker Growing Ability and Growing Gang
Charlotte Price	Support worker Growing Health
Rachel Cottey	Support Worker Growing Ability
Steve Granger	Garden Club session leader and Garden Committee member
Sean and Jeremy	Pavilion cleaners (Sean and Jeremy are also members of Growing Gang)

We welcome new trustees and committee members – if you're interested in joining please contact us. We're particularly looking for a new **Events coordinator** and **Publicity Coordinator**.



Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Hitchin Community Gardens is a charity No 1145243, company limited by guarantee No 07676360.

For more information please contact Liz McElroy on 07887 725962, email liz@trianglegarden.org or write to Liz McElroy, Triangle Garden Project Manager, c/o Htci, 27 Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HP.

Treasurer's Report:

Triangle Community Garden

Once again our Apple Day and Open Day provided us with valuable funds to finance the running of the Triangle Garden.

£4926 of our fundraising efforts from May to September plus an extra £83 paid directly to Groundwork went to the Treasured Spaces appeal. Groundwork provided £15,029 in match-funding, giving us £20,038 to spend on the project. The work was completed at the end of June and I'm sure everyone will agree that the result is fantastic. Special thanks are due to Vicky for organising the contractors and also completing the large amount of paperwork necessary to obtain the grant!

I would also like to thank those organisations and people who have supported us through donations, sponsorship and raffle prizes:

- Bowles & Wyer
- Town Garden
- Hackspace
- Groundwork
- Jane Visick, our mosaic artist who gave her time for free
- McCarthy Landscapes, for generosity with their labour
- All those who donated their surplus apples for juicing.

Planting has continued on the Forest Garden again this year and the interpretation noticeboard funded by Waitrose Hitchin was unveiled at our 15th anniversary celebrations in July.

We would like more people to join our **Friends Scheme** which we set up last year - details are on our website. Regular contributions provided by this scheme will help us plan the finances for the upkeep of the Triangle Garden and the development of the Forest Garden. Now that the refurbishment of the meeting space is complete it is more important than ever to raise the funds to pay Steve to run the Friday Garden Club – their work is invaluable.

The Pavilion is proving popular for children's parties and as a meeting space for community groups and raises valuable funds to pay Liz, our project manager.

Growing Ability – A third group started in October. We need to recruit two more gardeners to ensure that all three groups remain viable. We are currently also fundraising for a shelter/toolstore to allow our gardeners to work outside even when it's raining or very hot – thus making the most of their sessions.

The Growing Gang have worked hard and have sold some of the surplus produce from their allotment to help raise funds towards the running of the group. Special thanks are due to the Hitchin branch of Santander Bank for providing us with a week-long fundraising opportunity and match-funding the week's achievements. As these funds must be spent on a capital item (not for everyday costs), the money will go towards buying a polytunnel to extend our growing season on the allotment.

The sale of this autumn's apple juice will go towards the running of our Ability projects.

Abbreviated accounts are included with this report. The full accounts in the format required by the Charities Commission are available on our website.

Margaret Byrne, Treasurer



From top down: Margaret and Sandra manning the cake stall at Apple Day 2014, dog lovers enjoying our Open Day 2015, Growing Gang selling produce at their Hitchin Market stall in May, Katherine showing off what she has grown.

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Hitchin Community Gardens is a charity No 1145243, company limited by guarantee No 07676360.

For more information please contact Liz McElroy on 07887 725962, email liz@trianglegarden.org or write to Liz McElroy, Triangle Garden Project Manager, c/o Htci, 27 Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HP.

Triangle Community Gardens: Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st August 2015

	Triangle Garden and Pavilion	Growing Ability Group	Treasured Spaces	Tesco Fund	Total
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	996	542	15112		16650
Fundraising	4053	345			4398
Investment Income	25				25
Charitable Activities	2530	24567			27097
Other Income					
Total	7604	25454	15112	0	48170
Expenditure on:					
Raising Funds	1906	86			1992
Charitable Expenditure	5674	28151	20038	67	53930
Other Expenditure					
Total	7580	28237	20038	67	55922
Net Income	24	-2783	-4926	-67	-7752
Transfer between Funds*	-4926		4926		
Net Movement in Funds	-4902	-2783	0	-67	-7752
Total funds Brought Forward	12569	10130		836	23535
Total Funds Carried Forward	7667	7347	0	769	15783

*Our own funds put towards the Treasured Spaces Appeal as required by Groundwork.



Above: Our completed Treasured Spaces project takes centre stage at our 15th birthday celebrations

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Hitchin Community Gardens is a charity No 1145243, company limited by guarantee No 07676360.

For more information please contact Liz McElroy on 07887 725962, email liz@trianglegarden.org or write to Liz McElroy, Triangle Garden Project Manager, c/o Htci, 27 Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HP.