



Triangle Community Garden

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

Annual Review 2015-16

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Please join us for our

AGM

Weds 5 October
Ransom's Pavilion,
SG5 1RB, 7.30–9.30pm

Light refreshments

All welcome!

Welcome to our Annual Review for 2015-16

Welcome to our 15th annual review. After the excitement of the Triangle Garden's Treasured Spaces refurbishment and our 15th anniversary celebrations last summer, this year has been one of consolidation, review and improvement.

Our Growing Ability projects have continued to make a positive contribution to the lives of their learning disabled participants. Liz McElroy, our Project Manager, has been hard at work refining and improving them: at Growing Health participants are now able to **prepare and cook healthy meals together**, thanks to a grant from CDA Herts and £200 from St Mark's Hitchin. Participants continue to report benefits such as **weight loss** and enjoying trying **new foods**.

Growing Gang's allotment **plot swap** has brought new opportunities in the form of raised beds and the space to site a **polytunnel**, which has been successfully secured via an award from Affinity Water. Growing Ability continues to provide all the **therapeutic** benefits that gardening can give, as well as being a **social** anchor for its participants. Read more about these projects inside.

Our Friday Garden Club and Sunday volunteers have continued to tend and develop the Triangle Garden and its Forest Garden, steered by Club leader Steve and the Garden Committee. This year Steve set up a traditional **hedge-laying** skills session, led by the Countryside Management Service. This was one of several volunteer activities filmed by Garden Club volunteer Alan Hodgson and we now have a great set of **short films** showing what we do at volunteer days. You can view them at www.trianglegarden.org/gallery-and-links

As well as raising funds through our annual events, we used sales to boost our income this year. Our **apple juice**, made from donated apples, added significantly to our funds, as did sales of our artist-designed **butterfly greetings cards**, both of which can be purchased via www.trianglegarden.org/buy-our-stuff

Huge thanks are due to all our committee volunteers, trustees and staff, all of whom work very hard to enable the charity to continue to carry out its work. We were sad to say goodbye to Charlotte and Emma this year but welcome Nic and Brigid as new chairs of our Garden and Events committees. We're very grateful to new treasurer Tom for his forecasting expertise, to Sarah for HR advice, to Margaret for continued dedication to our accounts and bookings, to Robin our webmaster and to Louise for policy help despite stepping down as a trustee! We thank her for her long service and continued support.

Vicky Wyer, Chair of Trustees.

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: Harvesting rhubarb to make cordial
Above: a Growing Ability Project group visit to Hitchin Lavender at Ickleford.

Our Growing Ability Projects

Growing Ability, Growing Gang and Growing Health are our three projects for adults with learning disabilities. Until August 2016 there were five Growing sessions running each week with a total of **21** regular 'gardeners' (service users). This year we were very sad to say goodbye to gardeners Lisa and Andrew, and longstanding support worker Charlotte, who have all moved out of the area.

Growing Health has been evolving...

Our Growing Health project 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. A meal is prepared and eaten as part of the session.

The project was initiated in 2013, when personal reviews, group feedback and discussions within our Growing Ability project, highlighted the need for a group that could focus and deliver a **healthier lifestyle** to the individuals attending our sessions. An initial grant of £5000 enabled us to set up and start Growing Health for **one hour a week** alongside one of our Growing Ability sessions.

The success of Growing Health has been well documented in previous Annual Reviews, but we felt that the project could be even better – in particular by enabling members to take part in **preparing meals** rather than just learning from demonstrations.

A very generous £200 donation from St Marks Church Hitchin and a grant of £450 from CDA Herts' Community Innovation Fund enabled us to start the **Growing Health Lunch Club**. We purchased 2 induction hobs, a hand held blender, pots and pans, chopping boards, knives, peelers and other essential cooking equipment for cooking healthy lunches. As well as cooking and preparing **healthy recipes** devised with help from volunteer Karen Shields of LP Nutrition, the group has been learning about **basic health and safety and food hygiene** in the kitchen.

In August this year, the group decided to merge the Lunch Club and its associated Growing Ability session into one and call the whole session **Growing Health**. The new session runs from 9.30am to 12.30 and **focuses mainly on cooking as well as growing produce** that could be used in the weekly menus.

Growing Ability is branching out

Growing Ability is a social and therapeutic horticulture project based primarily at our main allotment.

Thanks to our new cooking equipment, Growing Ability sessions have recently begun to include **cooking**. Produce grown by our gardeners has been made into **healthy lunches** such as vegetable soups, many courgette-based meals, and a delicious rhubarb cordial which was sold by the glass at our Open Day. Five of our gardeners helped out at the Open Day Growing Ability and Garden Club stall selling plants, apple juice, jams and chutneys.

All the groups visited Hitchin Lavender this year and **collected lavender** which will be made into lavender bags over the winter. One group also visited Cambridge Botanical Gardens in June.

In December 2015 all the groups helped make **mosaic-inspired tree decorations** from seeds, for our entry in the Holy Saviour Christmas Tree Festival.

Growing Health Impact August 2015 to August 2016:

- 5 people have lost a total of 57lbs (4 Stone)
- 2 people have gained a total of 14lbs (1 Stone)
- One person has now been taken off medication for diabetes.
- One person has been referred and supported.
- Individuals have fed back that they now buy different foods including kale which they had not liked before.
- Individuals are being more adventurous in their eating habits and have tried new foods such as cous cous, kale, and quinoa.
- Individuals report having healthier habits ie snacking on celery and hummus, and buying more fruit and veg.

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Our Growing Ability Projects cont'd

Growing Gang have swapped their plot

Growing Gang is our **community-based gardening work-experience project** 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.

In June 2015 the opportunity to **swap our small central allotment plot**, for one right next to our main existing plot, arose, and we took it. Timber sleepers left over from the 2015 Triangle Garden renovations were used by the Growing Gang to form **new raised beds** of different heights.

Consolidating our allotment presence in one location allowed us to **plan for a polytunnel** which would allow us to extend our growing season through the winter and also provide a growing space for use in wet weather. Friday Garden Club would also be able to use it to grow plants on for the Forest Garden. Using funds raised in 2014-15 by Hitchin Santander and a successful bid in October 2015 to Affinity Water's **Community Engagement Programme**, we were able to make this dream into a reality.

In August Growing Gang visited **Garden Organics** to see their Keder polytunnel. The trip was very inspirational and everyone said they had a great day. At the time of writing our own Keder polytunnel is almost built thanks to Steve Granger and our Friday and Sunday volunteers.

And finally as always a huge **Thank You** to all our supporters and the wonderful staff and volunteer team we have: Avril, Rachel, Yolanda, Karen and our gardeners' support workers. Finally thank you to Vicky, Tom, Margaret, Sarah and the Trustees, Committee members and volunteers for their continued commitment and dedication

Liz McElroy,
Project Manager



Top: the polytunnel framework awaiting its cover on our new allotment plot.
Above: Growing Gang, having done some serious weeding

Growing Ability profiles: Yolanda, a volunteer

Yolanda has volunteered with us since March 2014; she currently volunteers at our Growing Ability Thursday sessions and is on our Events Committee. Yolanda regularly helps at our events and has accompanied service users on many of our trips.

Why did you decide to become a volunteer?

I thought it was a gentle project and very worthwhile. This was obvious when I first visited.

What expectations did you have? I thought I would be able to encourage and enable the gardeners to develop their skills and confidence.

How have you found being a volunteer? Very enjoyable, worthwhile and fulfilling for me. You can be a volunteer and be treated as a dogsbody, but at this project volunteering is **quality** volunteering.

What do you do as a volunteer?

I work with and support two of the gardeners; I encourage them to be independent. If they make a decision of what they want to grow, or do on the allotment, whatever their decision is, I help them to facilitate it. Decision making is so important. And whatever the gardeners' decisions are, they are the right choices. If they are able to make these decisions, then they are confident to make them.

On the Events committee: It's great to have events, being part of the community. We put on events to join in and be part of whatever we do. It raises the profile of this project as well as raising funds

My final comment: it's a very worthwhile, happy project. I feel the service users benefit from coming to us as well as the volunteers. Everyone who helps at the project has something different to bring to it, including personality and skills.

Thank you to Yolanda for taking part in our profile.

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A year in the Triangle Garden and its Forest Garden:

This year our volunteers, steered by the Garden Committee, have focused on the **forest garden**, extending it along the river, mulching the area to suppress weeds, adding a hedge of dog roses along the front and planting many more trees in our Sunday volunteer sessions. The **new arrivals** have included hazels (for bean poles and pea sticks), a strawberry tree (with edible fruit and medicinal qualities), a Judas tree (a nitrogen fixer loved by bees), Mirabelle plum (makes delicious jam) and a Nashi pear (with crunchy sweet fruit). We are currently **planning the understorey** which will include smaller shrubs and perennials, including a range of **herbs and dye plants** such as weld, woad and dyers' chamomile. These will be sown from seed, propagated, and bought as small plants which can then be grown on in our **new polytunnel**, to add to the forest garden in the New Year.

The Friday Garden Club have been working hard **maintaining the garden**, repairing the willow maze and developing the pollinator raised beds. More plants have been added to extend the flowering season for pollinators and this work will be continued into the New Year. We have **strengthened links** with other local like-minded groups during the year. In March, the Garden Club entered a team into the Letchworth Transition Town Green Quiz and everyone had an enjoyable and brain-taxing evening. In April, the Garden Club attended the Letchworth Grow It Yourself Organic Group's launch event. The talk by James Campbell, Chief Executive of Garden Organic, was entertaining and thought-provoking and the event was an excellent opportunity to discuss our work at Triangle Garden with visitors, and learn more about other local groups.

We have also continued to develop links with the local community through our work with **schools, nurseries and Beavers groups**. Toad Hall Nursery brought their pre-school class for a tour of the garden and bug hunt in July, whilst William Ransom Primary School and two local Beavers groups helped to grow and plant sunflowers in the meadow area to attract pollinators.

Earlier in the year the Garden Club created an attractive display in **two brick planters** outside Next in the High Street for passing shoppers to enjoy. Scented rosemary, lavender and thyme evoked the Triangle Garden's ethos of using edible plants whilst also providing valuable resources for pollinators. White-flowered Lily turf (which has looked lovely during the summer), Christmas box and blue periwinkles were also added to the scheme to create interest throughout the year.

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. If you'd like to **get involved** please contact Liz McElroy (see below)

Nic Wilson, Garden Committee Chair



From the top: Premier Inn trainees help with our Forest Garden in August 2015, spring bulbs coming up in the pollinator beds at the Triangle Garden, a letter from one of our young visitors, and a view of the brick planters outside Next in Hitchin town centre in April freshly planted up with pollinator-friendly aromatics.

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Friday Garden Club:

Garden Club meets every Friday morning 10am-12.15 for some **gentle social gardening**. It is open to anyone and its purpose is to maintain and develop the Triangle Garden and its Forest Garden. Members benefit from learning new gardening skills, and being active in the fresh air, while making a positive contribution to the community. There are also regular trips and outings to gardens and shows. A very important part of the Garden Club experience is the cuppa and chat at the Pavilion at the end of each session!

There are some spaces at Garden Club at the moment so do get in touch if you'd like to come along.

Garden Club is run by experienced gardener Steve Granger, who has provided this review of the year:

The Club has met throughout the year most Fridays, excluding holidays and for bad weather. Volunteer numbers have fluctuated, but with a core group of two or three volunteers attending regularly. A total of **222 volunteer hours** have been spent working in the garden this year.

Members have recently been involved in the construction of the **new polytunnel**, which at the time of writing is almost ready for cladding. Alongside the usual maintenance tasks, volunteers have also been **harvesting produce** from the garden from which they have made jams/jellies for sale at events. This year we have had **outings** to Cambridge Botanic Garden, Hitchin Lavender and Hampton Court Palace Flower Show. As plants in the garden expand Garden Club members plan to **learn propagation techniques** with these plants, with a view to creating plants we can sell at open day.

Over the winter last year members prepared the first section of hedge for our **hedge-laying day**, and we have plans to do the same this winter with the second section. Heidi Hutton, Derek Gilder and David Cannon from Countryside Management Services provided us with materials, tools and expertise to carry out the work, and David was there on the day to show us what to do.

If you would like to try out Garden Club please contact Liz McElroy using the contact details at the bottom of each page,

Steve Granger, Garden Club session leader
(centre, with Liz McElroy, left, and Garden Club member Chris, below)



Right: Garden Club members head off for a cuppa at the Pavilion after a happy morning's gardening
Below: Volunteers learning how to lay a hedge at a Triangle Garden volunteer day.



For hire

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

- from £20 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

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Events and Workshops:

Our active and friendly Events Committee have had a wonderful year planning and running the events and workshops that are so important in raising funds, promoting our projects and benefiting our community.

In September 2015 our **Teddy Bear's Picnic & Heritage Bake Off** was judged by Emma from Cookery Eatery – it was great to see so many lovingly made entries!

October was a busy month with a well-attended **Bat Walk**, our ever-popular **Halloween** event and another successful **Apple Day**, celebrating local food in season. Our apple appeal in September allowed us to sell **our own apple juice** at Apple Day and thereafter through local outlets like Halseys and Rosebuds Tea Rooms.

Spring 2016 saw more Seedy Sundays, and two well-attended family-friendly **wildlife workshops**: Dawn Chorus Walk and Pond Dipping/Wildlife Safari.

Attendance at our June **Open Day & Fun Dog Show** suffered slightly from poor weather but everyone who came had a great time. Thanks to GRWE and Berry House Vets for their collaboration and to the wide variety of stallholders we attracted this year. The same weekend we were delighted to host a wonderful **yarnbombing** display at the Triangle Garden courtesy of Hitchin Stitchin and Festiwool.

Vicky, Liz, Brigid, Rachel, Kate, Louise and Yolanda of the Events Committee



Top: A child enjoys the yarnbombed Triangle Garden at our June Open Day. Above: a keen junior baker collects her prize from Vicky Wyer, left, and Emma Ince-Gouldina of Cookery Eatery.

Who's Who 2015-16: Triangle Garden Trustees

Vicky Wyer	Chair of trustees, publicity coordinator, Community Projects committee chair
Tom Palmer	Treasurer
John Wyer	Trustee
Natalie Sutterby	Trustee, Community Projects committee member
Louise Wills	Trustee, Events committee member
Gareth Hills	Trustee, Garden committee member
Sarah Rhodes	Trustee, HR advisor

Key Volunteers

Margaret Byrne	Accounts assistant, Pavilion Bookings Clerk
Nic Wilson	Garden committee chair (from January 2016)
Rachel Cottey (right)	Events committee member
Kate Hendry	Events committee member
Melanie Coath	Garden committee member
Dominic Coath	Garden committee member
Brigid Bassindale	Events committee chair (from July 2016)
Yolanda Warrell	Events Committee member and GA volunteer
Karen Shields	Growing Health volunteer



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 (right)	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 Growina Gana)

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Treasurer's Report:

While our learning disability projects are largely financed through personal budgets allocated to participants from Social Services, our community activities rely on fundraising and income from the Pavilion to survive. Our fundraising events, including the ever popular Apple Day, Open Day and more, have provided us with valuable funds to continue to run the Triangle Garden and ensure its long term stability.

A key part of our fundraising this year has been **our apple juice**. Last year's apple collection made 770 bottles of juice over the month of September, and over the last year made over £650 for our **Growing Ability** projects. We would like to thank all those who picked apples for us, or allowed us to scump their orchards, those who helped sell our juice, including Halseys and Rosebuds, and of course those who enjoyed drinking it. Likewise we would like to thank others for their invaluable support in our fundraising, including Polly Wyr and her beautiful **butterfly cards and prints**, sales of which raised over £230. We'd also like to thank Holly Calcraft for her lovely Christmas card designs, and all those who made **jams and chutneys** for us to sell.

We would like more people to join our **Friends Scheme** - 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 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.

We would also like to make people aware that supporters of Triangle Community Garden can raise free donations, simply by shopping online using **GiveAsYouLive.com**. Shop at over 4,000 leading online stores including Amazon, eBay, Tesco, John Lewis, Sainsbury's, Just Eat and Trainline, to name but a few, nominating the Triangle Garden, and this helps to continue funding our existing activities.

We would also like to thank Affinity Water for funding of £2,450 to support the purchase of the polytunnel and equipment. This allows the **Growing Ability** and **Growing Gang** to utilise new growing space and enable produce to be grown and used throughout the year.

Workshops have continued to be successful with record attendance on the Dawn Chorus, Pond Safari, and 2015's Bat Walk. Users are now able to book the events online and pay directly through the Triangle Garden Community website.

The **Pavilion** continues to be popular for children's parties and as a meeting space for community groups such as Hackspace. This helps to maintain the facilities for all to benefit and raises valuable funds to pay Liz, our Project Manager.

Growing Health has the new addition of the Lunch Club this year. In February 2016 the group was awarded £450 from CDA Herts to equip the Pavilion for cookery. This has allowed the group to purchase essential cooking equipment for cooking healthy lunches. We'd like to thank St Marks Church for their generous £200 donation towards this and Growing Ability.

An abbreviated version of the accounts can be found overleaf. The full accounts in the format required by the Charities Commission are available on our website.

Tom Palmer, Treasurer



From top: our apple juice, butterfly cards, jams and chutneys made by Garden Club members, Give as you Live logo, and Hackspace in the Pavilion on Monday nights

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Triangle Community Garden

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31 August 2016

	Triangle Garden and Pavilion	Growing Ability Group	Capital Fund	Total
Income from:				
Donations and legacies	311	218	100	629
Grants			2900	2900
Fundraising	5883	679		6562
Investment Income	1			1
Charitable Activities	2505	25682		28187
Other Income				
Total	8700	26579	3000	38279
Expenditure on:				
Raising Funds	2935			2935
Charitable Expenditure	5453	27509	2768	35730
Other Expenditure				
Total	8388	27509	2768	38665
Net Income	312	-930	232	-386
Net Movement in Funds	312	-930	232	-386
Total funds Brought Forward	7667	7347	769	15783
Total Funds Carried Forward	7979	6417	1001	15397



Above: the Growing Health group visit Cambridge Botanical Gardens with former staff member Charlotte (far left), and volunteers Yolanda (third from left) and Karen (centre in sunglasses).

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