Triangle Community Garden

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

Annual Review 2016-17

More inside

- Growing Health
- Growing Ability
- Growing Gang
- Garden & Forest Garden
- Friday Garden Club
- Events & Workshops
- Who's who
- Treasurer's report
- Accounts

Please join us for our

AGM

Weds 4 October
Ransom's Pavilion,
SG5 1RB, 7.30–9.30pm

Light refreshments

All welcome!

Welcome to our Annual Review for 2016-17

This year has been one of highs and lows, with as many frustrations as successes for our projects.

The good news has been that **our events team has done an outstanding job** in pulling in an unprecedented fundraising total this year with Brigid Bassindale, our new events chair, coordinating and hosting a very successful quiz night, and leading a strong team to run improved Apple Day and Open Days. The funds generated by James Wong's sell out talk were the icing on the cake.

Our Growing Health project has gone from strength to strength since its expansion into a longer slot, with time on the allotment included in the session. Regular tweets and Facebook posts show the wonderful meals that our GH members are creating with allotment produce, using only the simple equipment they would have access to at home – a microwave and one hob ring. Members continue to find new ways of improving their health, fitness and stamina, and working these into their everyday lives outside the project. A testament to the imagination and dedication of the GH team: Liz McElroy, Steve Granger and volunteer Karen Shields of LP Nutrition.

Garden Club have been making the most of our new polytunnel by propagating and growing on plants for the Triangle Garden and its Forest Garden, and last autumn started a **successful line in jams** and chutneys using surplus produce. This year has been a dispiriting one for them though as the Triangle Garden has seen its highest levels of **vandalism** for many years, and every Friday morning they have to brace themselves for what nastiness awaits them in terms of graffiti, litter or mindless plant bashing. More about the Garden on page 4.

It's also been a **tough year for Growing Ability**, in terms of financial stability. A combination of service users moving away, dropping out, being absent for health reasons or experiencing financial difficulties have led to some of our sessions being undersubscribed for large chunks of this year, which has had predictably negative impacts on our finances. Having said that, the project has continued to give huge benefits to its members (our gardeners), and through Liz McElroy's judicious management, our losses have been minimised.

As always we are indebted to our fantastic team of staff and volunteers, both within our projects and behind the scenes. This year Tom our Treasurer moved away and Nic our Garden Committee chair stepped down due to work commitments – we thank them for their sterling work and welcome new trustees Hilary Oughton and Andrew Green to our merry band.

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.
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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. We offer 4 sessions each week throughout the year. There are currently 21 service users who attend the projects, supported by 4 members of staff and 6 volunteers.

Growing Ability is a Social and Therapeutic Horticultural Project which is based primarily on our main allotment site the Pavilion as well as the Triangle Community Garden.
Growing Gang is our gardening work-experience project which currently tends our allotments at Ransom's Rec as well as helping with the maintenance of the Triangle Garden and Forest Garden.
Growing Health aims to promote active, healthy living. Sessions include physical exercise and shared support around healthy eating and weight management. A meal is prepared and eaten as part of each session.

Several improvements have been instigated this year: the most exciting being **the completion of our new polytunnel** which has made a significant difference, enabling groups to work outside throughout the year and to start sowing seeds earlier. We have also created **four new raised beds** on our new half-allotment plot and introduced **more cooking** into the Growing Ability and Growing Gang sessions, which has been very well received.

With a view to encouraging a culture of continuous service improvement our focus this year has been to **monitor and evaluate our effectiveness**. Gardeners continue to have quarterly reviews (Individual Development Plans) to chart achievements and personal goals accomplished, and set new ones or revise unfinished ones. Individuals are asked what they enjoy, what has gone well and also what has not gone so well.

A key part of our horticulture therapy provision is the recording by staff of **observations on each service user at every session,** allowing us to monitor individuals closely and pick up on any problems, issues or improvements that might have the potential to affect their lives both at the project and beyond. Individuals are also encouraged to, and where necessary are given support to, write their **own personal diaries**.

As well as planning ahead for each quarter each group spends time reviewing the previous quarter. Quotes from these reviews have been set out **overleaf to give a picture in their own words**, of what was successful, most enjoyable and what could be improved within each project, over the last year.

Going forward based on the requests of our service users we would like to **raise funds** to buy computers and get wifi at the Pavilion; to replace the old raised beds on our main allotment and to redecorate the Pavilion. We would like to have **more service users** joining our groups and aim to set up a fifth group next year.

I would like to thank Avril, Rachel, Steve, Karen, Yolanda, Jenni, Carol and Judith for all the commitment and support that they have given throughout the year. Thank you also to Vicky, and our trustees, particularly Hilary and Sarah, and to Margaret for her role in managing the finances and the hire of the Pavilion.

Liz McElroy, Project Manager

Growing Projects Impact

- 3 people formed part of a team at the Quiz in March and did well
- 4 people helped at Open Day
- 2 people attended the Bat Walk
- 3 people helped at Apple Day
- 3 people attended and spoke about the projects at the Learning Disability Forum in June
- 19/21 members attended our annual Harvest Lunch with staff and volunteers.
- 1 person learnt to text on his phone
- 2 people have learnt to tie their shoe laces.
- 2 new volunteers and 2 new gardeners have recently joined Growing Ability
- 2 service users have now left, and are both attending different projects. This was a significant step for both individuals.

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Our Growing Ability Projects cont'd

What Growing Ability gardeners have enjoyed:

"More regular lunches" (cooking as a group); "Planning and deciding to grow fruit"; "Laughing with my friends"; " Working with Yolanda" (volunteer); "Going on trips"; "Writing in my diary"; "I'm now happy to text by phone"; "Writing my name on the computer"

What has gone well: "Really strong group"; "Training - how to make a complaint, Fire drill"; "Balance between crafts, arts and gardening"; "Good to be able to swap groups when needed"

What has not gone well: "David has left - very sad"; "Some weeks were cancelled when we didn't have enough people in the group"

What they would like to change (if anything): "Get someone in - new possibly 2 people"

What they would like to be doing next year: "Lose weight"; "Bad weather at Christmas so I can be here on Christmas morning"

Other comments: "I like to have the half terms off"

What Growing Gang gardeners have enjoyed:

"Making the new beds on plot 2a "; "Really pleased with the cucumbers, kale and courgettes"; "When I sold my cabbage for £2 I was very proud"; "Apple Day, the quiz and the bat walk"; "Leaf raking"; "Picking fruit"; "Growing courgettes and aubergines"; "Taking produce to Rosebuds Cafe"; "Using the laptop for my work"

What has gone well: "The new polytunnel"; "Our volunteers"; "New plots"; "Harvest of carrots, cauliflower, kale, potatoes, cucumbers, butternut squash, celeriac and rhubarb"; "Harvest lunch was really good"; "Sean and Jeremy sorted the Christmas meal"; "I like the jams and chutneys - yummy!"; "Open Day"

What has not gone well: "Andrew leaving"; "Disappointed with my cauliflower"; "We've not been regularly to Church House"; "Storage of tools is difficult"; "Slugs and weather very wet"

What they would like to change (if anything): "I would like to do more cooking"; "New plots need to be made, replace the wood"; "Less time off in the summer"

What they would like to be doing next year: "Visit Cambridge Botanical Garden in the winter"; "Using the computer to look up things to grow and when things go wrong"

Other comments: "Good, excellent, we've achieved a lot"; "Very proud of what we've achieved"

What Growing Health members have enjoyed:

"New polytunnel"; "Cooking and eating the food we have grown feels really good"; "I enjoy fresh air – liked going to buy ingredients for a banana smoothie"; "Planning - really helpful"; "Learning how to cut an avocado and butternut squash"; "Trip to lavender fields"; "Team work"

What has gone well: "Sowing and eating the spinach"; "Learning about portion control"; "Learning about food hygiene"; "I don't feel rushed"; "It's been useful to have words written up on the board to copy"; " I like being in the group"; "I've lost a stone since July"

What has not gone well: "Too much writing" (from one individual); "When people rush off and don't do the dishes"

What they would like to change (if anything): Nothing

What they would like to be doing next year: "Internet for looking up recipes and writing menus"; "Trips in the summer"; "To decorate (the pavilion)"; "Lose some weight"

Other comments: "It's been fantastic and I love coming"; "Thank you for lovely sessions"

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A year in the Triangle Garden and its Forest Garden:

This year has been a mixed one for us. While the Triangle Garden has struggled to overcome **recurring vandalism** over the summer, the Forest Garden has started to really come into its own, producing **wonderful crops** that we can use for jam.

The Triangle Garden is a **lovely secluded place** to spend a warm evening with friends, and we welcome this use of it, whether it be by kids, teenagers or homeless people. But over the last year those using the garden in this way have caused a lot of **deliberate and thoughtless damage**. Last autumn our noticeboards were ripped apart, and from April to August we have had plants squashed or pulled out in the pollinator beds, graffiti on the pergola, trees and branches snapped and swathes of litter left (mostly non-alcoholic suggesting the perpetrators are fairly young). Recently a couple of fires were built in the garden and someone tried to smash up the mosaic.

The effect of this on the **morale of our volunteers** and staff has been quite corrosive. Some volunteers have stayed away and others have thrown themselves into helping in other ways to avoid visiting the garden. Steve our Garden Club leader has shown amazing resilience despite being regularly diverted from garden management, into repair or clear up work. We're very grateful to those who **donated plants and funds** to replace what was lost including Cllr Ian Albert, but sadly the young replacements didn't survive the ongoing thoughtlessness. We'd also like to thank our **dog-walking friends**, especially Sandra Wilkins, who often clear up on their way through.

Beyond replacing our plants and sanding off graffiti we're **unsure how to proceed**. We have visited the garden in the evenings and spoken to those there, who have assured us that it was others who had caused the mess around them. The community police and NHDC have been informed of every incident and are as helpful as they can be, but there is no budget to install CCTV and without it we cannot hope to catch the culprits in the act. All we can do is to **continue to be positive** in outlook, to appeal to parents to instil respect into their kids and to hope that this behaviour will fade as the cohort grow up.

On a more **positive note**, the ferns and hostas we planted in the garden this spring have mostly survived, and Forest Garden has undergone a **transformation** this year. A combination of targeted input from the Garden Club and help from Groundwork's **GOGA** (Get Out & Get Active) group based at the Forest Garden one day a week for six weeks this summer, we have covered the remaining weedy areas with mulch mat and weeded around all the established trees and shrubs, many of which are looking quite mature now. We have also started to plant the **groundcover layer** under the more established trees near the Triangle Garden – using edibles such as rhubarb, day lilies and mint. We have brought the weed-infested edge along the path under control by regular mowing and the Rosa rugosa hedge is thriving, producing a good harvest for rosehip jelly.

Vicky Wyer, fair-weather Garden Club attender

From the top: a spring volunteer Sunday, vandalism at the Garden, volunteers planting ferns and hostas, and wildlife discovery…

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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 a few 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:

Garden Club has met throughout the year most Fridays, excluding holidays and for bad weather. Volunteer numbers continue to fluctuate, but now with a core group of three or four volunteers attending regularly, and some new members recently joined. With the number of volunteers we have had this year, a total of **264 volunteer hours** have been spent working in the garden - an increase of 42 hours from the previous year.

Alongside the usual maintenance tasks, volunteers have also been harvesting produce from the garden from which they have made **jams, jellies and chutneys** for sale at events. This includes fruit from the Forest Garden, which is now producing more. We also now have a **nursery bed** on the allotment for plants for the Forest Garden, with a view to members propagating them to provide plants for the garden and hopefully surplus to sell to raise funds for different varieties.

We have had **trips** to Cambridge Botanic Garden, an inspiring trip to The Skip Garden in Kings Cross and Camley Street Natural Park.

Unfortunately parts of the garden have suffered from a spate of **vandalism** this year, meaning we have lost some plants from the pollinator beds. Replacement plants were kindly funded and donated by Cllr Ian Albert and Mr and Mrs Dawson, and planted at Open Day as part of a demo session, but frustratingly, the vandalism continued throughout the hot dry summer and we were unable to retain the new planting. Plans are underway to re-stock the beds over the winter allowing time for the plants to properly establish before next summer.

Over the winter last year members prepared the second section of hedge for our **hedge laying day**, this was carried out in January and now both sides of the hedge have been laid. Thanks go to Heidi Hutton, Derek Gilder and David Cannon from Countryside Management Services, who provided us with materials and expertise to carry out the work with Derek and David there on the day to show us what to do.

If you would like to try out Garden Club please contact me by email at steve@trianglegarden.org

Steve Granger, Garden Club session leader

Right: Garden Club discuss how to tackle an area of the Garden
Below: volunteers learn the ancient skill of hedge-laying with expert tuition from the Countryside Management Service.

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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From top: Open Day stalls, snail racing at Open Day (has to be seen!) and quizmaster Brigid and her score-keeper sons at our very successful Quiz

Events and Workshops:

The Events Committee has had a very successful year, raising much-needed funds, promoting our projects and generally raising the profile of the Triangle Community Garden in the community.

In October, we celebrated **Apple Day** in the Market Square with apple tasting, cakes, stalls and activities including sales of our own apple juice made from donated garden apples. October ended with our popular **Halloween** children's event at the Pavilion and Garden, with children enjoying the torchlight procession, spooky stories and toasted marshmallows.

In March we held our first **Quiz Night**, offering teams the chance to enjoy a fish and chip supper whilst pitting their wits against each other. It proved to be a popular event, with the hall filled to capacity, and one which we hope will become a regular feature on the Events calendar.

June saw our annual **Open Day and Fun Dog Show** where we offered a range of stalls, activities, refreshments, entertainment, demos, garden tours and even a **Bake-Off competition**. The Forever Hounds Dog Show, sponsored by Berry House Vets, was well-attended and thankfully the weather was kind to us this year. All in all great success, and a welcome boost to our funds.

In July, we were privileged to host **James Wong** who gave an entertaining talk on "How to Eat Better" to a sell-out audience at Woodside Hall. Thanks to sponsors Jarman Murphy.

Finally, we held a number of popular family-friendly **wildlife workshops** across the year, which were very well received.

Brigid Bassindale, Events Committee Chair

Who's Who 2016-17: Triangle Garden Trustees

Vicky Wyer	Chair of trustees, publicity coordinator, Personnel chair
Tom Palmer	Outgoing Treasurer
John Wyer	Trustee, member of working party for CSR
Natalie Sutterby	Trustee, Events committee member
Gareth Hills	Trustee, Garden committee member
Sarah Rhodes	Trustee, HR advisor and Personnel committee member
Hilary Oughton	Trustee, Learning Disability Ambassador (new role)
Andrew Green	Trustee and incoming Treasurer

Key Volunteers

Margaret Byrne	Accounts assistant, Acting Treasurer & Pavilion Hire Clerk
Rachel Cottey	Events committee member
Brigid Bassindale	Events committee chair
Yolanda Warrell	GA volunteer and events committee member (far right)
Karen Shields	GH volunteer and events committee member (right)
Alan Byrne	Apple Juice salesperson extraordinaire
Chris Mathieson	Garden committee member and jam supremo

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
Rachel Cottey	Support Worker Growing Ability
Steve Granger	Garden Club session leader, GH support worker, and Garden Committee member
Sean and Jeremy	Pavilion cleaners (Sean and Jeremy are also members of Growing Gang)

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Treasurer's Report:

The Triangle Community Garden is dependent on fundraising to survive and this year has been an exceptional year. Both Apple Day and Open Day again provided us with valuable funds and our new venture – **a quiz night** – proved highly successful, both financially and socially. The talk given by James Wong as part of the Hitchin Festival proved a sell out – our thanks to James for being so generous with his expertise. Also particular thanks to the events committee who worked so hard to make these events a success.

I would also like to thank those organisations and people who have supported us and our learning disability projects through **donations, sponsorship, raffle prizes and gifts**: St Mark's Church, Jarman Murphy, Graham Edwards, Cllr Albert, Paws Fur & Fin, Town Garden, Spencer Rhodes, Rosebuds Café, Growing Strong, Rochfords, Carol Young, Nic Wilson, Jane Visick, Mike Moult, David's Bookshop and Groundwork.

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 the development of the Forest Garden. Especially we need to raise the funds to pay Steve to run the Garden Club on Friday mornings – their work is invaluable in keeping the Triangle Garden and the Forest Garden under control. If you would like to make a regular or one off donation this can be done via the **donate** button on our website.

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. It is also used for our family-friendly wildlife **workshops** which have proved even more popular this year and also helps to raise funds. Keep an eye on the website for upcoming workshops – you can book and pay online.

Although our **learning disability projects** are largely financed through personal budgets allocated to participants from Social Services, this income has not been adequate to cover the full costs of running the scheme this year. Additional funds are provided by donations and by the sale of apple juice, jam and Christmas cards but **more is needed**. Particular thanks are due to Kang, the barber in Ickleford Road, for his sterling work in selling apple juice. Also our thanks to all those who donated apples, and to our jam makers Chris, Gill, Liz and John. The sale of jam and apple juice has been largely down to the efforts of a few – **please buy it and recommend it to your friends.**

Growing Ability We need to recruit more gardeners to ensure that all three groups remain viable and hopefully provide us with a fourth group, which will help spread our overheads more evenly.
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. They also ran a very successful tombola stall on Open Day.
The attendees at **Growing Health and its Lunch Club** have benefited from learning about healthy eating and hopefully next year we will be able to start a second session to roll out these benefits.

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 Accounts Assistant and Acting Treasurer

From top: Margaret at Apple Day, our GA Christmas cards, the Open Day plant stall, and a group photo at James Wong's talk featuring sponsor Anna Murphy, Yolanda, Liz, Brigid, John and Vicky Wyer, James Wong, Margaret, Steve, Karen and Rachel.

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Triangle Community Garden

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31 August 2017

	Triangle Garden and Pavilion	Growing Ability Group	Capital Fund	Total
Income from:				
Donations and legacies	203	272		475
Grants				0
Fundraising	8678	705		9383
Investment Income				0
Charitable Activities	2490	22245		24735
Other Income				
Total	**11371**	**23222**	**0**	**34593**
Expenditure on:				
Raising Funds	3284		43	3327
Charitable Expenditure	5190	26687	12	31889
Other Expenditure				
Total	**8474**	**26687**	**55**	**35216**
Net Income	2897	-3465	-55	-623
Net Movement in Funds	2897	-3465	-55	-623
Total funds Brought Forward	**7979**	**6417**	**1001**	**15397**
Total Funds Carried Forward	**10876**	**2952**	**946**	**14774**

Below: Sunday volunteers gather for a group photo in the Triangle Garden's central meeting space at the end of a rewarding morning's gardening, before heading up to the Pavilion for tea and a snack.

Sunday volunteer mornings take place once a month, usually on the last Sunday, and are open to all.

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