Triangle Community Garden

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

Annual Review 2017-18

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Please join us for our

AGM

Thursday 11 October
Ransom's Pavilion,
SG5 1RB, 7.30–9.30pm

Light refreshments

All welcome!

Welcome to our Annual Review for 2017-18

This year has been a very **satisfying** one in many ways, with Garden Club and Growing Ability member numbers steadily climbing, and some very successful events and workshops taking place.

The weather has been **challenging** at times, with extreme conditions curtailing some of our usual outdoor activities, and some very long hours spent watering over the summer! Luckily our outdoor events hit some sweet spots of mildness amid the relentless heat.

Vandalism at the Garden seems to have subsided, much to the relief of our Garden Club volunteers who were getting heartily sick of facing new scenes of devastation every Friday. Community gardening has returned to being **therapeutic** again!

This year saw the start of a **mutually beneficial relationship** with local company Crane (formerly Viking Johnson) and a series of successful funding bids to upgrade our facilities. Having Crane's employees coming in regularly has been a real boost to progress the upgrade and it has been a pleasure to work with such an enthusiastic team.

Fantastic work continues to be done in **learning disability projects**. Huge thanks and respect go to our excellent team of staff and volunteers headed up by Project Manager and lead Horticulture Therapist Liz McElroy. After several financially challenging years, **Growing Ability** has attracted several returning and new members, bringing it back to a more **sustainable footing**. **Growing Health** continues to **thrive**, with several longstanding members now feeling ready to move on to paid work and fresh challenges, allowing us to extend the benefits of the project to a new influx of participants.

As always our work is supported by a **broad foundation of dedicated volunteers**, setting strategy, running events, writing bids, developing the garden, looking after the finances and defining policy. We're sad to say **goodbye** to events supremo Brigid Bassindale and trustees Tillie Sutterby & Sarah Rhodes, and we thank them for their excellent work with us. This year we're delighted to **welcome** back Mel Coath to events and new trustees Lexi Turner and Fiona Dolman to our board.

Our longstanding volunteers continue to **reward us with their dedication and stamina:** Margaret Byrne (accounts & bookings) was nominated for a Comet Valiant Volunteer Award this year; nutritionist Karen Shields continues to support Growing Health and Chris Mathieson deserves a medal for jam making! We have **many more fantastic volunteers** who help us in ways too numerous to mention, and we are as always full of gratitude and respect for all they do.

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.

Growing Projects Impact

- 7 members helped at June's Triangle Garden Open Day
- 2 members attended the Bat Walk in October
- 1 member learnt to text on his mobile phone
- 3 members helped at our annual Apple Day
- 5 members have taken part in meetings of the North Herts Learning Disability Forum
- 4 members helped at a Health and Wellbeing event in Hitchin
- 1 member attended a Grow it Yourself Organic event in Letchworth
- 1 member attended a Health Day event in St Albans
- 12 members attended our annual Harvest Lunch in September with staff and volunteers.

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, horticulture therapy, preparing and cooking food together and shared support around healthy eating, exercise, mental health and weight management. A healthy meal is prepared and eaten as part of each session, using fresh ingredients grown on our allotment as the starting point.

How we work: We aim to focus our activities (horticultural, culinary and crafts) to ensure they **make a difference** to individuals who attend the sessions. We consult groups and individuals regularly using quarterly reviews to reflect and evaluate. As well as reviewing our activities we actively plan sessions together, gathering and sharing ideas from our members.

Setting goals with our members helps them to believe in themselves. This enables them to reach their full potential and to fulfil their ambitions. Goals give us vision and motivation which lead to **building confidence and self-esteem**.

The impact of our projects can be measured in the small steps that our members feel empowered to take as their confidence builds in the supportive environment that we provide. Some of the milestones we have achieved together are listed in the box (left).

Last year our Annual Report ended with a **wish list**: the result of asking our members what they would like to change and what they would like to be doing over the next year. The ideas included; new computers, with office equipment for training as well as the ability to access the internet. We also wanted to replace the timber on the raised beds on Allotment 1 and we desperately wanted (and needed) to redecorate the Pavilion.

I am delighted to be able to say that we have accomplished almost all of those aims within the past year.

This would not be possible without the devotion, dedication and support from **our steadfast team** of staff and volunteers, who have helped with writing bids for funding, attending Bid committee meetings, setting up equipment, building the raised beds, and painting the Pavilion. Huge thanks also to our funders Hitchin Area Committee and to Councillors Ian Albert, Judi Billing and Derrick Ashley (the latter two for granting us HCC Locality funding).

The regular **volunteer time** donated by local building components company Crane has been pivotal in helping us make our wish list become a reality, and has been much appreciated by members, staff and volunteers at our projects.

Continued over

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Our Growing Ability Projects

cont'd

Overview and changes since last year:

We made **changes** to the way we grew our crops this year. Rather than individuals each taking a plot, we pooled resources and grew together. This has meant that everyone had the opportunity to **share the produce and cook collaboratively**, joining together to make new dishes. This was especially crucial with the climatic challenges which we have experienced throughout the year. Individuals could choose what they wanted to grow based on the foods they would like to eat. Sharing the maintenance also took pressure off individuals during time off in the summer.

Two members from our **Growing Gang** group have collaborated with the café Rosebuds in Hitchin. At the beginning of our planning sessions they asked Rosebuds to tell us what **kind of produce** they would like us to grow. Diligently, the group has planned, sown, nurtured, harvested and taken produce to the café which Rosebuds have used in **salads and soups**.

This year we have brought **mindfulness** into our sessions. Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. It is successfully used as a therapeutic technique. We have used mindfulness to enhance the experience of growing and gardening: by observing our produce at different stages of growth, taking photographs or painting them, and tasting once ripened, whether cooked or eaten raw. We have also attempted to eat mindfully too: noticing textures, smells, colours, shapes, temperature and even the sound of our food when eaten. This has also been taken a stage further within our sessions by observing the world around us, feeling the warmth of sunlight, noticing changes in the seasons, and recording these through photography, artwork and cooking.

Our projects have made **visits** to Cambridge Botanical Gardens, Hitchin Lavender and the Skip Garden at Kings Cross. Travelling to London was a first, and an experience we wish to repeat next year.

Our groups have been very **well attended** throughout the year and individuals have said that they enjoy working with staff and volunteers. We are delighted that three of our original Growing Health members have recently felt able to move on from the project, taking all that they have learnt with them. One has a job, one is applying for paid work and one is attending another group. These are **significant steps** for all of them and we wish them well. We will miss them but look forward to welcoming new members.

I would like to thank our staff Avril, Rachel and Steve, and our volunteers Karen, Yolanda, Jenni, Carol, Judith and Tony for all the commitment and support that they have given to me and the groups throughout the year.

Thank you also to Vicky and our board of Trustees and to Margaret for her role in managing the hiring of the Pavilion, keeping the accounts and taking care of payroll, pensions, staff contracts etc.

Liz McElroy, Project Manager

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Pavilion Upgrade:

This year we have finally been able to move forward with our aspirations for our little community building: Ransom's Pavilion. Refurbished into **flexible community space** from football changing rooms in 2010, the building contains a small meeting/workshop space, spacious kitchen, storage and toilets, accessible throughout. After seven years of almost daily use, the décor was in need of revitalisation and shortcomings of the building for our own use and also as a 21st century hire venue, had become apparent. We needed Wifi!

We put in a series of bids to Hitchin Area Committee and the HCC Councillors Locality Fund for Hitchin, and through these have been able to fund **Wifi installation**, paint/decorating equipment and several items of much needed **IT equipment**, including a large wall-mounted monitor, housed in a purpose-built lockable cabinet which we are now using for training and demonstrations. As soon as our Wifi connection is installed we'll be able to expand our sessions to include supervised internet searches for information on food growing, healthy eating and recipes. Also our members will be able to upload records of our adventures and activities onto our website and Triangle Garden social media.

We're very grateful to all the volunteers from Crane Building Services who have transformed the interior of the pavilion and to Steve and Liz for coordinating the redecoration.

Vicky Wyer, Fundraising Committee member

A year in the Forest Garden:

This year has been a **very good year** in the Forest Garden, many of the trees and shrubs are maturing well, this combined with great growing conditions have led to **bumper crops**. We picked 6.5kg of apricots, alongside large amounts of damsons, mirabelle plums, honeyberries, currants, rosehips, quince, Almonds and if we get them before the squirrels do, there are even hazelnuts!

Some plantings of understory plants are also doing well and beginning to establish, the Chamomile lawn (from donated plants) is the biggest success.

Over the last year Garden Club members have propagated many different and **unusual varieties of mints**, both to sell on Open Day and the surplus to be planted in the Forest Garden. Now the weather has turned more Autumnal that is a task to start in the next few weeks.

This year we were delighted to have received donations of several garden tools and a **lawnmower**, which is now being used to cut the rougher grass areas in the Forest Garden.

Luckily, the vandalism previously suffered by both the Forest Garden and the Triangle Garden has subsided this year. Long may the respite continue! As always our thanks go to our fantastic volunteers for all their support.

Steve Granger, Garden Committee member

From the top: Crane volunteers painting the Pavilion, picking apricots, bumper berry harvest

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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! Over the last six months or so we have also been supplied with much appreciated homemade cakes from a local resident carrying out volunteer work as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award.

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

The group 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 numbers have **increased** this year, with new members attending regularly. With the increase in volunteers we have had this year, a total of 392 volunteer hours have been spent working in the garden - an increase of 128 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 this year has provided a bumper harvest.

Our **group outings** this year included a trip to Kew Gardens, including staying into the evening to see their Christmas Lights display, and to Chelsea Physic Garden, somewhere that all those who came on the trip would like to visit again.

Fortunately the spate of vandalism the garden suffered last summer has subsided. The pollinator beds, which suffered most damage have been left to see what regenerated over the year. Now with this knowledge, we can think about what to re-plant that will be most **resilient** in the future.

We're very grateful for a **donation of surplus plants** we had towards the end of last year from Arborcare. Many have been planted in the garden, including ferns, dogwoods, Euonymus and grasses.

Since March Garden Club members have been joined once a month by volunteers from **Crane** Building Services & Utilities. Groups of up to six volunteers have helped carry out a range of tasks including re-painting the pavilion, renewing the timber on the raised beds in the allotment and weeding and harvesting tasks in the garden itself. It has been great to have this injection of manpower to help us with these larger tasks

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

Steve Granger, Garden Club session leader

From top: Garden Club planting mint in the Forest Garden, new batch of Quince Jelly

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 plant stall, Cookery Eatery's Emma Ince Goulding and Triangle Garden's John Wyer judge the All Age Bake Off

Events and Workshops:

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

In October, we celebrated **Apple Day** in Hitchin 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** event at the Pavilion and Garden: a magical evening for families with young children.

Another successful **Quiz Night** followed in April 2018 (our first was last year) with much praise from participants for our very own Brigid Bassindale and her quiz setting prowess.

June saw us launch a bigger and better **Open Day and Fun Dog Show** where we offered even more stalls, activities, and entertainment, including Zumba with Robert, Hitchin Allstars Choir, Garden City Samba and Lesnick School of Ballet. Plus all day dog agility demos, garden tours, great new street food and our very popular **Bake-Off competition** sponsored by Cookery Eatery. The Forever Hounds Dog Show, sponsored by Berry House Vets, was very well-attended and thankfully we evaded the heatwave that weekend.

Once again our family-friendly **wildlife walks and talks** were fully booked this year and very well-received.

We couldn't do any of this without our fantastic band of dedicated resourceful events volunteers, headed up by Brigid, who stepped down to take on a teacher training post this autumn and will be sorely missed. Thank you for all your help.

Vicky Wyer, acting Events Coordinator

Who's Who 2018:

Triangle Garden Trustees

Vicky Wyer	Chair of trustees, acting events coordinator
Andrew Green	Treasurer, member of working party for CSR
John Wyer	Trustee, member of working party for CSR
Gareth Hills	Trustee, Garden committee member
Hilary Oughton	Trustee, Learning Disability Ambassador
Fiona Dolman	New Trustee, Garden committee
Lexi Turner	New Trustee, publicity/comms

Some of our Key Volunteers

Margaret Byrne	Accounts assistant and Pavilion Hire Clerk
Karen Shields	GH volunteer and events committee member
Mel Coath	Events committee member (right)
Yolanda Warrell	GA volunteer and events volunteer
Chris Mathieson	Garden committee member and jam meister
Gill Martin	Garden and events committee member

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 hugely dependent on **fundraising** to survive and this year has been an exceptional year, which has helped us report a modest surplus for this year. This has maintained our reserves at a level that is in line with our policy, which helps to ensure the ongoing viability of our activities.

Both **Apple Day and Open Day** again provided us with **vital funds** – this year's Open Day was particularly successful – thank you to all of those that came along and enjoyed a great day in the sunshine! Our **Quiz Night** went from strength to strength too – our next one will be in March 2019 – we're sure it will be another great night out. These events rely heavily on our events committee, so we would like thank all of them, but also welcome new volunteers to the committee to ensure next year's events are just as successful.

Grant receipts are important source of funds for our ongoing work, and this year we have been fortunate to receive £1,000 from HCC Locality Fund for new raised beds at the allotment, and £2,850 from the Hitchin Area Committee to help refurbish the pavilion and to provide wi-fi and computers. We would also like to thank Cllrs Ian Albert, Judi Billing and Derrick Ashley for their support in obtaining these grants and their ongoing involvement with Triangle Garden.

We 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 – see box overleaf.

In particular we would like to thank Crane and their team of volunteers who have been spending time each month to renovate and refurbish the Pavilion. This has helped to brighten and renew the building, and with the installation of wi-fi, the improvements will not only make our sessions better, but also make the Pavilion a great venue for supplementary activities. It is popular for children's parties and as a meeting space for community groups and raises valuable funds to pay a portion of Liz's Project Management time.

Please do contact us if you would like more information about hiring the Pavilion. It is also used for our family-friendly wildlife workshops, such as our very popular Bat Walk, which are well-attended and are another important source for raising funds. Keep an eye on the website for upcoming workshops – you can book and pay online.

We would like more people to join our Friends scheme. Details are on our website. Regular contributions provided by this scheme help us plan the finances for the upkeep of the Triangle Garden and the development of the Forest Garden.

Especially we need to ensure we continue 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 and looking attractive. If you would like to make a regular or one off donation, no matter how small, this can be done via the donate button on our website.

Our learning disability projects are largely financed through personal budgets allocated to participants via Social Services, but because the sessions are not always fully-subscribed 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 always needed. Cont'd

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Treasurer's Report continued:

Particular thanks are due to The Little Deli on Hermitage Road and Kang, the barber in Ickleford Road, for their sterling work in selling our apple juice. Also our thanks to all those who donated apples for juicing and to our jam makers, Chris Mathieson in particular. The sale of jam and apple juice has been largely down to the efforts of a few – please continue buy it and recommend it to your friends.

The Growing Gang have worked hard and have continued to sell some of the surplus produce from their allotment to help raise funds towards the running of the group. They also again 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 but recent departures have resulted in several vacancies, which means that one of our aims for the coming year will be to recruit new attendees and ensure the continued success of this project. Our longer-term aim is still to establish a second session, bringing the health benefits to even more people.

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

Andrew Green – Trustee & Treasurer

Thank you

Particular thanks for donations, corporate volunteer support, raffle prizes or gifts in kind go to:

- St Marks Church
- Bowles & Wyer
- Crane Building Services
- The Little Deli
- Kang's Barber Shop
- Arborcare
- Rosebuds Café
- Hermitage Rd Restaurant
- The Snug Bar
- Town Garden
- Stephanie Rose Florist
- The Beer Shop
- The Picture Framers
- Berry House Vets
- Cookery Eatery
- Zumba Robert
- Garden City Samba
- Hitchin Allstar Choir
- Orchard Agility
- Lesnicks School of Ballet
- Hitchin Stitchin

Triangle Community Garden

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31 August 2018

	Triangle Garden and Pavilion	Growing Ability Group	Capital Fund	Total
Income from:				
Donations and legacies	2599	220		819
Grants			3850	3850
Fundraising	7913	524		8437
Investment Income				0
Charitable Activities	2475	23843		26318
Other Income				
Total	**10987**	**24587**	**3850**	**39424**
Expenditure on:				
Raising Funds	3466		2304	5770
Charitable Expenditure	5794	25803	525	32122
Other Expenditure				
Total	**9260**	**25803**	**2829**	**37892**
Net Income	1727	-1216	1021	1532
Net Movement in Funds	1727	-1216	1021	1532
Total funds Brought Forward	**10876**	**2952**	**946**	**14774**
Total Funds Carried Forward	**12603**	**1736**	**1967**	**16306**

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