Triangle Community Garden

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

Annual Review 2018-19

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Please join us for our

AGM

Wednesday 16 October
Ransom's Pavilion,
SG5 1RB, 7.30–9.30pm

Light refreshments

All welcome!

Welcome to our Annual Review for 2018-19

This year has been a mixed one, with unprecedented fundraising success, a steady rise in volunteers, and Growing Ability continuing to thrive but with attendance at Growing Health taking a long time to pick up after several members moved on. Our workshops have broadened to include some very popular Foraging Walks and the Pavilion has attracted two new regular hirers, as we say goodbye to Hitchin Hackspace. However we have had to deal with challenging weather and anti-social behaviour at the Garden.

A dry winter and spring, following last year's dry summer, coupled with some late frosts has pretty much put paid to this year's Forest Garden harvest, although we've had a good crop of Honeyberries (taste like blueberries) and Buffalo currants (clove-y blackcurrants).

Garden Club and our Sunday volunteers have continued to keep the garden looking good and are making steady progress with the Forest Garden understorey layer, helped by volunteers from Crane, and a Groundwork project with refugees, all led by our indefatigable Steve.

Our learning disability projects continue to provide huge benefits for their members, from the social connections forged by working together, to the learnings and progress made in planning, tending, harvesting, cooking and sharing what they grow. Huge thanks and respect go to our excellent team of staff and volunteers headed up by Project Manager and lead Horticulture Therapist Liz McElroy. This year all land-based projects have been asked to prepare to retender with Herts County Council as Social Care Service Providers, a process that has so far involved considerable investment of time and energy.

This has happened to coincide with trustees reviewing the Triangle Garden's **vision, mission and values** and re-evaluating the way we are structured to be as effective as possible as a service provider. One clear challenge we have identified is reaching our target audience more effectively, so we can fill all our sessions and ensure everyone knows about and can benefit from our valuable projects.

This year we welcome new members to the events committee: Scarlett Star our events coordinator and her partner Tim, and several new Friday volunteers to our Garden Committee. We wave a sad goodbye to Karen, our longstanding events team member and nutritionist volunteer, and welcome new nutritional therapist Jane to the Growing Health volunteer role. As always we have **many more fantastic volunteers** who help us in ways too numerous to mention, and we are brimming with gratitude and respect for all they do.

Vicky Wyer, Chair of Trustees.

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

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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 places taken within all of our projects with 17 members attending once a week and 4 members attending 2 different sessions per week. We are supported by 4 members of staff and 4 volunteers one of whom attends twice a week. Our staff to service user ratio is 1:3, with volunteers providing additional support.

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.

We aim to focus our activities (horticultural, culinary and crafts) to ensure they make a difference to individuals who attend the sessions. We have monitored and reviewed our sessions to establish service user satisfaction as well as the quality of service provided. This process allows us to identify the most valuable and efficient use of resources and ways of working, as well as helping us to improve things ie environment, training, policies.

After nearly 4 years our Nutritional Therapist volunteer Karen Shields, has had to stand down due to the growth and success of her own business. We are very grateful for all of her nutritional, culinary, technical and personable support. We were very fortunate that Jane, a fellow Nutritional Therapist was able to join the Growing Health team in June.

This year has marked **our ten year anniversary for Growing Ability**. A short video was produced to show at our annual Harvest Lunch. It was apparent that although some members were no longer with us, there were many who have remained with us since the project began in 2009.

Our retention of staff, volunteers and service users throughout the past 10 years I feel is an indication of our success. Having staff and volunteers with the right values and skills is fundamental to delivering safe care and support within our groups.

I would particularly like to mention Avril Frost who has been an integral part of our team for the last ten years, and Rachel Cottey who has been volunteering throughout that time and a member of staff for the last 5 years.

Continued over

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Our Growing Ability Projects

cont'd

Our groups have benefitted this year from the continued support and volunteer time given by staff at Crane Building Services & Utilities, based in Hitchin. Volunteers from Crane have rebuilt 5 raised beds during the dormant months resulting in minimal disruption. They have also built a sink unit for pot washing and some small raised plots for the wildlife area, which groups are currently developing as well as painting the Pavilion kitchen and toilet areas, putting up shelves and noticeboards and helping to reorganise the Pavilion's storage areas.

Members of Growing Health have also benefited from a donation from the Crane Fund for Widows & Children of $2,500 which was presented at Crane's 100 year celebrations in July. We are enormously grateful for this donation which will enable us to provide a limited number of concessionary places at Growing Health in the coming year.

Thanks must also go to the volunteers from the Friday Garden Club and from the Sunday Volunteers who have supported with tidying and managing for a couple of weeks on the allotment, which due to bouts of extreme hot weather, members were unable to maintain.

Members from growing Gang continue to take the produce they grow such as spinach and rhubarb plus Triangle Garden apple juice, for use at Rosebud's café and we were very touched that Rosebuds made a special cake for our 10 Year celebration.

A major impact this year has been the wall-mounted monitor screen which we use as a visual aid during group discussions, training, planning, and reviewing, as well as showing videos of the projects' activities. The arrival of Wi-Fi has meant that members can access the internet for research on horticultural, health, nutritional advice as well as being able to plan visits to the Lavender Fields and Cambridge Botanical Garden. We would like to thank the Hitchin Area Committee and Cllrs Judi Billing and Derrick Ashley (HCC Locality Funding) for the funding to make these advances possible.

To sum up I have taken some of the feedback from the year of 'what we are good at': 'teamwork', 'we have good ideas' and that we are good at' communicating what has gone well and not so well'. 'We grew lots of really good things that we have been able to eat.' 'We all get on, some of us go out for lunch together' 'Helping each other ie when filling barrows of mulch we shared the jobs' 'Great attendance and we ran through half term' 'We all enjoy coming'.

Finally, I would like to thank, Avril, Rachel and Steve for their continued support as well as our volunteers, Yolanda, Carol, Judith and Jane.

Thank you to Vicky, and all of the Trustees and to Margaret for her role in managing the hiring of the Pavilion and for her support with managing the accounts.

Liz McElroy, Project Manager

Pavilion & Workshops:

This year our upgrades to the Pavilion really came into their own. The large wall-mounted monitor, now with the benefit of Wifi, has been a **fantastic communication aid** both at our Growing Ability/Health sessions and at trustee meetings and promotion events. Liz has made several short films documenting the progress of our projects across the years, which we have been able to show to our learning disabled members and their parents and carers, to great positive effect, particularly at Growing Ability's 10th anniversary.

We were sad to say goodbye to Hitchin Hackspace this spring but delighted for them at having their own dedicated space at Bancroft Park. Fortuitously we were able to welcome a new regular hirer to the Pavilion this year: **Jewellery Artist Tuuli Parker**, whose regular **silver clay jewellery workshops** are proving very popular. Having attended one with my daughter (my birthday gift to her) I can thoroughly recommend them!

This year has seen a huge rise in interest in wild food and foraging, something we have long wanted to offer at the Triangle Garden. A new collaboration with **Hitchin Forager** Jane Simmons has been very successful with five fully-booked **foraging walks** run this year. Jane is also active in our Friday Garden Club and garden committee.

And we welcome **Nature's Rainbow**, who specialise in dyeing with plants, and will be basing their new natural dyeing workshop programme at the Pavilion.

Vicky Wyer, Premises & Safety / Events & Workshops team

A year in the Forest Garden:

This year has been a **year of consolidation** in the Forest Garden, many of the trees and shrubs are maturing well, unfortunately poor growing conditions have led to very low crops. We have focused on the maintenance and protection of the understorey plants, such as mint, chamomile, chives and woad (a dye plant) and these are now well established, with the Chamomile lawn (from donated plants) being the biggest success. We have also spent time propagating the shrubs so that we have further stocks to plant in the autumn.

We have experimented this year with a **wild flower meadow** area and it has been a great success. We are hoping to extend this further along the front of the rosehip hedge, with a particular emphasis on plants for seed-eating birds.

The **Willow arch** at the entrance to the community garden has had mixed success this year and we will be looking to replace this with a **Beech arch** in the autumn which will not only give greater seasonal interest but also be easier to maintain.

Over the last year Garden Club members have propagated many different and **unusual varieties of mint**, both to sell on at Open Day and to plant as a ground layer in the Forest Garden where it seems to thrive.

Fiona Dolman, Garden Committee Chair

From top: silver clay creations with Tuuli Parker; first-time foragers; plant dyeing with Nature's Rainbow; corn marigolds in our new wildflower meadow

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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 Forest Garden. Members benefit from learning new gardening skills, meeting new friends 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, cake and chat at the Pavilion at the end of each session! Over the last year we have also been supplied with much appreciated homemade cakes from local residents carrying out volunteer work as part of their 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.

Garden Club has met most Fridays throughout the year, excluding holidays and for bad weather. Volunteer numbers vary week on week, but have steadily increased this year, with new members attending regularly. Last year a total of 472 volunteer hours were spent working in the garden - an increase of 80 hours from the previous year! Alongside the usual maintenance tasks, volunteers spent time planting spring-blooming flowers and ferns throughout the community garden, and have worked hard to bring the pollinator beds back to life, with all members of the garden club getting involved in the planning and planting. We also prepared a wide range of plants, both ornamental and vegetable for our Open Day in June, with almost all plants sold on the day.

The harvest from the forest garden has been poor this year, primarily due to a late frost and very dry conditions throughout the winter and continuing into the summer. This contrasts significantly with 2018 where the harvest was a bumper one. These extremes make it hard to rely on our produce and give an indication of how fragile food security is becoming with the increase of unpredictable and far-reaching weather events.

On a sunnier note, our group outings this year included a trip to Kew Gardens, staying for the Christmas Lights display, and to Brockwell Park Community Garden, with more trips planned, including a trip to the Cambridge Botanical Winter Garden.

Since March 2018 Garden Club members have been joined once a month by volunteers from Crane Building Services & Utilities. Groups of up to six Crane employees have helped carry out a range of tasks including repairing the willow maze and building a bug hotel in the garden. It has been wonderful to have this help and we are very grateful to the Crane team for their ongoing commitment and support. I would also like to thank of Steve Granger, who skilfully leads Garden Club every week, imparting his knowledge and humour, and the volunteers who show up, rain, shine or storm, on a Friday and who make the Garden Club the wonderful place that it is.

Fiona Dolman, Garden Committee Chair

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

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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Open Day crowds get settled in, June 2019

Events and Workshops:

It has been a bumper year for events this year, and we have raised much-needed funds, promoted our projects and raised the profile of the Triangle Community Garden in the community.

Our October **Apple Day** in Hitchin Market Square went well despite a blustery start, and Scarlett Star, our new Events coordinator, added a very successful raffle to the event. Our popular **Halloween** event for families with young children, held at the Garden and Pavilion, was marred by the discovery afterwards of extensive vandalism of the garden decorations by older kids on push bikes, but the event itself went well.

Our fun **Quiz Night** followed in April 2019 at which we successfully persuaded the Town Fryer to trial cardboard packaging instead of polystyrene for their fish and chips.

June's **Open Day and Fun Dog Show** was our biggest and best yet with even more stalls, activities, and entertainment, including As One Community Choir and Emerald Dance Academy's Bollywood Dancers. Plus Wrayfield Dog Agility, garden tours, great new street food and our popular **All Age Bake-Off** sponsored by Cookery Eatery. The Forever Hounds Dog Show, sponsored by Berry House Vets, was very well-attended and thankfully the weather was kind. Our 'Bring your Cup, not your Car' message even made it into the Comet!

We couldn't do any of this without our small band of dedicated and resourceful events volunteers, headed up by new burst of energy: Scarlett Star. Thank you for all your help and please get in touch if you'd like to join us!

Vicky Wyer, Triangle Garden events team

Who's Who 2018-19:
Triangle Garden Trustees

Vicky Wyer	Chair of trustees, comms (middle right)
Andrew Green	Treasurer, finance committee chair
John Wyer	Trustee
Gareth Hills	Trustee
Hilary Oughton	Trustee, Learning Disability Ambassador
Fiona Dolman	Trustee, Garden committee chair
Lexi Turner	Trustee

Some of our Key Volunteers

Scarlett Star	Events Coordinator (right)
Margaret Byrne	Accounts assistant and Pavilion Hire Clerk
Karen Shields	GH volunteer and events committee
Mel Coath	Events committee member (far right)
Yolanda Warrell	GA volunteer
Gill Martin	Garden 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 so it is great to report that this has been an exceptional year, with the final result showing a healthy surplus for 2018/19. This has improved our reserves to a level that exceeds our current policy requirements, but which critically helps to ensure the ongoing viability of our activities against a backdrop of some uncertainty for the year ahead.

Both Apple Day and Open Day again provided us with vital funds – thank you to all of those that came along and enjoyed a great day in the sunshine! Thanks go to our events committee, and we'd like to extend a warm welcome to any new members 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 the Herts Locality Fund for essential equipment. We would like to thank Councillors Judi Billing and Derrick Ashley for their support in obtaining this grant and also Cllrs Ian Albert and Val Bryant for their ongoing involvement with our work. This year has also seen donations from Hitchin Horticultural Society, St Marks Church and Nutleigh Grove Knitters – which have made a big impact on our funds. Last but not least, a big thank you to Liz (our project manager) for her hard work in securing an award from Crane (our valued corporate supporters) who continue to provide much-appreciated volunteers to improve the Pavilion and garden.

The Pavilion continues to be a great venue for supplementary activities. It is popular for children's parties and as a meeting space for community groups, and more recently for regular jewellery and dye plant workshops. This raises a small but valuable income for us - please do contact us if you would like more information about hiring the Pavilion. We also use it as a base for our very popular Bat Walk and Foraging expeditions, which are another important source of funds. Keep an eye on the website for these and more – you can book and pay online.

Particular thanks are due to those who donate apples every year for Triangle Garden's apple juice – not forgetting our jam makers whose culinary skills produce our ever-popular sellers. 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 as this remains an important source of income for us.

Whilst the attendees at Growing Health and its Lunch Club continue to benefit from learning about healthy eating it is disappointing that the initiative still suffers from being under-attended. In a broadly successful year, Growing Health's financial performance has improved for this year but it has still reported a net deficit. For this reason, it will remain a focus for our recruitment efforts in 2019/20 because we continue to see the important changes that Growing Health can bring about for its participants. Our longer-term aim is still to establish a second session, bringing these health benefits to even more people.

Although our learning disability projects are largely financed personal budgets allocated to participants from Social Services, they continue to be susceptible if attendance numbers are low. This year has seen an improvement in attendance such that Growing

Ransom's Pavilion Review

"If you're looking for a space to hold a class, workshop or children's party, Ransom's Pavilion is an **excellent venue at a very reasonable price**. Situated in the middle of Ransom's Recreation Ground, it's a **really lovely space with a big kitchen with excellent facilities**, **workshop space with lots of tables and chairs** and toilet facilities. Margaret and Vicky are helpful and easy to deal with.

Highly recommended ***

Tuuli Parker, Jewellery Artist

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Treasurer's Report continued:

Ability and Growing Gang have shown a small surplus which is great news. However it also needs to be recognised that there are two risks ahead that could have a hugely damaging effect on the continuing viability of the Triangle Garden's projects.

Firstly, there is the risk that North Herts District Council remove their support for our work by changing the arrangements for meeting the overheads of running the Pavilion. Currently NHDC meet these costs, thus removing these as an operating cost for the projects.
Undoubtedly if the Triangle Garden had to meet these costs, it is likely that it would operate at a loss. Secondly we are aware that Herts County Council, who currently pay the session fees for many of our participants, are reviewing the fee rates for ours and other services across the county. If HCC concludes that it can no longer pay fees that meet the costs of running the very specialised yet highly beneficial set of projects that we provide, then this would also seriously limit the ongoing viability of the Triangle Garden's services. We will continue to make the case for the continuation of our projects to both Councils whilst making sure that our running costs remain low but reasonable.

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

Triangle Community Garden

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31 August 2019

	Triangle Garden and Pavilion	Growing Ability Group	Capital Fund	Total
Income from:				
Donations and legacies	491	2170	1250	3911
Grants			1000	1000
Fundraising	10065	269		10334
Investment Income	1			1
Charitable Activities	2640	26483		29123
Other Income				
Total	**13197**	**28922**	**2250**	**44369**
Expenditure on:				
Raising Funds	3717		379	4096
Charitable Expenditure	6126	28230	1477	35833
Other Expenditure				
Total	**9843**	**28230**	**1856**	**39929**
Net Income	3354	692	394	4440
Net Movement in Funds	3354	692	394	4440
Total funds Brought Forward	**12603**	**1730**	**1967**	**16300**
Total Funds Carried Forward	**15957**	**2422**	**2361**	**20740**

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