



Triangle Community Garden

Created and cultivated by people of all ages and abilities at Ransom's Rec Hitchin, Herts

Annual Review 2021-22

Welcome to our Annual Review for 2021-22

For those new to the Triangle Community Garden (TCG) and its work, here's our vision:

'A community where people feel happier and more fulfilled through a connection with the natural world and an understanding of our place in it.'

Our aim is to help people of all ages and abilities lead more fulfilling lives, through gardening and contact with the natural world. We do this through:

- Supporting physical and mental health through social therapeutic horticulture, healthy living and 'green care' projects,
- Volunteering opportunities and
- Community events.

This has been a great year for all our projects, which have recovered well after the strain and upheaval of the pandemic and its fall out.

We're active in three areas within Ransom's Rec (a small informal park near Hitchin station): the allotments, the Triangle Community Garden in the northeast corner of the park, and our Forest Garden adjacent to it alongside the River Hiz. The areas vary greatly in character and each brings different challenges and rewards. All three sites have thrived under the loving care of our volunteers at Friday Garden Club, New Shoots and Growing Ability, our three current green care projects.

Growing Ability works long-term with adults with learning disabilities, focusing on the goals, abilities and support needs of each individual, and using horticulture to increase the health, wellbeing, self-esteem and self-confidence of our 'gardeners'.

New Shoots began as a response to the rise in social isolation and anxiety brought on by the pandemic, and seeks to use the benefits of working in nature to bring about improved physical health and mental wellbeing. Although attendance is time-limited, some participants go on to join our Garden Club, made up of loyal volunteers who tend and nurture all our sites, enjoying the benefits of biophilia in a virtuous circle.

We also run family-friendly community gardening sessions, open to all, once a month on a Sunday morning. And we manage half of the park Pavilion, not only as a base for our projects, but also as a community resource for local art and craft workshops. You can find out more about all these and the wonderful people who make them happen in the following pages, and by visiting our website or subscribing to our monthly email newsletters.

Lastly I'd like to thank everyone in our wonderful Triangle Garden community – our staff, trustees, volunteers, gardeners, collaborators, participants, stakeholders, funders, carers and supporters. And where would we be without nature itself...?

Food for thought

Vicky Wyer, Chair of Trustees



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Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org



Growing Ability

Growing Ability is our social therapeutic horticulture project for adults with learning disabilities. It's primarily based at our allotments and also uses the Pavilion, Triangle Garden, Forest Garden and Ransom's Recreation Ground.



175 sessions
 17 individuals
 365 volunteer hours
 4 new attenders
 this year
 4 off site trips

We currently run four 2.5 hour sessions a week, each led by an experienced Horticulture Therapist. Two members of staff and a volunteer work with up to six Growing Ability Gardeners (as we call our service users). 17 individuals currently attend, some coming to more than one session.

Our sessions incorporate activities such as growing food and flowers, setting up a produce table, cookery, art, going on trips to places of interest, nature walks and observations, flower pressing, coffee mornings and afternoon teas. Our groups came together on the bank holiday to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and we encourage our gardeners to participate in all our community events.

Within our regular review structure, individuals and groups make decisions as to what they want to do within their own groups. Individuals are encouraged to think about what they are good at as well as what they enjoy about the project and what could be 'even better if'.

During extreme weather we have been able to adapt by changing the session day or time, adjusting our activities, working in the shade or by having virtual sessions for those with access. This adaptability also proved useful during January when Liz broke her ankle and needed to work from home whilst Rachel

and Steve lead the sessions.

During August the project had its 3-yearly PAMMS (Provider Assessment) inspection by Herts County Council. Our overall rating was **GOOD**, with nine of the findings rated **Excellent**.

This is a reflection of the care our staff and volunteers deliver, highlighted by an overall **excellent** in the findings on 'Involvement and information, respecting and involving service users.'

Here are some clips from the feedback:

- *'Observed lots of conversations - Observed good and appropriate staff interaction throughout visit. In one observation staff continually and politely prompted service user to unscrew flower press rather than doing it for them.'*
- **'One service user commented - Staff are "fab" and are "always respectful, approachable, [and] understanding".'**
- *'Service user stated that what makes them happy is coming to the service, seeing friends, taking part in the tasks and the allotment, learning new things, crafts, cooking, and trips out'*
- **'Staff ensure that they respect service users views, choices and decisions during any discussions had and when working with the service users. Examples included what the service user would like to do that day and what they would like to grow in the allotment.'**

Liz McElroy, Project Manager

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Growing Ability Profile

How do you feel about Growing Ability?

I love the sense of getting outside of the house and being active.

The camaraderie, everyone helping each other and being friendly ... it's all good. I enjoy the excitement of what's growing each week like the tomatoes, I also love the neurotic chicken and the classical music (played in the background from a neighbour).

What has gone well?

My time keeping has improved immensely, this is down to me walking in with another GA member. Having Carole our volunteer back has been amazing.

What does a good session look like?

When I leave with a smile on my face

How could it be better?

Having a few more mini raised planters for growing salads.

What does the future look like?

It looks calm and relaxing when I am here....

How do we get there?

We learn to breath, we take time to breath and just focus

What one thing would you like to see happen to take us forward?

Breathing exercises at the start of the session.

Anything else?

It's the one day of the week that gets me back to nature. Gives me inner peace. I'm calm inside after I've been here.

By Mark (pictured centre right)



To find out more about
Growing Ability please
contact Liz McElroy
liz@trianglegarden.org

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org



New Shoots

New Shoots is a new project that uses gardening together, to reduce social isolation and promote mental wellbeing.

The combination of physical activity, working with others and being present in the natural world has multiple benefits.

In autumn 2021 we ran a 14 week pilot project: 10 individuals attended 2 hrs/wk 'supported volunteering'. Feedback from that helped us to refine and improve the project into its current form, based around the 'five steps to mental wellbeing'.

This spring we successfully bid for an HCC grant seeking innovative projects using physical activity to promote mental wellbeing. This grant is funding two 15 week blocks of New Shoots, the first of which ran from June to September 2022, with the second starting in October.

New Shoots enables individuals to work together or on their own within a group setting, on a range of activities: some physically active like leaf raking, mulch barrowing, and setting up a wormery, and others more focused on mindfulness. These have included botanical pressing and creating a herbarium of weeds with pressed specimens. Art is also a feature of the project with members taking part in cyanotype and leaf monotype printing.

Propagation, including taking cuttings, seed sowing and dividing plants, demonstrates the reciprocity of nature, reinforcing a sense of purpose and potential in simple horticultural tasks. The resulting plants have been sold to raise funds at our community events, which members have taken part in.

Each block culminates in a group trip to

Cambridge Botanical Gardens, also attended by Friday Garden Club members. This represents an opportunity to go somewhere new and inspiring in the company of the established group, and to meet and engage with other Triangle community gardeners. One New Shoots member had never been on a train before. Another reported not having been on a trip for many years. The sunflower became an emblem of our summer visit and was chosen by the group for future New Shoots promotional material.

Outcomes are measured weekly using simple feedback forms, and at the beginning, middle and end of each block using the Warwick & Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing and Mental Attention Awareness Scales (WEMWBS & MAAS).

For the autumn 2021 pilot project, weekly feedback showed participants on average feeling less anxious, more positive and more engaged after each session. The WEMWBS scores showed participants feeling more confident, more useful and more able to make up their minds about things over the block period.

One member of the pilot block went on to become a regular at our Friday Garden Club, one person joined Groundwork's Green Skills programme, another joined their GOGA (Go Outside Get Active) programme and one person self-referred to our Growing Ability project.

New Shoots has been led each week by Steve Granger and supported by Liz, and Gill our regular New Shoots volunteer. Outcomes for blocks 2 and 3 will be published in next year's Annual Report.

26 sessions
 17 individuals
 57 volunteer hours
 1 to Garden Club
 2 to Groundwork
 1 to Growing Ability

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Friday Garden Club

Friday Garden Club meets every Friday morning 10am-12.15 for some gentle guided social gardening. It is open to anyone and its purpose is to maintain and develop the Triangle Garden and Forest Garden for the benefit of people and nature. Members enjoy learning new gardening skills, meeting new friends and being active in the fresh air, while making a positive contribution to the community and biodiversity. 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 end of each session! Thanks go to Lesley for her cake baking at coffee time, often using produce from our sites.

Garden Club has met most Fridays throughout the year, excluding holidays and extreme weather. Volunteer numbers have remained fairly constant, with 14 volunteers overall, and an average of 6 people coming each week, giving a total of 606 volunteer hours this year.

As there is a restriction on the number of allotment plots that a therapeutic project can occupy in North Herts (one per site), some individual members of the TCG community have made their personal plots available to our projects either in whole or part. The number of people who benefit from this far exceeds the standard one family : one plot benefit.

The addition of plot 6A with its new polytunnel has given a dedicated space to Garden Club for propagation and cultivation, and resulted in a bumper crop of tomatoes and melons for the group to enjoy at coffee time. Plot 6A has also been used as a flower cutting garden and by our New Shoots project.

In their ongoing nurturing of our community spaces for biodiversity and people, Garden Club have created new paths in the Forest Garden, opening it up to encourage people to walk through.

The ongoing task of removing the 'weed suppressing' membrane continues slowly but surely, to allow planting of a new herbaceous layer. New plants added to these areas include Yacon, Mashua and Red Clover.

Garden Club's idea of leaving nettles and brambles in the area under the apple cordons to discourage 'scrumper's', allowed us a first crop of apples from the trees this year. From the Forest Garden we've harvested Mirabelle plums, Almonds, Szechuan Peppercorns, Dwarf Quince, Red, Black & White Currants, Blackberries, Gooseberries and more.

The Forest Garden and Triangle Garden survived the heat of summer pretty well, even without lots of watering, surely a permaculture success! Although new pollinating plants added around the meeting space in July did not do so well.

We enjoyed a trip to Stepney City Farm where we were lucky to get a behind the scenes tour from a member of staff, exploring their polytunnel, composting and growing areas. Many Garden Club volunteers staffed our plant stalls at Apple Day and our Summer Garden Party.

Crane have continued to attend carrying out various tasks including putting in a new noticeboard for the garden, building new leaf mould bins and helping with polytunnel construction on Plot 6A.

Groundwork's GOGA ran two six week sessions this year with volunteers from The Living Room. They carried out many tasks including building compost bins, planting Jerusalem Artichokes in the Forest Garden and learning how to take cuttings.

Thanks to Tom Ayres from NHC for marking out for the park contractor where to not cut the grass, we now have areas in front of the TCG and Forest Garden where wildflowers can set seed and thrive.

Steve Granger, Garden Club Leader



To find out more about
Garden Club or New
Shoots please contact
Steve Granger
steve@trianglegarden.org

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org



Community events, walks & workshops

Thanks to our collaboration with the wonderful Hitchin Forager we have continued to run well-attended and well-regarded Foraging Walks since restrictions were lifted, but 2021 was our first year back running our big community events.

As well as its usual celebration of English apples, local food and sustainability, Apple Day 2021 also provided the launch of Hitchin Nature Network, a local group dedicated to bringing wildlife back to our town by making space in our gardens and parks for nature. Other first-time stalls included Zuckermus Bakery, Yom vegan and 'What if...? Craftivism'. The event raised over £650 for our work.

Our events group said farewell to Scarlett and Tim on the organising side, and hello to new members Gemma and Karenanne, as well as a more active role for Garden Club's Gill, helping Mel and

Vicky put on our first big summer event since pre-covid times. Rather than recreating our old Open Day and Fun Dog Show, we opted for a smaller, more focussed 'open garden' event with a Summer Garden Party theme. The aim was to create greater awareness of the community garden and its work and showcase the creativity of our artistic collaborators at the Pavilion.

Garden Club ran a very successful plant and produce stall and Growing Ability put on a series of boules games. We ran a popular nature quest for kids among other nature-based activities, and there were several well-attended garden tours led by Liz, Steve and Hitchin Forager Jane. Nature's Rainbow provided an indigo dye demonstration and a host of local musicians contributed to the lovely laid back vibe.

Gemma, Mel, Vicky, Gill and Karenanne

The Pavilion & Nature's Rainbow

Our Pavilion continues to be well used by external arts tutors for creative workshops such as [Tuuli Parker's](#) silver clay and glass fusion jewellery classes, and [Kim Raymont's](#) botanical art courses. These hires provide welcome income to help fund our Friday Garden Club and Sunday volunteer mornings.

[Nature's Rainbow](#) have also been regular hirers of the pavilion this year. Co-founder Susan Dye elaborates here: 'We specialise in workshops on how to plan a dye garden, and extract dye from woad and Japanese indigo plants. Our students come from across the UK and we teach almost exclusively from the TCG pavilion and outdoor classroom which has been very popular with our indigo dyeing students this year. As well as providing the health benefits of excellent ventilation,

people love the setting of the working garden and learning about the Triangle Garden's projects.

We also teach a workshop in collaboration with a botanical printer from west London which has wider appeal. This has helped to raise our profile locally. Botanical printing creates designs directly onto fabric or paper from certain leaves and flowers with the aid of heat and mordant. It works well with leaves from a wide range of trees and we are grateful that TCG has agreed to plant an alder buckthorn in the forest garden. This produces beautiful clear golden leaf prints and is the food plant for brimstone butterflies; nectar from flowers is good for insects and the berries are a good food source for birds. We are keen to collaborate more on the forest garden.'

- 2 community events
- 7 local food stalls
- 8 sustainability stalls
- 40 event volunteers
- 8 arts workshops
- 10 foraging walks
- 15 dye workshop days
- 18 jewellery workshops

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Treasurer's Report

This financial year (1st Sept 2021-22) saw TCG returning to a degree of normality after two years that were dominated by the impacts of COVID-19, but where the effects on fundraising were still being felt.

Open Day returned in 2022, but on smaller scale than in previous years, with a deliberate shift in focus to the community garden and the activities of the charity. Despite this down-sizing, it was great to see that the event still generated a surplus for us.

Along with our other sources of income, the pavilion continues to be an important source of funds – generating fees from use by local community groups and classes, and providing facilities for TCG activities and projects.

Whilst we are very pleased to see that the combined activities of TCG have delivered a surplus this year of over £9,000 we remain very aware of the hard truth that without other sources of income, the charity would have likely made a deficit based solely on fees from clients.

This serves to highlight how important these other sources are, and how grateful we remain to those that provide them; whether that is very kind donations (such as those from Crane, Barratt Homes, St Marks Church and private individuals, amongst others) or the grants awarded to us (such as those provided by HCC and our local Councillors). It also shows the hard work undertaken by the team in submitting robust and convincing grant applications – their efforts this year have certainly been vital.

Income from client fees has shown a modest increase during the year, due in large part by an increase in attendance at the sessions run by TCG. But under the new fee structure introduced by Hertfordshire County Council, the level of this income is precarious going forward as new rates represent a reduction on those paid previously.

This uncertainty over future fee levels, and a desire to ensure that TCG runs a full programme of fully-attended sessions has led to the decision to create a new role of Business Development Manager. Applications are currently being sought for this position; it is hoped that this new team member will be in place before the end of 2022 not only to develop our current sessions but also to generate new sustainable income sources that match the Trust's aims and principles. Initially, this role will be funded from our reserves but the intention is that the additional income that is brought in will make the role self-sustaining.

Looking ahead, we are positive that 2022/23 will see a strengthening in the charity's position as the new role of BDM starts to deliver benefits, working alongside our outstanding team of hard-working and dedicated staff.

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, Treasurer

Triangle Community Garden

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st August 2022

	TCG and Pavilion	GA Group	Capital Fund	Total	Last Year
Income from:					
Donations and Legacies	1011	1873	1000	3884	1393
Grants	0	200	8220	8420	21566
Fundraising	6205	41		6246	2775
Investment Income	0			0	0
Charitable Activities	2509	30187		32696	30345
Other Income					
Total	9725	32301	9220	51246	56079
Expenditure on:					
Raising Funds	2025	5	1142	3172	2628
Charitable Expenditure	5542	29402	3680	38624	38360
Total	7567	29407	4822	41796	40988
Net Income	2158	2894	4398	9450	15091
Net Movement in Funds	2158	2894	4398	9450	15091
Total funds Brought Forward	16912	7305	16726	40943	25852
Total Funds Carried Forward	19070	10199	21124	50393	40943

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

People

We'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who supports us in whatever way – there are too many of you to mention individually but here are a few of our key staff, volunteers and supporters.

Thank you to our fantastic longstanding staff team led by Project Manager Liz McElroy and ably supported by Steve Granger at Garden Club and New Shoots and Rachel Cottey at Growing Ability. And to volunteers Judith, Lesley, Yolanda and Carol who support our GA sessions and Gill who supports New Shoots.

Thanks too to our trustees: Vicky Wyer (Chair), Andrew Green (Treasurer), Fiona Dolman (Garden Committee Chair), Adrian Stones (HR advisor), Gareth Hills, Hilary Aughton and John Wyer.

Massive thanks to our volunteer accounts assistant Margaret Byrne and her apple juice sales supremo husband, Alan. And to our committed events team of Mel Coath, Gemma Ward, Karenanne Haye, and the aforementioned Vicky and Gill.

Future plans

There are plenty of exciting opportunities on the horizon for the Triangle Garden and we hope that whoever fills our new BDM role will enable us to capitalise on those, to allow us to benefit as many people as possible with the great resources and facilities that we have.

We hope the success of New Shoots will enable us to get further funding to roll out the project's benefits to more people.

We'd like to promote Growing Ability to adults with learning disabilities from nearby counties as well as within Hertfordshire to maximise GA's benefit to this wonderful unsung community.

We have plans to provide Forest School sessions for families and young people next year using the Triangle Garden,

Not forgetting Jane the Hitchin Forager for supporting the garden through her foraging walks, and Hitchin Nature Network through their contributions.

Thank you to our wonderful Garden Club volunteers who help to keep our sites so biodiverse and beautiful. And to our Growing Ability and New Shoots gardeners and their supportive parents and carers. Plus HCC for their financial support via the Infection Control Fund.

Thank you also to our monthly Sunday volunteers and events volunteers who bring so much positive energy with them. We'd particularly like to thank those who contributed to Theo's 2nd birthday fund raising over £300 for the garden.

We'd also like to thank local building services company Crane for whom we hold a monthly team volunteering session which helps us move forward hugely with practical elements of our projects. We're also very grateful to Crane for their recent generous donation to Growing Ability.

Ransom's Rec and various other nearby greenspaces, to reconnect people to nature at this time of increasing digital isolation, rising cost of living strain, climate-related upheaval and loss of biodiversity.

And there are so many opportunities and possible collaborations open to land-based organisations like ours that could potentially benefit so many, if we had the headspace, time, energy and funds to take them on.

The key to this in the permaculture world is to 'Use small and slow solutions' to 'Obtain a yield'. 'Apply self-regulation and accept feedback' and 'Creatively use and respond to change'. So expect some changes around here – but slow and steady wins the race!

3 staff members

6 key volunteers

7 trustees

5 events organisers

14 Garden Club
volunteers

606 Garden Club
volunteer hours

32 Crane
volunteer hours

86 Sunday
volunteer hours



Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org