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#43 WINTER 2017

# SYDENHAM GARDEN NEWS



## WELCOME TO THIS WINTER EDITION OF THE SYDENHAM GARDEN NEWSLETTER

It's a great pleasure to be writing for the newsletter and to draw together the threads of our 15th Anniversary Year. Of course none of us will know about every single thread that goes to make up the tapestry of life at Sydenham Garden, and the hidden stories may often be the most important, but the visible fabric has been very rich.

Our annual evaluation (published in May each year and available in full on our website) contains a wealth of good news contained in positive co-worker stories as well as solid evidence of clinical benefit assessed by a widely used wellbeing measure. That's the repeating pattern in the tapestry – story after story of people finding meaning and new hope through the community acceptance and purpose that they find here at Sydenham Garden – and which, in their turn, they create for others.

So the most important thanks goes to our staff and volunteers, led by Tom, who week by week create the atmosphere that allows the community to flourish. This year we've said goodbye to Ella Perkins our Garden Project Lead (off to study Landscape Architecture) and have welcomed Charlotte Dove in her place. We hope Charlotte has a long and happy association with Sydenham Garden. Alex Barlow is our new Transitions Project Worker – helping co-workers think about the shape of their lives after their year at Sydenham Garden. Welcome Alex!

Our huge band of volunteers are key to being able to help so many people each week and deserve a big 'Thank You' for the richness they bring to the charity. I would like to single out Marion Nisbet and Alona Sheridan who have been Trustees of the charity since its beginning and who have just retired from this role. A huge debt of gratitude goes to both of them.

We hoped to make our 15th Anniversary Year special in other ways and have achieved many of our goals – our biggest ever Spring Fair, a tremendous Summer Festival at de Frene, a new hub building at de Frene, a hugely successful crowdfunding campaign for pond restoration, our biggest ever raffle, a happy 15k sponsored walk ..... Well done everyone! Oh and last but not least, a beautiful 2018 Calendar full of photos of life at Sydenham Garden – an ideal present available from the Office.

Happy New Year from us all. **Jim Sikorski, Chair of Trustees**

### **Spring Fair, 5th May, 11am.**

Entrance £1, 50p concessions. Come along and experience our famous plant sale, cakes, refreshments, crafts and much more!

### **Community Volunteer Days are back!**

Every 3rd Saturday of the month, 10.30am, volunteering for everyone! Based in our beautiful De Frene Market Garden, and finishing off with a hearty lunch, this really is THE way to give back to your local community.

**Sydenham Garden Resource Centre, 28a Wynell Road, London, SE23 2LW. 020 8291 1650**

# STORIES FROM SG

## Green Spaces Walk, a rambling success!



An intrepid bunch of ramblers from Sydenham Garden set out on 24th September! Not only did they manage to complete the route, they raised in excess of £4000 doing it! This ranks as quite possibly the most successful single fundraising event Sydenham Garden has ever put on.

The walk was beautifully crafted, taking the group through nature reserves such as Devonshire Road, Sydenham Hill Woods, and Dulwich and Wells Park. At any major crossing, the Police Cadets were on hand to ensure safe passage!

Upon completion, one participant said: "What a lovely experience: the weather was good, the scenery both interesting and beautiful and the company was delightful!"

The walk formed part of our 15-year celebrations.

We raised an amazing £4465 which is being used to refurbish our Resource Centre and gardens at Wynell Road. We must give a big shout out to the 27 walkers and dog and their generous friends for the sponsorship and continued support.

You can find out more about other Sydenham Garden events on website at [www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/news-events/](http://www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/news-events/)

## Pond News

After the hugely successful Pond Appeal we raised an impressive **£10,701!** Thank you to all our

supporters. The initial plans to renovate the pond have been drawn up. Work is planned to start before the Spring. Watch this space for updates.

## Christmas Fair

We had our annual Christmas Fair on 25 November. Over 300 people came through the door, eating perfectly flipped pancakes, delicious hot dogs and gorgeous home-made cakes. The greenhouse was filled with Christmas themed gifts, decorations and goodies to buy, potted, planted and made by the co-workers. Sow and Grow had their own 'shop' with exquisite succulents potted in simple, eye catching containers. All sold out far too quickly! The weather, though cold, was bright and sunny, an ideal afternoon to get us 'in the Christmas mood'. We took over £3000, so once again, a big thank you for those of you who came and supported us. And for those of you who were unable to, same place next year!



## Our Willow Workshop is back!

17 March, 12.30. This workshop is open to anyone though spaces are limited so book as soon as you can. £5 entrance, plus you pay for what you make.

Book a space here: <https://www.universe.com/events/willow-weaving-day-tickets-2CBWL3>

Or by calling the office.



# CO-WORKER FOCUS



## Growing Lives success.

*"It sounds dramatic, but it did save my life".* Anyone spending time at one of our projects can testify to the positive impact they have on wellbeing, health, social inclusion and confidence. In a recent independent evaluation these observations were confirmed. The summary of the evaluation concluded with: "Overall, it is clear that Growing Lives has had a significant positive impact on the vulnerable people it works with, some of whom have enduring and deeply entrenched mental health issues"

**Alex, Garden co-worker:** I had been very ill, and became depressed after leaving hospital; I needed something to do that would give me structure in my week and would help build up my confidence and self-esteem.

My doctor thought Sydenham Garden would be a good place for me. When I visited I saw immediately it was a tranquil place, somewhere I could relax. I love trees and wildlife, it was the perfect environment for me.

Since starting I have really enjoyed the peacefulness and beauty, working alongside others and getting to know co-workers and volunteers.

I've gained a lot, not least getting to know other people and having regular physical activity to keep me motivated. I have learnt about conservation and various gardening techniques, and had the opportunity to discuss ideas about my future employment.

My self-esteem, confidence and motivation have increased. I've become more sociable and feel capable of achieving tasks. My mood has improved considerably, and my activity levels have increased. I feel ready to face the world!

I started a gardening business and it's really taking off after just a couple of weeks. I'm really pleased and enjoying the work. I also hope to return to some of my former freelance work in consultancy and training.

This has been a great success for me. It's helped me get back to my former self, giving me the courage to launch a new enterprise in gardening.

## John, Growing Lives Co-worker:

John approached Sydenham Garden after he had lost his job and after a period of mental ill-health. He thought Growing Lives would be helpful and take his mind off things.

John told Sydenham Garden that he enjoyed having a routine and mixing with other like-minded people who have experienced similar situations. He stated he usually felt a lot more 'chilled' when he left and particularly enjoyed (and learnt a lot from) the OCN conservation course. He felt it really shows that he had achieved something that he could take to an employer, despite being unwell.

John stated: "It looks good on your CV and shows that you have taken initiative." Since leaving the programme John has gained full-time employment.

## Supporting us:

### **Friends**

We are dependent on our donors enabling us to keep on helping people. If you would like to donate financially to the Garden then you can become a Friend. Friends donate money each year, and get an invitation to a lunch once a year, printed newsletters through the post and are invited to our AGM. For more information go to: [www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/supporting-us](http://www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/supporting-us)

### **Volunteer**

Could you spare 3 hours a week to volunteer? We are looking for support volunteers to work alongside co-workers during their sessions. These volunteers need to be able to help others take part in the activities, through encouragement, listening skills and demonstration. To apply for a role or to find out more, please go to:

[www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/supporting-us](http://www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/supporting-us)

### **Hire our Venues**

Would our Victorian Garden and Nature Reserve provide the perfect scene for your tea party? We hire our venues to help generate income. To find out more, please go to:

[www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/supporting-us](http://www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/supporting-us)

### **Subscribe to our email**

To keep in touch and find out the latest information, subscribe to our email at: [www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/projects](http://www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk/projects)

## The Sun has got his hat on!

At Sydenham Garden we are always super excited about the warm weather! We've got a line up of workshops not to be missed on every third Saturday of the month (tickets available at [www.universe.com/users/tom-gallagher-QZ6P75](http://www.universe.com/users/tom-gallagher-QZ6P75)). Our Spring Fair is just around the corner (5th May), and **#DeFreneFest18** (our Summer Festival) is back for it's 3rd year running! DeFreneFest this year is promising to build on the success of last year, with a line of live bands and acts, workshops, crafts and of course food! Get your tickets here: <https://www.universe.com/events/de-frene-fest-18-tickets-G5R60Q>

## Charlotte starts as our new Garden Project Lead

After saying goodbye to Ella, who served the garden extremely well for



over 2 years, we are really pleased to welcome Charlotte! Charlotte comes with a wealth of experience in running therapeutic gardens and sessions, and has hit the ground running. "I feel very lucky to have joined the team at Sydenham Garden and have really enjoyed meeting everyone and being welcomed into the community. I'm looking forward to seeing the garden come alive in spring and to maintaining the high standards that have been set by my predecessors together with co-workers and volunteers."

## Transitions Project gathers momentum

Alex has been working on a specific project for co-workers going through a transition out of a Sydenham Garden project. This has been a pilot project with 12 co-workers attending so far. Co-workers are given some 1-to-1 support in identifying and applying for new opportunities and they are given 6 group sessions, with the aim of building confidence and identifying goals. They finish with a fun team building trip. There is also the option for a co-worker to receive 6-12 counselling sessions with NHS counsellors if they are experiencing high levels of anxiety. "Transition", the point when a co-worker's placement in one of our projects comes to an end, has been highlighted by co-workers and team members as a particularly risky time. It's our hope that we can establish the Transitions Project as a permanent fixture for co-workers coming to an end of their placement. "Growing Lives was the soil, the Transitions project was the fertiliser!" ***Transitions project co-worker.***

## De Frene Hub

Our De Frene Market Garden site finally has it's own building! Thanks to the Veolia Trust, we built an Eco Friendly wooden lodge, that has solar electricity and heating. From here we can deliver our OCN training , provide a private space for people to talk and a warm space for co-workers to gather.

## Just a small note

While we've tried to make things simple by having information and sign ups online, we realise there are people that do not use the internet. If that is you and you would like more information, or to register for an event, please call the office on 020 8291 1650, Monday—Friday, 9.30—4.30pm.



## 2018 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

### SPRING FAIR

5 MAY 11-3PM  
WYNELL RD

### PLANT SALE

26 MAY 10.30  
39 CATOR RD

### #DeFrenefest18

18 AUGUST 12-5PM,  
DE FRENE

### FUNDRAISING WALK

TBC

