



Annual Report 2022

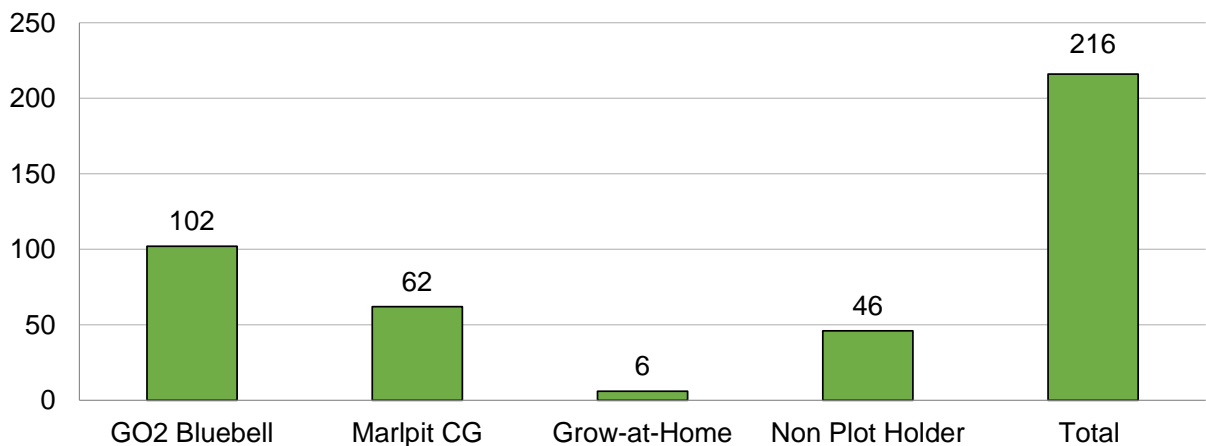
Introduction

The Sustainable Living Initiative (SLI) is a registered charity run by trustees with its office at Marlpit Community Centre, Hellesdon Road, Norwich NR6 5EG. Founded by Mahesh Pant in 2004 as a pilot project, it now runs two community gardens in Norwich; Grow-Our-Own (GO2) Bluebell which is at the Norwich City Council’s Bluebell South allotments, and Marlpit Community Garden, which is at Hellesdon Road, Norwich.

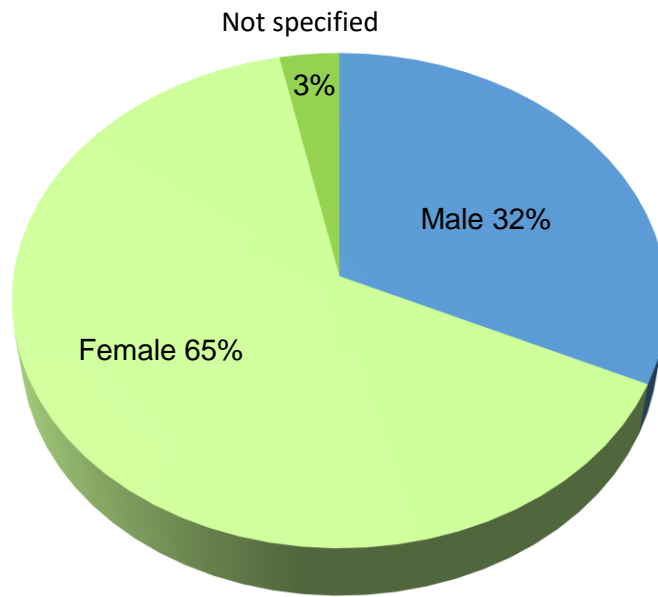
SLI is a membership-based organisation and is open to those who support its objectives and wish to be involved in its activities. SLI works to improve the quality of life for individuals and communities through gardening and environmental projects. Members come together to grow fruit and vegetables organically, share resources, food and recipes, learn about and support the natural environment and to enjoy each other’s company. SLI membership shows a commitment to promoting environmental awareness and improving our quality of life. It is a forum for sharing ideas and skills and initiating collaborative practical projects in growing and using food sustainably.

At a glance

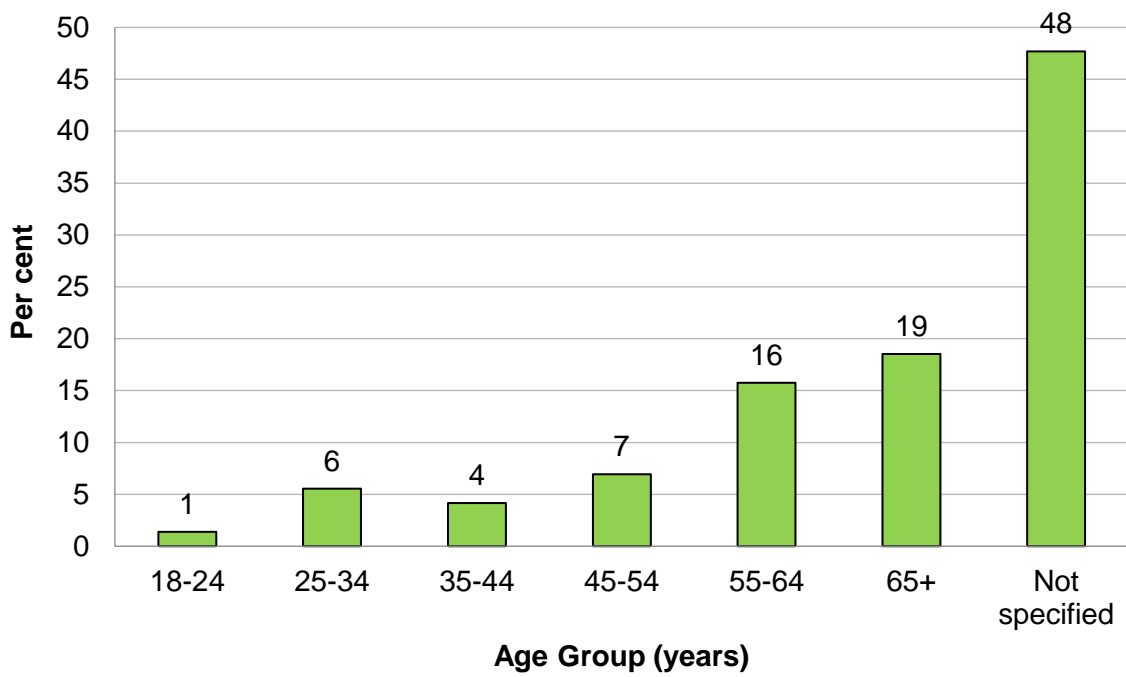
SLI Membership in 2021 - 2022



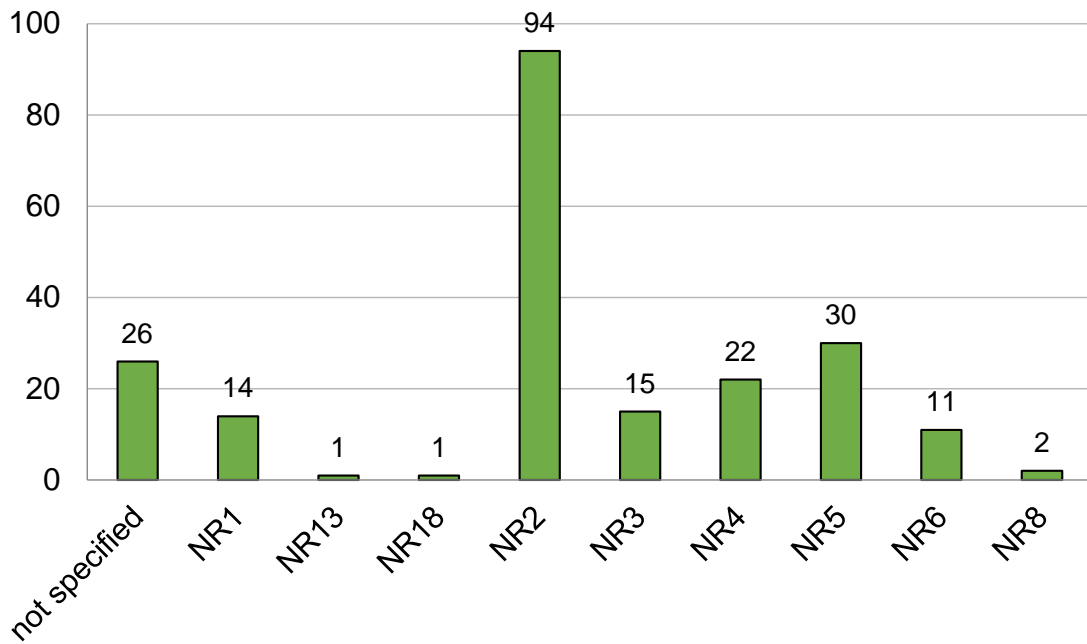
SLI Membership by gender in 2021-2022



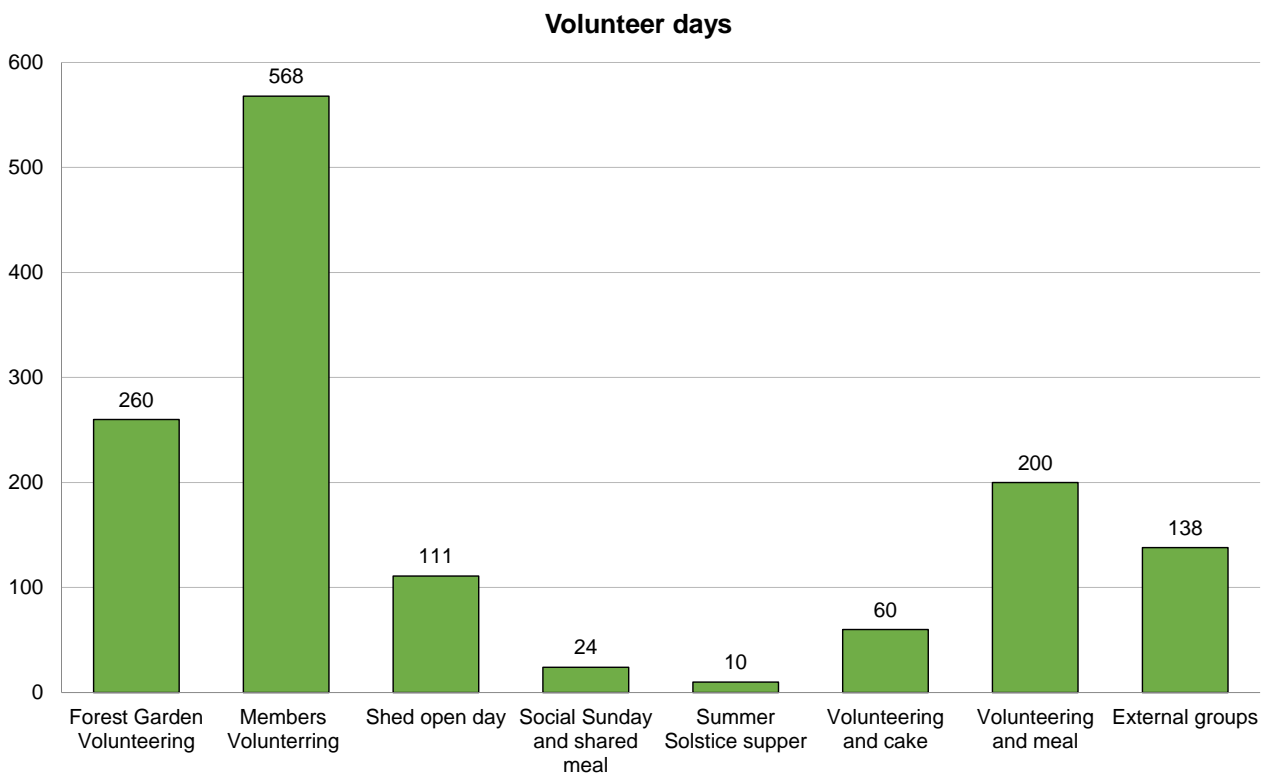
SLI Membership by Age in 2021-2022



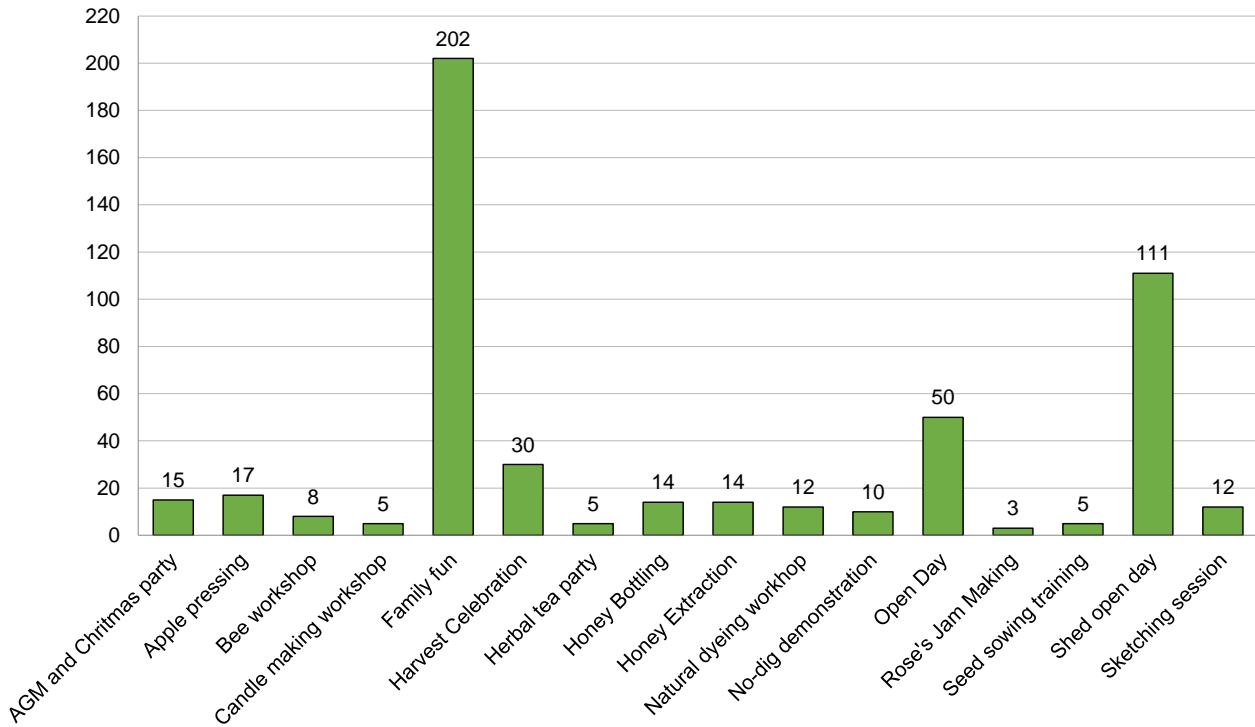
Number of members per postcode in 2021-2022



Number of people visiting SLI in 2021-2022



Events and training



Activities

Members having access to our sites during Covid restrictions has continued to be extremely important this year. For some members it was the only outdoor space they had access to. Many members said how much this supported their mental wellbeing. Members were able to continue gardening which promotes an active and healthy lifestyle. Volunteering events were arranged to ensure social distancing was observed while such restrictions were in place. Regular twice weekly volunteering days take place at both sites. There has been a big demand for growing plots from the public and we have waiting lists at both sites. New plots were established at Marlpit.

The wellbeing garden has been designed and planting has begun. Areas to grow flowers have been established and flowers for cutting, dying and eating have been grown.

Shared meals have now resumed on a monthly basis at both sites. A small team takes turns to cook a hot meal for volunteers once a month at Marlpit. At Bluebell members bring a dish from home to share. An exciting development is the new outdoor cooking facility at Marlpit, designed and built by members.

We held an open day for friends and family to share the delights of our Marlpit site and were entertained by a variety of musicians from among the SLI family.

Social events, beyond the regular shared meals, included the first Christmas lunch since the Covid pandemic and hot potatoes, music and singing around the bonfire. A jam making session was generously hosted by a member in her own home. A pot-luck Summer solstice supper took place on the longest day.

Our group plots continue to be well used by community groups involved in education and mental health. A homeschooling group visited Marlpit to take advantage of outdoor learning.

Our day-to-day work carries on with members looking after their own mini plots and joining in work on communal areas.

Training and education

The face to face training and education programme restarted and sessions were well attended by many newer members. This is supplemented by a complete set of training videos on our website.

We held activities for school children during the summer, Easter and half term holidays introducing them to the delights of nature and the magic of growing plants. These high quality sessions, led by experienced members, were very popular with SLI and the wider community.

It's really encouraging to see a growing number of member-led sessions that covered a wide range of skills. Practical sessions included no-dig techniques and seed sowing, fermentation workshops producing kombucha and kefir and dyeing workshops using natural dyes grown at Marlpit. Apple pressing sessions took place at both sites to manage the bountiful harvest this year. Hands-on bee education sessions were held, one for adults and one for children - complete with child sized bee suits. Other bee related activities included honey extraction and Christmas time candle making.

Members also ran informal pop-up sessions in tea tasting and sketching to share an interest and enjoy the company of others.

Members' sharing their skills and enthusiasms in these ways have really enriched the sense of our SLI community.

Working with external groups

Hard landscaping in the wellbeing garden was carried out by Volunteer It Yourself (VIY) participants. The young people on the scheme are working towards NVQ Level1 Trade Skills and have added a great deal of value to our site.

Groundworks East supports prisoner rehabilitation and gave us 6 weeks work landscaping and levelling plots.

We are very grateful to those involved who have supported our site in so many ways. We were delighted to offer our site to host a wild food foraging session which members and the public could attend.

Our site at Marlpit benefited from many hours of volunteering as several local companies including NielsonIQ Brandbank, KPMG, JLL and Aviva lent us cheerful and willing helpers. We also benefit from a collaboration with International Development students from UEA who visited our sites as part of their research and studies.

Outreach work

SLI attended the Edible East and Science Week events at the Forum in Norwich. Our stands, hosted by our members, attracted lots of attention and visitors had some hands-on experiences with making and growing.

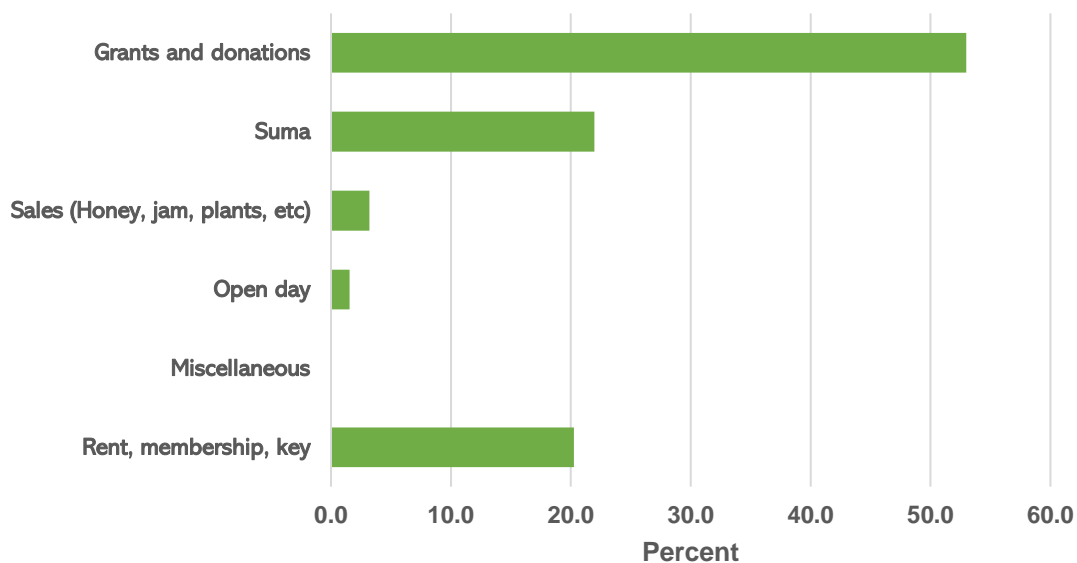
Our members also hosted an SLI stand during Volunteers Week at the Forum which promotes volunteering opportunities around Norwich.

Attending these events helps to raise the profile of SLI and spreads the word on our ethos and aims of promoting sustainability and community.

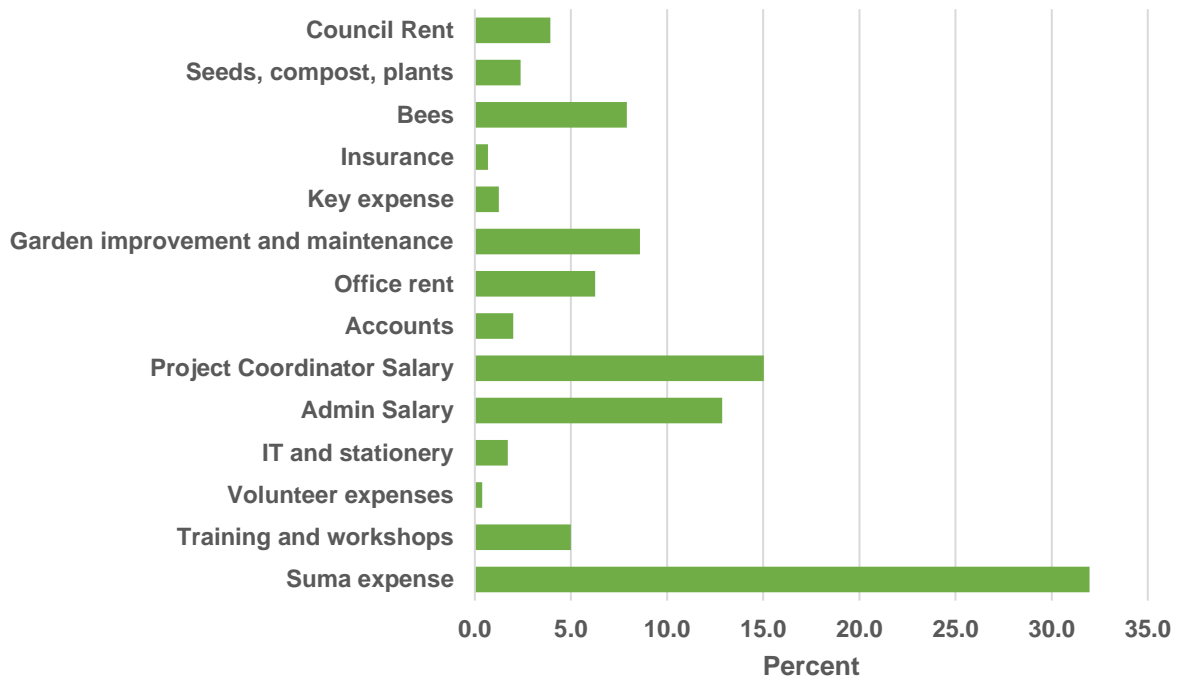
Finance

Total income for our financial / reporting year October 2021 - September 2022 was £39,562.12 of which over 50% was from grants and donations. We spent £30,267.63 most of which was spent on Suma, followed by salaries (administrative officer and project coordinator), garden maintenance, bee keeping and overheads (please see indicative charts below).

SLI Income 2021-2022



SLI Expenditure 2021-2022



Structure, governance and management

The management strategy in place since 2020 had Trustees taking oversight and management responsibility for different aspects of SLI and building teams of members to support the practical work. This proved challenging and it became clear we needed an assigned coordinator for some aspects of the work and one was hired in April 2022.

Future Plans

We will continue to maintain and develop our current schemes with focus on three areas next year:

1. **Environment:** Completing the well-being garden and large pond, exploring the possibilities of offering grazing. NWT has helped highlight areas that can be developed to support the diversity of flora and fauna. We want to focus in particular on developing and maintaining the wetland meadow.
2. **Education:** Sharing knowledge on sustainable gardening, e.g. training courses on forest gardening.
3. **Engagement:** Encouraging greater engagement from members and the wider community groups via a range of activities/events. Developing regular weekly family activities on site. Continuing to develop links with UEA students using the site as part of their educational field trips as well as other cooperate groups and community organization like VIY. Developing some communal beds at Bluebell to engage membership and share knowledge.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Norwich City Council, National Lottery, National Gardens Trust, Norfolk Community Foundation and ASDA for supporting our work by providing grants and donations during the year. Our thanks also goes to volunteers from AVIVA, VYI, Groundworks East, NielsonIQ Brandbank and UEA who have helped us maintain our community gardens. Last but not least - a big thank you to all our trustees, members and volunteers whose unwavering support helps keep the organisation running.



Sustainable Living Initiative

Marlpit Community Centre,
Hellesdon Road,
Norwich, NR6 5EG.

Web: www.grow-our-own.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SLI.Norwich

Tel: 01603 920570

Registered Charity No. 1154190