

# Sustainable Living Initiative

Annual Report  
2007-2008



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## Acknowledgements

This practical action project of Sustainable Living Initiative, Grow-Our-Own, has grown from a pilot to a full-fledged project in a short period of time. This would not have been possible without the hard work and the commitment of many individuals and organisations. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them all.

The Geoffrey Watling Charity grant enabled us to improve wheelchair-accessible facilities on the allotment. Norwich City Council's help in providing a cash grant, cycle stands and allotment plots deserves appreciation.

Our special thanks go to the friends of the late Marilyn Bear, who kindly donated a picnic bench and gave cash donations towards the cost of chamomile lawn. Marilyn was a strong supporter of our scheme and in the words of one of her friends: "Marilyn would be delighted that the community project is going so well".

Of all the well-wishers of SLI, Brian and Jo Baxter, Janet Bearman, Ben Binns, Alan Foulger, Keith Clays and Palm Cole have been a source of great support.

Individually, we would like to thank Alan, Angela, Anna, Anita, Anne, Bernard, Bridget, Carly, Christine, Claire, Georgina, Hella, Ian, Jane, Janet, Jo, John, June, Martine, Maureen, Moira, Natalia, Peter M, Peter A, Roberta, Tessa, and Vicky for making the Open Day a real success. Our special thanks go to Hilary and David Evans from Gardening with Disabilities for organising a tool stall on the Open day.

Of all the SLI members, Clive's digging, Peter A's tireless work on the composting site, Jane's spicy chutney and stall management, Christine W's photos and admin help, Tessa's art work, Jo's cooking, Sian's work with children, Debbie's help with our account report, Bridget's organisation of the food-sharing day and nurturing of the chamomile lawn, Peter M's never-ending DIY help, Vicky's management of tool-sheds, Kim's cooking on the food event day and Ben's help with the website and in designing the cover page of this report deserve special thanks. Thanks too to all those who have contributed to writing this report.

We would like to thank all those growers who have given tremendous amount of their time in doing never-ending work on the allotment over the year.

Happy Gardening!

Mahesh Pant

## Background

This is the third annual report of Sustainable Living Initiative (SLI) covering the period from October 2007 to September 2008. This report documents activities undertaken, progress made so far and plans for the future.

Sustainable Living Initiative is a not-for-profit social enterprise based in Norwich. It is registered as a “company limited by guarantee”. It has five Directors, a Secretary and a Treasurer (please see Annex 1), all of whom do not receive any payment for their services to the organisation. With generous help from SLI members and a growing number of volunteers, the Secretary manages the day-to-day operation of the organisation.

## Aims and objectives

We aim to promote a sustainable way of living through collective practical action. We believe that small-scale actions, such as growing some fruit, vegetables and herbs on allotments and in our own back gardens, recycling and reusing, avoiding car journeys and promoting a sense of community can have a far-reaching effect on natural, as well as on human, environments. The main focus of SLI’s work, at present, is on an allotment project called Grow-Our-Own in Norwich, which provides support and encouragement to people to grow vegetables, soft fruit and herbs on the allotment and in their own gardens.

## Profile of activities and achievements

Grow-Our-Own scheme has grown from a pilot to a full-fledged scheme. It offers a practical solution to the growing shortage of allotments in urban areas. Growing your own food by sharing land, tools and other inputs promotes a sense of community which is vital for sustainable development.

During the year 2007-2008, the total number of growers increased from 41 to over 80. A grant from the Geoffrey Watling charity helped us improve wheelchair access to facilities including the information centre toilet and picnic area. We now have specially designed vegetable growing areas for wheelchair users, children and young people

Details of our activities and achievements are discussed in the following sections.

### Grow-Our-Own Scheme

As a practical action project of Sustainable Living Initiative, the Grow - Our- Own ( GO<sup>2</sup>) scheme started in the Autumn of 2004. The main aim of GO<sup>2</sup> scheme is help those who are interested but have little or no experience in growing fruit and vegetables.

The standard 10 rod size allotment plots are divided into mini-plots of varying sizes depending on the need and experience of individual growers. The plot holders get all the necessary training, tools, seeds and seedlings, manure and hands-on practical advice.

*Figure 1: Preparing the plot*



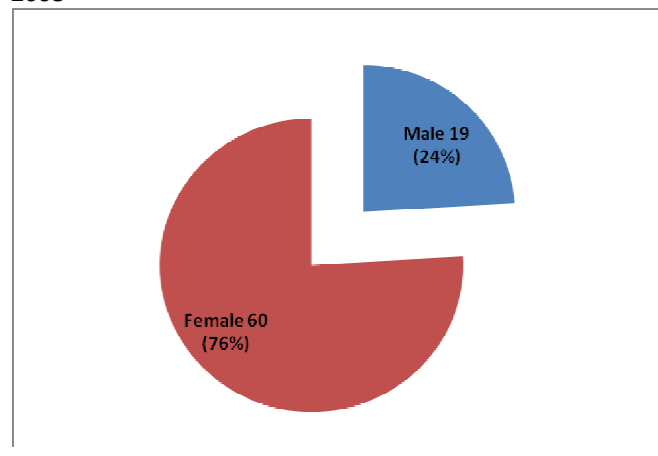
Apart from growing fruit and vegetables of their own choice and maintaining the plot, growers are reminded of the importance of self-help and collective action. We are also trying our best to use organic practices wherever possible and do not use insecticide, pesticide and chemical fertiliser.

**How many joined the scheme?**

During the year 2007-2008, 79 adult growers, 4 young growers and one group (Rethink, a mental health charity) signed up for the scheme. As in previous years, the majority (76%) of the growers were women (see Figure 2).

Ever since the start of the scheme, GO<sup>2</sup> has attracted more women than men and the last year was not the exception. What is encouraging though is the greater participation of younger people: in previous years, the majority of growers were retired/semi-retired women.

**Figure 2: Number of female and male growers in 2007-2008**



Allotments, traditionally, have been considered as 'men's territory', but media reports in recent years suggest that the picture is changing. However, according to the Norwich City Council data, of the total 140 occupants in Bluebell South Allotments by February 2007, the majority (61%) were still men. So the large proportion of women in GO<sup>2</sup> may be due to the family-friendly approach of the scheme (see Janet's story in Box 1).

**Box 1: Janet Johnson's story**

*I am retired and in my mid-sixties and I joined the scheme in Autumn 2007, feeling I needed some outdoor activity as caring for my mother towards the end of her life was becoming a too much of a round of anxiously sitting down in hospitals and nursing homes. I couldn't plan a holiday or go too far away from home. I felt I needed something new to think about and decided growing things would be a great way to go. I had had an allotment on this site in the eighties, but I couldn't manage more than about a third of the full 20-rod plot and always got letters from the council about my numerous weeds. I gave it up as it got increasingly difficult to park near my plot - I had to bring my all tools and watering cans and a barrow each time and the plot was a long way from the main paths – reversing along the narrow paths couple of times a session was a horrid nightmare! Straightaway on application, I was given a really good small plot that had been well looked after and on which flowers had been grown. I received help in digging out the couch grass, which was a very welcoming start and also was given raspberry canes and broad bean seeds to plant. The rest of the winter I potted about and then gradually as the growing season started, I found myself coming to the allotment on Wednesdays and taking what was available to put in to grow. I didn't have to think too much about it, as there was always a good variety of stuff to put in. I was allocated a second plot nearby when I began to feel I needed more growing space.*

*My granddaughter Florence seemed interested, so she was able to have her own small plot, and now we are bonding with our green fingers. My five year-old grandson Eric also enjoys coming over, if he gets his usual bribe of a lolly. We sit together under the apple tree and I have an ice cream to keep him company. I think he enjoys the space and the openness.*

*I had a reasonably successful growing season, with good crops of broad beans, runner beans, garlic and onions and potatoes, salads and courgettes: but I think it was a good growing year weather-wise. The raspberry canes that appeared on my plot from next door's fruited well and I had a crop until the middle of November. I am planning more soft fruit and have manured and dug over my second plot already (some changes re-arrangement meant I could take on the next door plot) and got my broad beans and onions in. Having all the manure ready to hand and leaf mould and tools available makes it easy to get organised and productive. The toilet is also a great boon to an older person. I have enjoyed taking part in the communal works programme and getting to know the other growers and the communal meals were fun.*

*The other really pleasing thing about the scheme is that we are all trying to grow sustainably without chemicals and we recycle and compost and save seed and use old varieties of plants. We benefit from the communal expertise of the experienced growers, in that suitable seeds that will do well on our land are selected for us and there is advice as to the best crops to grow. We also try out some crops that we perhaps wouldn't have selected if left to ourselves!*

### ***How many managed to grow fruit and vegetables?***

Of the total 79 adult growers, who signed up during the year 2007-2008, a large majority (67%) did manage to grow at least some fruit and vegetables. However, 24% of the total growers left the scheme halfway and a small minority (9%) did not start at all (see Figure 3). In addition to this, all the young growers and one group who joined the scheme during 2007-2008 did well in growing some vegetables.

This is all encouraging given the fact that so many growers were growing fruit and vegetables for the first time in their life. We need to build on this success and encourage growers to make the most of the fruit and vegetables they grow. We also noticed a considerable amount of fruit and vegetables wasted during summer months when people were away enjoying their holidays. While we cannot change the holiday season coinciding with the peak harvest season, we can certainly promote sharing produce with our friends.

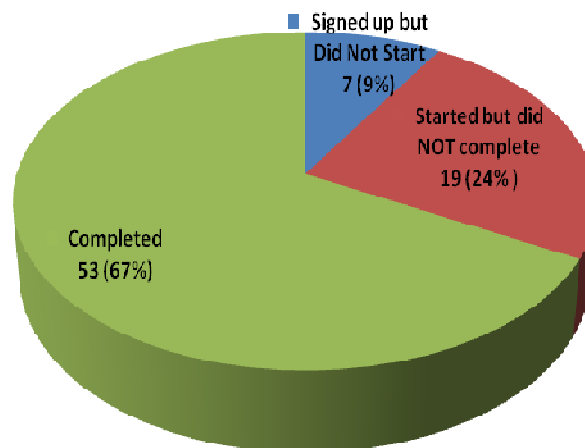
### ***How much land is allocated to GO<sup>2</sup> Scheme?***

When the scheme started in 2004, it had one 10 rod<sup>1</sup> size allotment plot. During the year 2007-2008, the scheme had a total of 15 allotment plots.

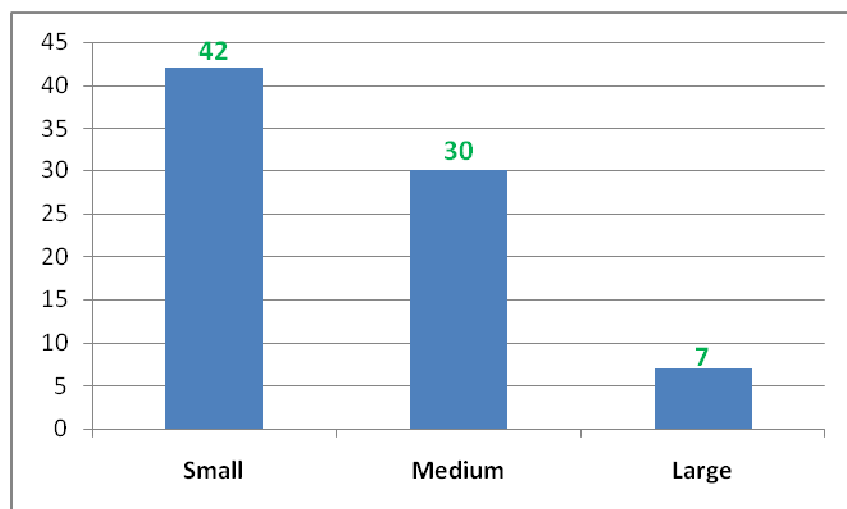
The 79 adult growers, 4 young growers and one group who took part in GO<sup>2</sup> scheme during 2007-2008 between them shared a total of 15 allotments to grow fruit and vegetables. Of the total 79 adult growers, just over a half (42) had one strip, measuring 6 meter by 1.3 meter, while 30 growers had two strips; a small minority (7 growers) had 'large size' plot equivalent to 5 strips together (see Figure 4). In addition to

this, the Rethink group had one large plot and four young growers shared 3 one square meter plots. It is a common practice amongst many growers to start with one strip and gradually move upward once they gain confidence. The large size plot in our scheme, which is about a third of the standard 250 square meters allotment plot, is good for those aiming at greater self-sufficiency in vegetables and soft fruit production. However, unless the Norwich City Council allocates more plots to GO<sup>2</sup> scheme, there will be no more large size plots available to GO<sup>2</sup> members in future.

**Figure 3: How many managed to grow fruit and vegetables in 2007-2008?**



**Figure 4: Number of growers with different plot size**



<sup>1</sup> Equivalent to 250 square metres.



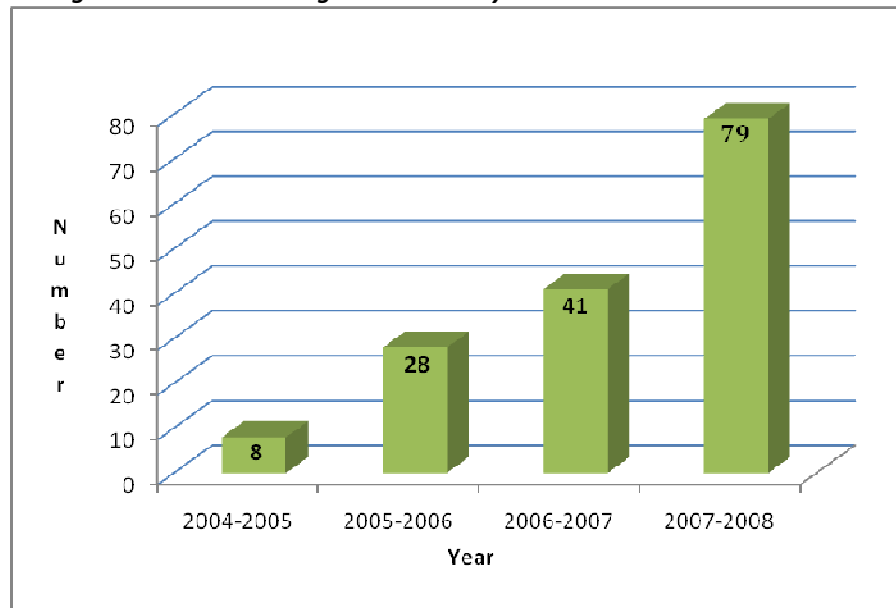
## The progress of GO<sup>2</sup> Scheme

Since the start of the pilot scheme in the autumn of 2004 with eight growers, GO<sup>2</sup> has grown steadily. The year 2007-2008 saw the biggest increase with the total number of growers reaching nearly 80 (see Figure 5).

The completion of the information centre and the composting toilet during 2006-2007 gave the scheme a real boost. Following a meeting at the beginning of the year 2008, Norwich City Council agreed to provide a link to our website ([www.grow-our-own.co.uk](http://www.grow-our-own.co.uk)) on Council's website. As the waiting list for an allotment in Bluebell South area was at an all time high, the

Council staff were advising prospective growers to contact us for an allotment strip. Equally important was word of mouth; most of the growers who joined during the year 2007-2008 told us that they were encouraged to join the scheme by their friends who already had joined the GO<sup>2</sup> scheme. There were also a few cases of people giving up allotments rented directly from the Council and joining the GO<sup>2</sup> scheme.

**Figure 5: How has GO<sup>2</sup> grown over the years?**



## Pick-Your-Own Scheme

A Pick-Your-Own (PYO) scheme started at the same time as GO<sup>2</sup>. The main aim of the PYO scheme is to offer an opportunity to those who have little spare time or are physically unable to work on the allotment to come and pick organically grown produce. It is hoped that the PYO scheme can help people see how the fruit, vegetables and herbs they eat are grown and get a regular supply of locally grown fresh produce straight from the land. The PYO scheme also helps raise funds for the organisation by turning surplus produce into cash.

No new members joined PYO during 2007-2008 except a few occasional buyers. With the growing number of volunteers working in the scheme we hardly have any surplus produce for sale either. We would need to find more land to grow fruit and vegetables solely for PYO if we were to save this scheme. At the moment, most of the plots available to us are allocated for GO<sup>2</sup> scheme.

## Volunteering

The volunteering scheme is aimed at those who are interested in gardening and growing but are unable to commit time on a regular basis. It provides an opportunity to learn gardening skills and get fresh produce from the allotment free of charge in return for help.

Apart from the occasional help from growers, we had a total of 15 volunteers last year. These volunteers provided help with a range of activities from plot clearing, digging, building maintenance, making paths and cycle stands to making jam and chutneys for sale and running stalls on the Open Day and at Notcutts. Such co-operation has helped to run the organisation, raise funds and promote a sense of community.

### **Growing-at-home Scheme**

The main idea behind the 'growing-at-home' scheme is to provide help to people to grow fruit and vegetables in their own back gardens. Under this scheme, people living in the close vicinity of Bluebell South Allotments can get seeds and seedlings through our Centre based at the Bluebell South Allotments, off the Avenues. The scheme also offers practical help and advice on how to grow fruit and vegetables organically. Members of the 'growing-at-home' scheme will also have the opportunity to come and meet the other growers on the allotment and learn from their experiences.

Due to the rapid expansion of the GO2 scheme in 2007-2008, we did not start work on this scheme. However, during our Open Day in September 2008, we advertised the scheme. As a result we have quite a number of people showing interest in the scheme. We will focus our attention on this scheme in the coming year.

### **Composting**

Composting is one of the main activities connected with growing fruit and vegetables along with farm yard manure, green manure and leaf mould. It is important that we make as much compost as we can to improve our sandy soil, return materials to the soil and mulch plants and bare beds.

We now have the large Tumbler working well, have several bins of various description full (see Figure 9), the New Zealand type bins being supplied with waste by the Greenhouse Kitchens, liquid work cast and nettle and comfrey 'tea' available for fertiliser. We are also comparing all these with an old-fashioned compost heap.



*Figure 9: Composting in action*

We hope that growers will start their own area schemes. We still have a few compost bins available for our growers, as is the advice and help if needed.

### **Heritage seed**

Our bed for saving Heritage Seed Library seeds had mixed fortunes. Of six vegetables seeded, three will be available soon: peas (for bulking up into larger quantity), Bath cos lettuce and large pointed radish. The parsnips did not germinate well, carrots were spoiled by carrot fly attack, but some good beetroot will, probably, produce seeds in 2009.

### **Events**

We organise a Food Event and Open Day once a year and Volunteering Day and Food-Sharing day once a month. The main objective of these events is to promote a sense of community and share experiences.



## Food Events

Our annual food event took place on Saturday 19th July and was attended by SLI members and invited guests. With the growing number of SLI members, there were quite a lot of new faces. A wide selection of menus based on the allotment produce, complemented by a barbeque made the event a great success. The event also did well in further promoting cooperation and friendship between SLI members and friends of SLI.

## Open Day

This year's Open Day took place on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September. Since most of the growers normally are away during August and the end of September is the deadline for plot renewal in Grow-Our-Own scheme, we decided to change the Open Day date from late August to late September.

The most encouraging aspect of this year's Open Day was the enthusiastic participation of a large number of members and growers in organising the event (see Claire's story in Box 2). The main activities (see Figure 8) included an information desk which provided information about the scheme and welcome to the visitors, received applications from new growers and renewed subscription of the existing growers; the fund-raising desk organised tombola and the sale of home-made jam, chutneys and fresh produce from the allotments; the refreshment desk had a wide selection of home-made cakes, freshly squeezed apple and pear juice and homemade lemonades for the visitors; finally Hilary and David Evans from Gardening with Disabilities kindly organised a display of specially designed tools for disabled people (see Figure 7).

*Figure 6: SLI members and friends enjoying the meal*



*Figure 7: Open Day – Display of gardening tools for disabled people*





Figure 8: Open Day, Saturday 20th September, 2008



Over 60 people visited the open day. The Open Day gave the existing members and growers an opportunity to work together and get to know each other better. It also provided a warm welcome to the new “would be” growers. We raised over £200 pounds from various stalls.

**Box 2: Claire's story**

*The Open day was the first I had attended and I offered my services to help out. Having been tasked with refreshments I was amazed by the variety of goods bought by the members to sell on. Chocolate Beetroot cake was a particular favourite as well as cookies and carrot cake all washed down with homemade lemonades and even better - freshly squeezed apple juice. Watching the visitors to the 'centre' gave me a real sense of pride in the small efforts I have contributed to the success of the project. Donations for the refreshments came in as fast as the cake disappeared! A fine total of @ £60 was raised by the refreshments.*

*One aspect that I was particularly looking forward to and was not disappointed by was the apple pressing and more so the 'scrumping' for apples and pears. The child in me was quick to suggest we lay a blanket down and shake the branches! This certainly got a few laughs and the heart rates up as well as interaction with other members of the group that I had never met. The apple juice and, as we later discovered, pear juice was delicious and had we had more time and more fruit I'm sure we'd have happily carried on scrumping for longer. I'd love to see the group purchase a press so that we can make more juice next year for us all to take home and share with our families. Apple juice ice lollies would be lovely! The Open day certainly confirmed that although I may not see everyone very often I am pleased and proud to be part of the success of 'Grow Our Own'.*

## **Volunteering Day**

The last Sunday of each month is our volunteering day when members and growers give help for communal activities, such as clearing plots, making paths, painting the shed, and so on. Apart from improving the facilities on the allotment, the main purpose of the volunteering day is to bring growers and members together, share gardening ideas and experiences and develop a sense of community. With the rapid increase in the number of growers, we expect the volunteering day to become livelier in the days to come. We also hope that those growers who rarely come to the volunteering day will find time to join in.

During the year 2007-2008, volunteers helped to maintain the information centre, toilet, tool sheds, green house, chamomile lawn and clear pathways and garden waste. Some growers who were unable to come on the volunteering day kindly offered their service for any outstanding jobs. Moreover, volunteers helped to make jam and chutneys for sale, to run stall at Notcutts Gardening Fayre and to organise the Open Day (as discussed earlier). So the number of volunteers offering help and the range of activities is growing over the years.

## **Food-Sharing Day**

This is another social activity aimed at promoting a sense of community and learning from each other. During the year Food Events were held on the first Sunday of each month, at lunchtime. The idea is that everyone brings a dish made from allotment produce to share. This year, when the weather has been fine, we have been able to eat in the open on the new seating. When it rained, and it has often, we ate in the Centre. Abundances of different crops have brought great inventiveness. In season, courgettes and carrots featured in both sweet and savoury dishes. Swiss chard soup and roasted butternut squash soup came hot in flasks on one cold Sunday. Unusual vegetables such as fat baby and Nepali spinach were added to a wide variety of salad leaves. At times the tally of different cakes made using fruit from the allotment – raspberries, plums, apples, or, deliciously, beetroot and chocolate – outnumbered the savoury dishes. There was apple and pear juice, elderflower champagne and elderberry cordial. As well as being sociable, these events provide an opportunity for people to share ways of growing different crops on their plot and ideas for using the produce.



## Infrastructure related work

### Wheel-chair access

One of the major infrastructure development works carried out during the year was constructing wheelchair access to the information centre, picnic area, toilet and growing areas, funded mainly through the grant from Geoffrey Watling charity. As part of this programme, we have made wheelchair accessible paths, a specially designed picnic area and vegetable growing areas for wheel-chair users (see Figure 10). We have spaces for 10 wheelchair users to grow vegetables in fully accessible plots measuring 1300 mm by 1300mm.

### Picnic site

With the rapid increase in the number of growers and visitors, we realised that the original picnic site with just one picnic bench was far from adequate. A new picnic site, next to the information centre (see Figure 11) was allocated for this purpose.

During 2007-2008, we cleared the field, levelled it and planted a chamomile lawn. We also developed the sitting area with bespoke picnic benches made locally by Reelfurniture<sup>2</sup> using recycled timber (see Figure 12).

One of the three benches in the picnic area was donated in the name of late Marilyn Bear, who was very supportive of SLI's work from the very beginning. The money for the

other two benches came from the Geoffrey Watling charity. A small cash contribution from the late Marilyn's fund paid for the chamomile plants.

**Figure 10: Wheel-chair accessible growing area and paths**



**Figure 11 : Picnic area – before**



**Figure: 12 Picnic Area - After**



<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.reelfurniture.co.uk> for more information.

### **Bike stands**

We now have eight cycle stands, enough for parking up to 16 cycles (see Figure 13). These stands were provided by Norwich City Council as part of its 'Take a Stand' scheme. All the work related to the cycle stands - for example, clearing the site, fixing the stands on the ground - was carried out by our volunteers.

Given the large number of growers most of whom come by cycle, we may need more cycle stands in the coming year.

**Figure 13: Cycle stands**



### **Visits, media, publicity**

During the year 2007-2008, two allotment groups from the Anglia region came to visit our scheme. The People's Community Garden Group from Ipswich were particularly keen on the composting toilet. We heard from the group later on that they have built a similar composting toilet on their site. The Swaffham Community Allotments and Leisure Gardeners' Association (SCALGA) came with over 30 members to see our work and talk to our members and growers. We had visitors from Landscaping for Biodiversity consultancy to explore the possibility of collaborative work between our scheme and the Hewett School.

The EDP Evening News had featured articles about our allotment scheme in their 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2009 edition. Likewise, BBC Radio Norfolk came to the allotment to report on our scheme. Our allotment has been featured in a film called Picture of the Past, produced by Earlham High School, in conjunction with The Garage, the NELM Development Trust and BBC Voices in Norwich.

We took part in the 'Picnic in the Park' event organised by the Green Grocer and Notcutts Garden Fayre organised by the Notcutts Garden Centre and Norwich City Council.

### **Finance**

During 2007-2008, we received grants from a Norwich based charity – Geoffrey Watling and from the Norwich City Council. We also received small donations from individuals. Other income to the scheme included the rent paid by growers and income from the sale of home-made jam and chutney made by the members.

With regard to expenses, the wheel-chair access project – paths, growing areas and picnic bench used up most of our annual income. Expenses on inputs such as seeds, compost, manure, and tools went up substantially due to increased number of growers. For a detailed analysis of the income and expenditure, please see Annex 2.



## What the growers say

At the time of plot renewal, we asked growers to give their feedback regarding the services and facilities provided. We also asked them to suggest areas for improvement and what role, if any, they would like to play in improving the quality of services.

Here are some excerpts from the growers' responses describing their experiences.

*"Going up to the allotment is always a pleasure, even in bad weather! There is always someone to talk to and some interesting new development. This year the scheme expanded and I have many new grower-neighbours. It's good to see the additional bike racks. My veg production was very different from last year both in terms of quantity and variety. The planted potatoes produced virtually none (due perhaps to a late frost taking the foliage?) and a rogue potato in the 'wrong' place produced some giant specimens (but that's King Edward for you!). The quantity of everything else was rather poor considering the number I planted except for late French beans which I ignored completely while they were growing and were most prolific and delicious! Broad beans, to which I am addicted, were productive until the dreaded black fly arrived. Of ten or so onions I had one good specimen – see photo, and only four beetroot out of about 12. However a row of parsnip seeds produced 14 enormous parsnips. Snails and slugs were a major pest this year. We need to reduce the places they can hide and protect plants as it's so disappointing to find everything eaten time after time. The Open Day was great fun and drew people from far and wide. Next year I will not grow many flowers but I think there is a place for bee-loving plants like borage which is lovely to look at but takes up too much room on a strip"* **Christine**



*"I made the bold move from 2 strips to a 'small plot' at the end of this summer. A bit of concentrated hard work quickly got the plot into a 'plantable' condition meaning that I have lost very little during transition from one plot to another and have already enjoyed a harvest of cauliflower and baby potatoes (much to Mahesh's disbelief that I was planting spuds in June!). My only comment would be that it would have been nice to have an explanation over the price increase as it took me a little by surprise.*

*Although I'll miss the more sociable 'other side of the road' I am looking forward to growing a greater variety in larger quantities over the coming season. My new plot also comes with the benefit of being closer to long established allotment holders who are already proving to be a great source of information and advice. I just have to resist the urge to buy my own seed as I know everything I could want will be provided! I'll even be writing up my own plans of what I would like to plant when and where so I'm ready when Mahesh has the stocks available."* **Claire**

*"I love being part of the scheme even though I'm not there as often or as regularly as I'd like to be. It's just other stuff I have to deal with which restricts my time quite a bit. Having said that, I have so much enjoyed growing vegetables and having guidance to do so, as you will appreciate that I'm fairly clueless in that regard, even if my fingers are tinged with a bit of green! It's so true that there's nothing so good as eating something you've grown yourself, particularly when it's freshly picked. My sweet corn was fantastic but so too was the beetroot, mange-tout, red*



*onions, courgettes and even the frost-attacked potatoes! I don't think much from my plot was wasted.*

*I found the odd couple of hours on a lovely day just weeding very therapeutic. Friendly, helpful people. It's a great place to escape to."* **Maureen**

*"I am new to the scheme, having joined in May 2008, but I enjoyed some wonderful broad beans, runner beans, potatoes, chard and calabrese in the short growing season left available to me.*

*I have grown some vegetables before but not with any great confidence so one of the major advantages of joining GO<sup>2</sup> is the help and support I get from more experienced gardeners. It is also a major incentive to have tools, seeds and plants handed out at all the appropriate times. Regular supervised sessions on Wednesdays and Sundays motivate me to attend the allotment more often than if I were left to my own devices.*

*It is another of the bonuses that the scheme feels like a social club where I can get to know like-minded people. I love that this is about building a community not just growing fruit and veg. I am amazed at the amount of progress that has been made on the site in just the six months that I have been there – pathways for people with disabilities, the poshest composting area I've ever seen, beautiful flowers and the wonderful camomile lawn.*

*I am looking forward to my first full year and to enjoying the fruits (raspberry, hopefully) of my labours."* **Rochelle**

*"My first year was so fruitful that two other friends joined the scheme!!!  
The other allotment holders are a great crowd, and supply yummy food on the food share days. We call it the "GREEN GYM", and all support each other with help and advice."* **Tessa**

*"I have been thinking about what I can say about the last year's experience with Grow-Our-Own scheme and its members. I was introduced to the organisation by my friend Maureen who told me that she was enjoying the experience of growing her own produce and felt supported by you in many ways. I thought I would give it a go as I have been trying to improve my health both in a physical and emotional way after becoming disabled about 5 years ago and retiring from teaching due to ill health.*

*With the invaluable support from the scheme, I have been able to grow wonderful produce on my own manageable plot of land and have met some remarkable, friendly and encouraging members of the scheme in the process.*

*The experience of visiting the allotment is refreshing both from the point of view of getting some exercise and pushing the boundaries of what I can achieve, but also finding it a peaceful and accessible environment. The facilities at the site are remarkably good, an amazing state of the art disabled, composting toilet and the main shed is good for sheltering from an unexpected downpour full of useful information. The tool sharing scheme is a really good idea especially as I can barely manage to push a wheelbarrow!*

*I have felt valued and included especially regarding the plans to develop an area for disabled people who may need wheelchair access and establishing a disabled parking place. I would like to*

*help with this in some way in the coming year perhaps by talking to disability groups or some sort of publicity material.*

*I speak to friends and family about Grow-Our-Own scheme and consequently many have visited and some have joined or intend to join.*

*Thank you for helping me this year and I hope in some way that I can be of some help to the scheme.” Moira*

*“My first year on the allotments has been so good for me! I have grown crops like carrots and sweet corn successfully for the first time in my life, others like rocket, lettuce, dwarf beans and raspberries have been excellent, we will not talk about the potatoes or the onions (thank you snails for eating off the tops). Even better than the veg have been the flowers, starting with sweet peas, gladioli and marigolds, on through dahlias, nasturtiums, cosmos and incredible self sown sunflowers.*

*Added to all of the above has been the space, the sunshine and fresh air plus the social side, talking to growers both in and out of the scheme. I did mutter a little when the rents jumped up but then thought realistically what it was worth to me each week, a chance to get away from home and work, get totally engrossed in some digging or muck carting, then feel fitter at the end of it all.” Ian*

These contributions from our growers are very helpful in improving the quality of inputs and services and in making the annual report writing a truly collaborative exercise. We hope that more and more growers will write about their experiences in the year ahead.

### **Plan for the future**

We have successfully created both the physical facilities - paths, buildings, toilet, greenhouse, picnic area, cycle stands, etc. and social side – volunteers, members and friends - necessary for the long-term sustainability of the Grow-Our-Own scheme. What is now needed is to maintain these physical facilities and continue to develop our community.

### **Promote Growing-at-Home Scheme**

One of the priorities for the coming year is to reach out to the community living adjacent to our site and encourage them to grow vegetables in their own gardens. We should share our wealth of inputs, skills and experiences with them in creating a thriving growing community. Our Centre at the Bluebell South Allotments will work as hub for all these new activities.

### **Spread the word about new facilities for children and wheelchair users**

To make good use of the facilities developed for wheelchair users and children, we should be spreading the word about these facilities over the next couple of months so that we have enough people to take part in the scheme by Spring time.

### **Encourage our growers to play a leading role**

Greater participation of the growers in the running of the scheme and in sharing experiences are vital for the sustainability of the scheme. We should find ways of encouraging everyone to get involved in the running of the scheme.

### **Campaigning for Grow-Our-Own**

We should use our knowledge and experience in promoting growing communities in Norwich and beyond. We can do this by inviting people to come and see our work and by offering help and advice in setting up similar schemes in other areas. We should particularly focus on schools, local community groups and clubs.

**ANNEX**

**Annex 1**

**Sustainable Living Initiative Limited**

**Company Information**  
**for the period from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

**DIRECTORS:** C. O'Hanlon  
K. Hudson  
P. Medhurst  
B. Beauchamp  
V. Leconte

**SECRETARY:** M. Pant

**REGISTERED OFFICE:** 37 Buckingham Road  
Norwich  
Norfolk  
NR4 7DE

**REGISTERED NUMBER:** 5472105 (England and Wales)

**Annex 2****Income and expenditure account detail for the year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008  
(Comparatives for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2007)\***

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<u>Income</u>		
<b>Sales income:</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>338</b>
Jam, Chutney and Vegetable Sales	554	311
Plant Sales	27	27
Miscellaneous Sales	10	0
 <b>Recurring income:</b>	 <b>1,618</b>	 <b>717</b>
Plot rent	1,420	640
Members fees and related income	193	45
Seed kitty	5	32
<b>Other income:</b>	<b>7,266</b>	<b>14,331</b>
Donations	253	781
Grants	7,000	13,453
Interest	13	97
 <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	 <b>9,475</b>	 <b>15,386</b>
 <u>Expenditure</u>		
<b>1. Direct expenditure:</b>	<b>1958</b>	<b>1,402</b>
Plot rent	482	371
Seeds	550	212
Manure	299	383
Labour	0	110
Small Tools	342	326
Plot improvements	285	0
 <b>2. Investment in equipment &amp; facilities:</b>	 <b>7,316</b>	 <b>13,453</b>
Solar Light and water butts	870	1,521
Meeting Hut	0	4,924
Composting toilet	0	5,803
Disability access improvements	6446	0
Seeds and tools	0	1,205
 <b>3. Overhead expenditure:</b>	 <b>1,682</b>	 <b>1,905</b>
Telephone & broadband	301	376
Postage	9	14
Stationery	151	125
Insurance	1,042	774
Training	0	27
Subscriptions	15	40
Sundries	164	299
Professional fees	0	250
 <b>4. Taxation:</b>	 <b>0</b>	 <b>(393)</b>
Corporation tax payable on result for period	0	(393)
 <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	 <b>10,956</b>	 <b>16,367</b>



\*These are draft figures subject to account adjustments.