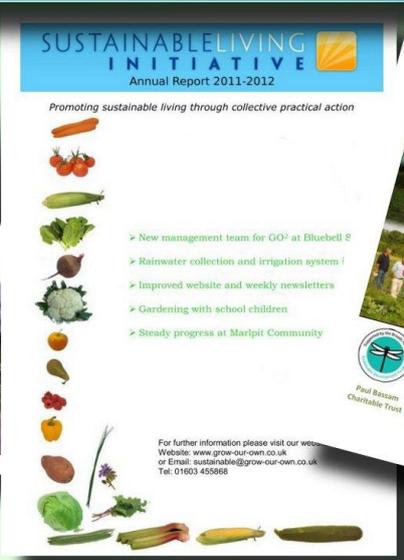
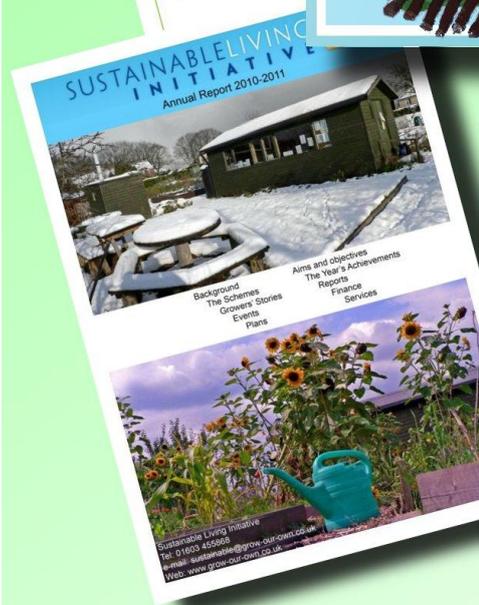
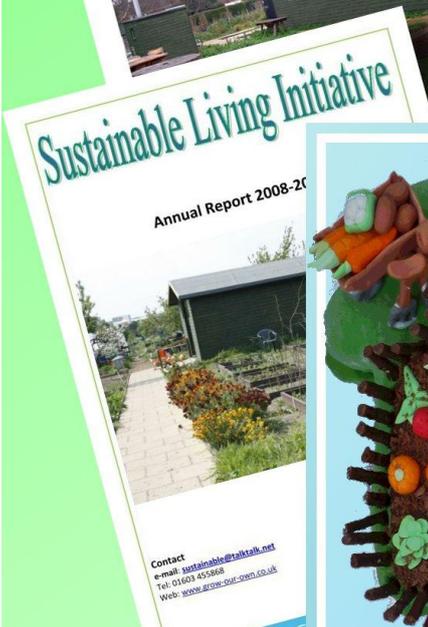
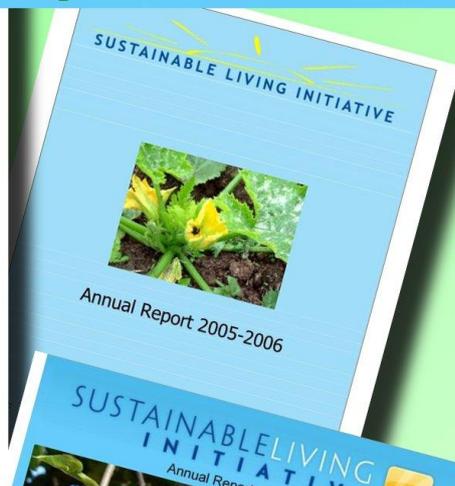
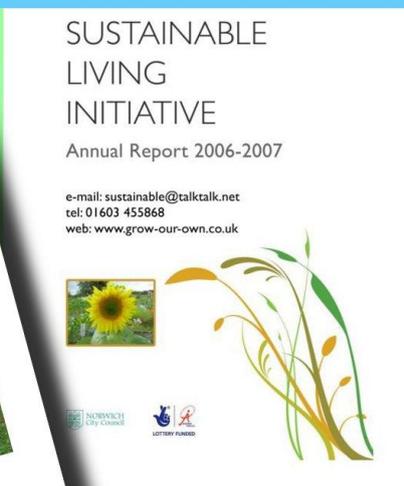
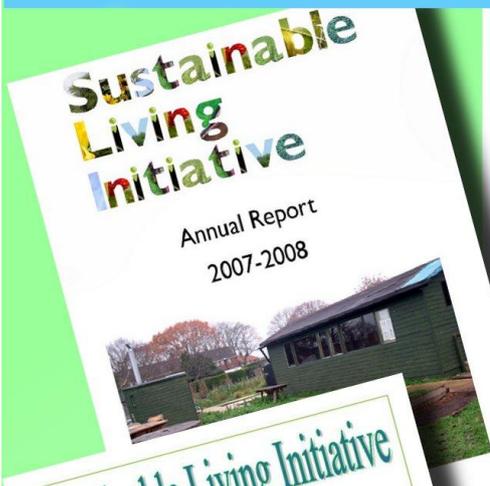


SUSTAINABLE LIVING INITIATIVE



Annual Report 2013-2014 Tenth Anniversary



SUSTAINABLE LIVING INITIATIVE

Annual Report 2006-2007

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SUSTAINABLE LIVING INITIATIVE

Annual Report 2005-2006



SUSTAINABLE LIVING INITIATIVE

Annual Report 2009-2010

Grow-Our-Own numbers up 20 fold!

Expansion plans include training centre for growing, cooking and preserving

SUSTAINABLE LIVING INITIATIVE

Annual Report 2011-2012

Promoting sustainable living through collective practical action

- New management team for GO² at Bluebell &
- Rainwater collection and irrigation system!
- Improved website and weekly newsletters
- Gardening with school children
- Steady progress at Marpit Community

For further information please visit our website
Website: www.grow-our-own.co.uk
or Email: sustainable@grow-our-own.co.uk
Tel: 01603 455868



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Foreword



Ten years ago, under the broad umbrella of the Sustainable Living Initiative (SLI), Mahesh Pant started the 'Grow Our Own' (GO²) allotment project at the Bluebell South allotments in Norwich with the aim of making it easier for people to grow their own food. He was able to give those new to vegetable growing the chance to try it out on a smaller and far more manageable plot with the added support of a wide selection of seeds and young plants, an on-site supply of tools and his extensive experience in the cultivation of a wide range of familiar and more exotic varieties.

However, the intention was far greater than just growing one's own vegetables successfully. The idea of forming a community of growers supporting each other, sharing produce, recycling, using 'green' transport and volunteering their time for communal tasks was inherent in the original plan. Gradually, with generous grants from the local authorities and local organisations plus many volunteer hours, new facilities were built including a composting toilet, a greenhouse to shelter young seedlings, an ingenious system of water storage and supply, accessible paths and raised beds for wheelchair users and the ultimate in garden sheds where meetings and events could be held.

As time went by, regular social events were organised including food-sharing days when growers got to show their culinary skills with the allotment produce, exchange recipes and just enjoy time together. From the start there were annual open days on the Bluebell site and I have been lucky enough to attend most of them. The weather has not always been kind! I have fond memories of being one of a merry crowd helping to hold down a gazebo as the wind howled and the rain lashed - the downpour all but extinguishing the barbecue! These open days have been well attended over the years and have led to many new people signing up to take plots. The enthusiastic contribution of delicious savouries and cakes made from allotment produce, the sale of spare plants, cut flowers and vegetables, cups of freshly squeezed apple juice, an exciting tombola and children's activities have all helped to raise much-needed funds for the project. A good day out for all!

As with most innovative schemes there have been problems along the way. In the early stages of the project there was concern amongst a few of the long-term allotment holders on the Bluebell site that the project was somehow 'taking over' the entire area. In later years there was an incident in which one of the allotment sheds was burned to the ground and tools destroyed. Undeterred, the project has continued and despite the setbacks, a highly committed core group of growers has helped the project evolve from an allotment scheme to a fully-fledged community garden offering an important social space in which to bring people together.

In 2011 Mahesh was able to hand over the day to day running of the Bluebell scheme to two coordinators who bravely took the helm for two years and then handed over to a seven-member management team, each with a different area of responsibility. This has been a successful move and has enabled Mahesh to start work on a second SLI initiative, the Marlpit Community Garden. Just getting this latest project underway was a huge achievement

considering the bureaucratic and legal hurdles that lay in wait but the garden finally opened in the summer of 2013 with the same aims as GO² at Bluebell.

Over the last ten years it has been fascinating to watch, even if from afar, as these two projects have taken shape. It just shows what can be achieved through strong leadership, commitment, enthusiasm and countless hours of voluntary work. Many other organisations are now learning from this innovative approach. All those who have taken part in the development of these two dynamic schemes can be proud of what they have done so far and can look forward to a very exciting future!

It just remains for me to sincerely thank all of the many people and organisations who have so generously given their time and financial support and helped to make this initiative such a great success! Congratulations and good luck for the next ten years!

Kim Hudson, SLI Director 2005-present

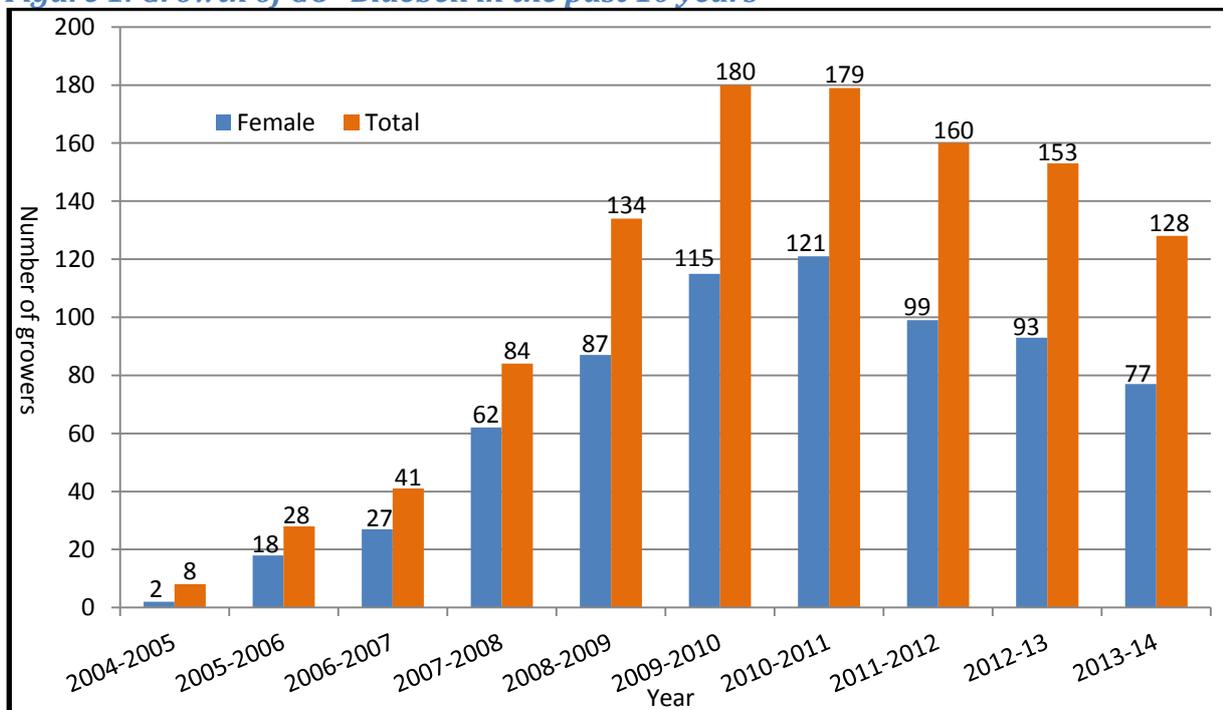
10 Years of GO² at Bluebell

We celebrated our 10th anniversary on Saturday 27th of September 2014 with an Open Day where the guest of honour was the Lord Mayor, Councillor Judith Lubbock who is also a former GO² member.



In the last decade, we saw a big increase in the number of GO² members. The willingness of growers to stay on and participate in the management of the scheme as well as help newcomers meant we were able to rent additional plots from Norwich City Council. These evolutionary approaches proved effective in responding to members' aspirations and in attracting a large number of new people within a short period of time (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Growth of GO² Bluebell in the past 10 years



What the scheme has achieved in the past ten years is a vibrant community of growers who not only grow food, cook and share meals and help each other but also manage the scheme.

GO² has successfully developed an alternative to the conventional allotment model in Norwich; a grower now has the choice of having a large plot from the City Council and potentially working on his/her own or having a small, easily manageable plot and sharing land, tools, plants and friendship.

The main features of GO²

Information and advice

The availability of information and advice is crucial to new/novice growers. GO² offers one-to-one practical advice to its members on a regular basis and has produced easy-to-follow written growers' guides. Together, these help our members to acquire basic gardening skills and gain confidence.

Social space

The provision of a meeting place, tea-making facilities, on-site toilet, regular work-days for members to carry out communal tasks collectively and food-sharing days, when members bring meals to share - all provide an attractive social space which our members greatly appreciate. In this respect, GO² at Bluebell is truly a community garden not just an allotment scheme.

Sharing culture

GO² has in-built sharing culture; about 30 sets of tools, 4 small sheds, 5 car-parking spaces and one picnic area are shared by well over 130 members. One cannot imagine what the GO² scheme would have looked like if all the 130 members had their own set of tools, tool-shed, car-parking space and picnic area. Likewise, by sharing seeds and plants we have reduced costs and minimised waste. Apart from the environmental benefits of sharing resources, it has also helped promote friendship and cooperation between members.

Environmentally friendly approach to growing

We do not allow the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides on our allotments. All our members grow fruit and vegetables organically; we buy organic seeds and get Heritage seeds wherever possible, and promote the use of companion planting. Locally sourced horse manure, leaf-mould from leaves supplied by the City Council, our own home-made compost and comfrey and nettle feed provide nutrients to the fruit and vegetables we grow.

Dissemination

Apart from attracting a large number of people from Norwich to join our scheme, the ethos of GO² is spreading far and wide. A number of groups from Norfolk and Suffolk have been to see our scheme, meet our members and learn from our experiences, with a view to starting similar initiatives in their own communities.

Financial sustainability

Started as a small pilot scheme, GO² has been managed entirely by volunteers; the grant and individual donations received (so far totalling just under £30,000) have been used for capital – a shed, toilet, greenhouse, tools and accessible paths and raised beds for wheelchair users. Such an approach has helped GO² remain financially viable in the long-term.

The future of GO²

In the context of cheap food (in real terms), the increasing use of ready meals and a busy lifestyle, growing fruit and vegetables on allotments may not be an attractive hobby for the majority in the foreseeable future. Whilst the taste of fresh produce from our own garden is second to none, the time and commitment required to manage even a small plot is considerable and there is no big economic incentive in doing so either.

However, the provision of a 'social space', mentioned earlier, means that schemes like GO² offer a place for people to make new friends, share food and drinks, help each other, and enjoy nature. The future of GO² is secure as long as its members continue to value the social, environmental and health benefits of community gardening.



Mahesh Pant, Secretary and Programme Manager from 2004 – present

The Sustainable Living Initiative was registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee in June 2005; it became a charity in October 2013.



GO² members' stories

Peter Medhurst



I was a Trade Union officer and socialist who retired in 2004. I had been very concerned about climate change for some time, therefore the need to grow more of our own food was something I was considering. Having a complete allotment was too much, but then in early 2005, I bumped into my old friend Mahesh, who I had previously met at swimming lessons. He wanted me to join the project he had just begun at Bluebell South allotments, where I could just have a strip instead of a whole allotment. This was like a dream come true as it provided seeds, muck, tools, and knowhow, working collectively together on about 15 full allotments.

After a while, I became a Trustee, as I wanted to be more involved with what I regarded as a touch of socialism in practice. The number of growers increased, young and old, but with one common thread, wanting to work together to achieve our goal of growing our own, fully organic food, encouraging recycling and having fun with it, sharing food and enjoying great conversations about sustainability and politics without the party. I was very much involved in embarking on our new project at Marlpit; a fantastic idea which is slowly emerging. Many people have gone their way, but new blood has joined so we are ready for our next ten years. It has been a pleasure to be a part of it.

Christine Wilson: Getting on in grow-our-own!



As a child in the 1950s I helped my dad grow vegetables in our garden so I was used to gardening and thought I knew something about it! Eight years ago when I joined GO² I found out I didn't know that much! I've been amazed how much I've learnt, and keep learning, about growing fruit and veg, cooking and food! Each year is a discovery in terms of growing and harvesting, and of course I've seen many people come and go and many changes. I've always been involved in the operational side of GO², first looking after tools and now as team leader for admin. I can't now imagine life without GO² and the many friends I've made there.

I've still got my original two strips. I wouldn't say it's the best soil of the Bluebell site – probably average and I try and give it a boost each year with leaf mould, compost or muck. I test it for pH and it keeps fairly neutral. Being out on an allotment is a great way to observe the ever-changing weather and its effect on growth and harvests. Every year has variable results but I've kept to my preferred veggies: broad and runner beans, spinach, chard, peas, beetroot, parsnips, garlic and brassicas. Some things don't work very well in my experience: carrots which are prone to carrot fly, celeriac, leeks and swede. Brassicas are a must for winter greens and I find Tuscan, curly green and red kales, sprouting broccoli and red cabbages work best.

Eight years ago GO² had about 40 growers and now we've nearly four times that. It's a rich mix of people of all ages and many nationalities. It's a truism to say that the more you put in the more you get out and the benefits of getting involved are enormous. GO² offers so many

opportunities: growing new varieties, cooking and eating new dishes, jam and chutney-making, learning about pruning, water conservation, seed propagation – the list is endless.

I can't finish without mentioning Mahesh, whose vision and hard work have made it possible for us to benefit from the project he started ten years ago. Food is essential to our lives, yet growing vegetables here in Britain is a luxury; after all we will probably not go hungry if we can't. In an increasingly commercialised society maybe it takes a couple of years to really appreciate what we've got in terms of a small piece of land and the chance to grow our own food. We should make the most of it!

Jane Graham

I am so glad that I met a friend of Mahesh's at a conference we were both attending in 2007. The conversation turned to allotments and how much I wanted one but a full plot would be too much to manage on my own. I was given Mahesh's phone no. and quickly contacted him: THE BEST THING I EVER DID!

Over the past 7 years I've learnt so much, not only about growing vegetables but how a project can develop and a community grow and prosper. An important part of the allotments is the peace and tranquillity that comes with spending time on the site. I can think of no better way than to spend an afternoon "pottering" a little bit of digging, a little bit of planting and best of all, a little bit of harvesting!



It has been interesting to watch and be involved with, the many changes that have taken place, the compost toilet being built (my first volunteer day!) the big shed built, raised beds and slab pathways constructed and the increase of growers from 40 to 140.

Of course it has not always been plain sailing there have been moments of despair, slugs and crawlies, weather and weeds, some battles lost, but those that are won provide joyous moments tinged with pride, as a vegetable is proudly presented to the community, or a glut happily shared.

From the beginning as a one plot holder to a three plot holder and team leader, the last 7 years have been some of the most interesting and enjoyable years of my life and I hope the next 7 will continue to be the same.

Jim Froud

GO² has been in my address book since 17 February 2008. As you might guess, I was in IT before I retrained in Ecology and Conservation. Of course, IT skills have been useful ever since and often prevent me getting my hands dirty as much as (I say) I would like.

My wife, Moira, was introduced to Grow-Our-Own in June 2006, with a regular plot alongside her friend Maureen, and of course I was an assistant. Ever since I started as a grower, managing the website has been my primary contribution to GO² and the accompanying members' blog which we also send as a weekly newsletter. These are "techie" ways to help keep busy members up to date with events and seasonal gardening and recipe tips.



Helping set up Marlpit Community Garden has been great fun and has expanded an already wide circle of friends: my thanks to all of them, and congratulations to Sustainable Living Initiative for GO² on its significant anniversary.

Moira Froud

I have been a member of GO² for several years. During this time I have been fortunate to learn about how to manage and grow fruit, herbs and vegetables in my own small raised plots. There is always help at hand for those of us who are not so confident or experienced. The weekly newsletter is always welcome in the Inbox, full of useful tips, guidance for the week, recipes, events and links to the ever expanding website. The chutney, jam and bottling workshops led by more experienced members have been an opportunity to have a go at something which can seem quite daunting.



Members of the Food Team, of which I am one, help to organise the monthly food sharing lunch. It is always surprising to see the variety of dishes brought to share on the first Sunday of each month, the challenge being to use produce we've grown. We have been lucky with the weather this year enabling us to enjoy relaxed outdoor meals.

GO² is a welcoming, friendly and mutually supportive group. Making produce and making friends seems to be a great part of life at Bluebell.

Thank you to all those members who work so hard and are happy to give their time and support to anyone who needs it.

Rochelle Wilson from novice to council plot holder

Six years ago, I had just moved to Norwich and was keen to follow up some information I had heard about GO², a community gardening scheme where it was possible to learn the skills required to grow vegetables and fruit.



I was already buying organic food and had grown some broad beans and peas in my back garden, but I wanted to do more. So, I went up to Bluebell South to meet Mahesh and to volunteer for the scheme. 'Well,' he said, 'you can volunteer, but it would be better if you took a plot. I've got one right here that doesn't need much work.' We went to look at the strip and it had some broad beans on it. I was hooked.

I was worried about being able to keep up with the work required, but I soon found that I couldn't keep away from my plot and it was easy to maintain. My first season was a bumper harvest of beans, peas, potatoes, onions and garlic. Very shortly after I joined, the plot next to me became vacant so I took that on. And, a couple of years later, the plot on the other side was free, so I took that too.

I have never lost the thrill of planting seeds and watching them turn into vegetables. For instance, it had never occurred to me to grow garlic. I had thought that it came from hotter countries. When I bought it in the shops or the market stalls, it was never from the U.K. Last year, my crop kept me going all year round. Early on, I planted the very aptly named Autumn Bliss raspberries and this year, ran out of freezer space, the crop was so good.

As part of my community duties, I volunteered for the seeds and plants team because I wanted to learn more. I discovered another thrill – growing plants from seed in the greenhouse.

So, it was just another step from there to try my next adventure: becoming responsible for the whole operation of laying out a plot, ordering manure and seeds and making sure it all happens on time for the seasonal tasks. This October I took on a half council plot in addition to my original GO² plot, and once again I am a little nervous. But, I would never have dreamed of doing this without the wonderful support and sharing of knowledge I have received from members of GO². Thank you one and all.

Sian's story

I first met Mahesh on a stormy day in deepest winter. I had seen a flyer in a local shop outlining a scheme to encourage people who might find a whole allotment overwhelming. Instead, it promised small, manageable strips in a community group. My son was 2 months old and a caesarean had left me feeling like a sawn in half woman that the magician has forgotten to magic back together again...but all the same, I was drawn to the idea of growing my own veg. So it was, that illuminated by little more than lightening flashes, we took refuge in a leaky shed and Mahesh outlined his vision. Looking back, I can see it was quite a vision. Not just in terms of ousting stubborn repeat offenders like couch grass, but other less tangible pests such as red tape and a general aversion to doing things differently. For me, it was most liberating to be told I could simply chuck things in, as and when. No need to produce a 1950s House and Gardens plot. Certainly, I never have - and after the first child, there came another, and then very random work projects. I have certainly been dreadful at keeping my plot tidy, but, ten years on, I do have an almost 10 year old and a 6 year old who will tell you a healing borage flower from a peppery nasturtium and will dig quite plausible trenches.



Many thanks to the diverse and knowledgeable people we have met upon the way. Most especially to Mahesh.

Mark Newman: a newcomer



" Mark, come to my allotment and help me dig it over ready." That's how it all began for me in the early spring of this year. So having Googled for a safe cycle route, I arrived at Bluebell South. If it had been my intention to 'dig and begone' it soon changed to dig and stay. I signed up for a strip and became an allotmenteer.

I suppose my introduction to allotmenteeing by Jane, my mentor, can be likened to going to Aldi for a bag of sugar. My one item of ' just dig Mark' went into the trolley. I arrived. I looked. I liked. I came out with a trolley full of excitement. So, three strips on: The trolley is filling and I'm not out of the store. No. I'm not in Aldi its IKEA! Easy to enter. Difficult to find

the exit. But, do I need an exit?

Now a land and water manager, I have wonderful resources to hand above and below the ground and I'm part of a great community which shares a common goal of giving people access to land and turning the land into sustainable production. I love every minute. The planning, growing and harvesting. These are seen, tasted, recorded and go in the trolley. But also placed with respect and care, I'm adding friendships, knowledge and experiences into the trolley. I'm not looking for an exit ... yet!

GO² Bluebell - 10 years on



Sustainable Living Initiative Annual Report 2013-14



Table 1: List of directors, past and present over the past 10 years

Name	Date	
	From	To
Kim Hudson	6 th June, 2005	Present
Steve Clinch	6 th June 2005	6 th September 2007
Christine O'Hanlon	6 th June 2005	1 July 2009
Georgia Kaufmann	6 th June 2005	22 nd July 2006
Adria Pittock	6 th June 2005	11 th January 2008
Peter Medhurst	22 nd July 2006	Present
Vicky Leconte	7 th September 2007	2010
Bridget Beauchamp	11 th January 2008	26 th March 2013
Peter Anderson	7 th January 2009	12 th September 2011
Claire Pinkney	26 th September 2009	17 th August 2012
Debbie Payne	9 th September 2011	3 rd March 2014
Lucy Hogg	22 nd January 2013	1 st June 2013
Laura McCartney-Gray	18 th December 2013	Present
Tristram Cooper	29 th April 2014	Present

Table 2: Grants/donations received for GO² Bluebell in the past 10 years

Name of the Organisation	Date	Amount £
Norwich City Council	24/04/2006	5000
Awards for All (Lottery)	12/12/2006	9540
Noel Armstrong	24/04/2006	1000
Royal Bank of Scotland	24/04/2007	250
Norwich City Council	06/06/2008	1000
Geoffrey Watling Charity	29/07/2008	6000
Norfolk Community Foundation	17/11/2008	4992
Royal Bank of Scotland	17/11/2008	250
Waitrose Community	10/01/2009	492
Voluntary Norfolk	14/04/2011	500
East of England Cooperatives	19/07/2007	500
T & G	10/05/2007	300
Grand total		29824

Annual Report of Grow-Our-Own (GO²) at Bluebell South Allotments

Administration: Christine Wilson

Following a consultation with members in September 2013, a new seven-member management team took over the running of GO² Bluebell South Allotments from October 2013. There were many meetings in the first year to sort out endless questions but in the course of that there was much laughter, tea and some fantastic cakes, and much sharing of experience about growing vegetables and related matters. I wouldn't have missed it!

Issues resolved included decision-making and improving contact with and between growers. Then there was planning how to provide a steady flow of seeds and plants, getting muck and organising the compost heaps, updating information, and ensuring a rota of people in the big shed. We improved communications between ourselves and with growers, decided what to do about growers who leave their plots untidy, and sorted out details like revising our information, putting up signs and clearing rubbish. By May however, it was noted that approximately 20% of growers had not signed up to a team and about 50% of the remainder had not contributed to GO².

From now on team leaders will be monitoring this and in line with Norwich City Council allotment policy it was also decided to make clear that growers should keep the paths by their plots clear - on pain of exclusion! See your grower's agreement! Several growers were refused renewal this October because they neither contributed to the scheme nor kept their plots and paths in order.

We do all we can to make GO² inclusive, since bringing people together is one of its aims, but only about 25 people attended the AGM in July – rather disappointing considering there are about 130 growers in all. It's a chance for everyone to have their say and find out what's going on. The minutes are on the website, www.grow-our-own.co.uk

There is a lot of local interest in GO² – in February the Women's Institute organised a conference on food security and I did two group sessions about small-scale allotmenting. The numbers at each were about 25 and 20 respectively. We often have visitors to GO². About 30 members of the Danish Allotment Association visited although they were quite shocked at how untidy the allotments are – not at all like Denmark! But they appreciated that a big part of GO² is bringing people together and sharing resources and produce rather than establishing a self-contained fiefdom on a small plot of land. Other very appreciative visitors were from Swaffham Allotment and Gardening Association who came in July and later wrote to say they would be introducing a system of small starter plots for new people.

Throughout the year we have done a lot of publicity on Streetlife (an internet forum), posters in libraries and other places, and advertising when and where appropriate so we've always had a trickle of interested people. Most have stayed with us and we are concerned to find ways of keeping them interested and involved. There is a lot of behind-the-scenes work to keep GO² going so please support your chosen team because the management needs the input of all growers.

Tools and maintenance: Jane Graham

A site visit with Mahesh to inspect the sheds and discuss the 2014 programme was carried out and we agreed future works and repairs. The growers who had signed up for the tools and

maintenance team were contacted, with the result that one member took on the task of maintaining the lawnmowers and cutting the grass lawn in the picnic area and another member offered to do minor repairs to buildings and where possible repair broken tools. I agreed to keep the toilet clean and stocked with toilet paper, cleaning products and disinfectant hand gel. Cleaning and tidying the large shed was shared between the leaders of the tools and admin teams. Later in the year the seeds and food teams also helped as their usage of the shed increased.

It was decided that the best way to take an inventory of all the tools, clean the sheds, sharpen the shears and cutting tools, was to use a Sunday morning volunteer day. March 9th was chosen and proved very successful with a large turnout. It was noted that we had lots of tools but these were unevenly distributed among sheds. This was easy to rectify thanks to colour coding for the different sheds. Cutting tools were cleaned, sharpened and oiled. Hand tools were gathered and some were missing, there have been various suggestions as to what is the cause, none proven, so the decision was to replace them as needed but growers are encouraged to use their own trowels, hand forks and secateurs. Wheelbarrow wheels were replaced and minor repairs carried out. Some tools were taken to a workshop of one of the growers and repaired where possible.

A second tool day was run on the 2nd November and the process was repeated but on a smaller scale as it was mainly a check and repair exercise.

We think using the volunteer Sunday mornings is the best method for tool maintenance as it is inclusive, brings everyone together and the team leader is on hand to answer questions. The building of a new tool shed and repainting of the main shed was deferred until 2015.

Training: Rochelle Wilson

The team met in the autumn to plan the year which began in February with pruning fruit bushes and ended in December with our Christmas party. There was much discussion about the best day for training and we decided on the second Sunday of the month to avoid clashes with the first Sunday, which incorporates both our work day and food sharing. I'm not sure how successful a choice that was because we averaged about six people at each session. Having said that, those of us who did attend were royally rewarded with some excellent advice on plot planning, how to plant seeds, identifying herbs and their uses, composting, how to avoid pests and diseases, harvesting and storing, and, probably our most popular session: gardening in dry conditions when we were invited to visit the plot of fellow allotment holder, Carolyn Batch. She showed us techniques she learned while living in Greece where there was no rain for seven months of the year. We made notes of these sessions and took photographs to record what we learned for the website. Our training ethos was the same as that of the whole scheme: keep it simple to ensure the best results. I hope we succeeded. A big thank you to all the people who led the training sessions and those who took notes.

Seeds and plants: Jane Chittenden

In September 2013 I agreed to take on the role of team leader for the Seeds & Plants team. As one of the six team leaders I found the structure very helpful, because it enabled each of us to concentrate on our particular area of responsibility, while getting a lot of support from our fellow team leaders if we needed it. There was no feeling of hierarchy ("I'm in charge!"); rather, it was all about understanding what needed to be done and then to be able to get on and do it with our teams. For me, this worked very well, because we'd collectively agreed the responsibilities in our open meeting.

I was able to draw on earlier plans of Mahesh's and detailed sowing and planting notes kept in the greenhouse. I had outstanding support from some of my team. As with any team, especially a voluntary one, some people contributed more than others (and some not at all) – but that's to be expected and I don't see it as a problem. I think that this team-led structure works very well, much more than the sum of its parts and it makes everyone aware that it really is all about collaboration. So I wouldn't change a thing.

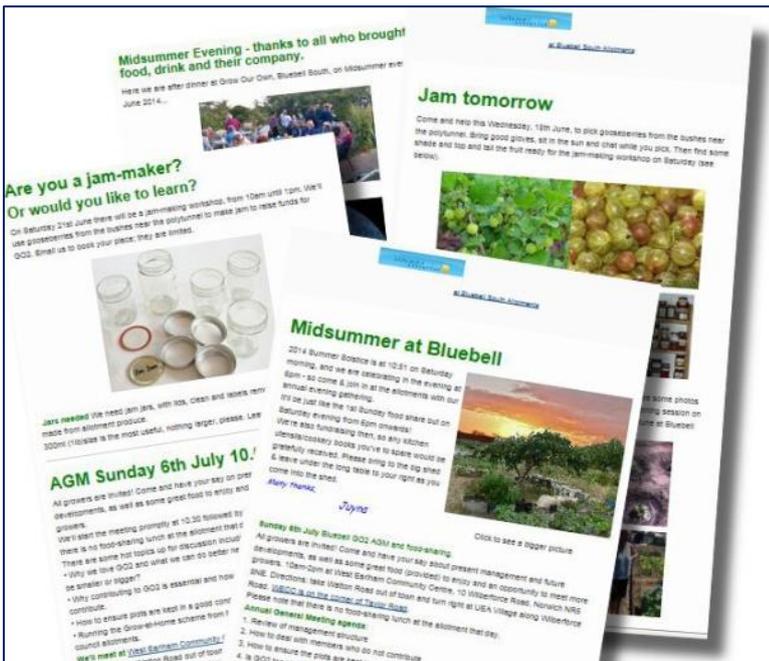
I had to stand down from the team leader role because of pressure of work in my day job, and handed over to my very capable right-hand person. That made sure of a smooth transition.

Food team: Juyna Lewis

2014 was a busy one for the food team. I was ably assisted by Amy Deol, deputy food team leader, and a small band of active and wonderful helpers. I would very much like to thank them; they have made the job of being a team leader so much easier. Recently, SLI funded four of us to go on a 1st aid course (Amy, Lynda, Juyna and Mark) and food hygiene course (Amy, Juyna, Lynda and Moira). As well as the first Sunday 'food share' which takes place monthly the food team has also been involved with preserving produce such as plums, apples, beans and jam-making. Chutney-making sessions have been organised throughout the year. We also had a visit from the Swaffham allotment group who commented on the wonderful communal nature of our scheme and enjoyed delicious cakes made by our members.

The food team is looking forward to planning more events in 2015, including a 'spring festival'. If you would like to see anything else organised or can contribute to a workshop then please let us know.

Communications: Jim Froud



There is no IT Team, so it has no leader! Any volunteers who feel they could contribute should let me know, and will get a full explanation of what is currently being done. Suggestions for improvements are welcome, as are contributions of news and relevant information. Newsletters and a blog based on our website help to keep members up with events, although the best way to do this is by regularly visiting one's plot and calling in at the Centre to meet other growers and volunteers.

The blog ("Members Page") currently has 99 subscribers and usually 70% of the recipients do read the news

and 30% following links to our website. We send over 50 newsletters each year and archive them on our website, www.grow-our-own.co.uk. The website describes SLI projects and has events pages, galleries with photos of our events from several contributors and pages of recipes showing how growers have used the produce.



There are two members-only sections, with passwords for Bluebell and Marlpit which are tailored to those groups. Over 140 pages of information and a blog with over 160 weekly postings are illustrated by many hundreds of images. This report and its predecessors, publicity, posters and documents are all to be seen online and are regularly updated.

Progress made in 2013-14

The total number of growers who took part in various GO² schemes was 128 (Figure 2), which was 16% lower than the number of growers in the previous year. Of the 132 adult growers in 2012-13, 79 stayed on and 32 new growers joined during the year. Due to the lack of demand for children’s plots, the scheme was closed.

On the whole, the number of people joining the GO² Bluebell scheme is declining. According to the Norwich City Council Allotment Officer, there has been a slowdown in demand for Council allotments as well. Maybe allotmenting is out of fashion for the time being!

Figure 2: Number of Growers in 2013-2014

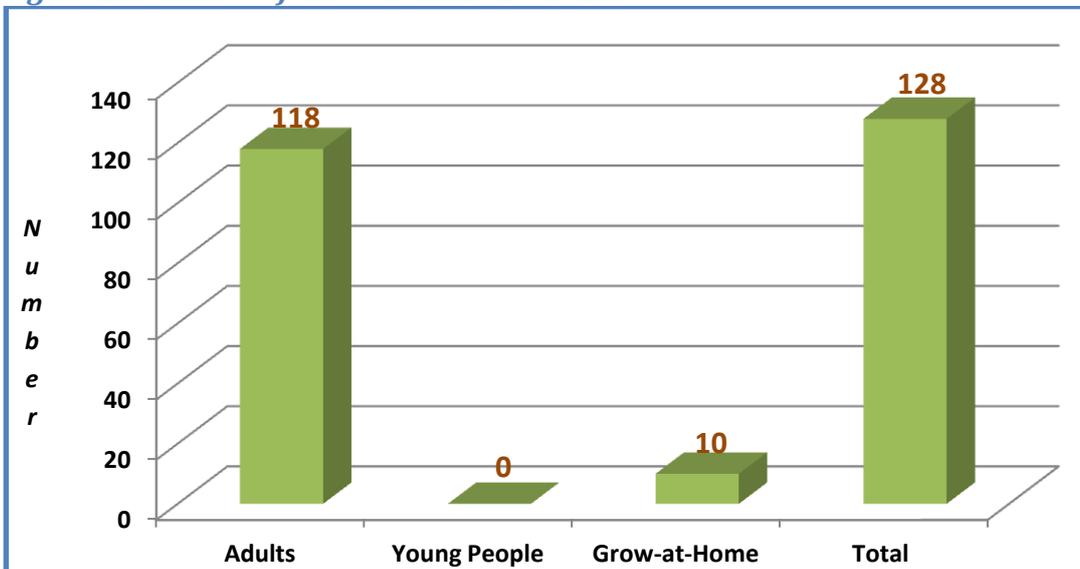
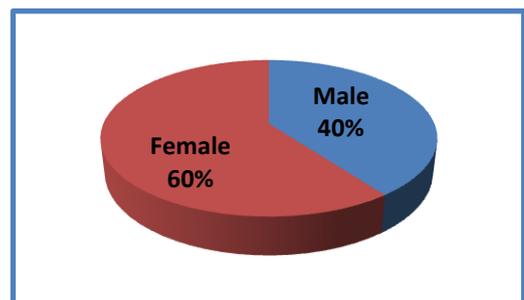


Figure 3: Percentage of Growers by Gender

A total of 12 growers left the scheme during the year due to being “unable to manage their plots” (9), “ill health” (2) and “moved on to a Council plot” (1).



As in previous years, the majority (60%) of our growers were women in 2013-14 (see Figure 3). Just over half of our members were 55 years and above but the number of younger growers joining GO² is on increase.

While the majority (77 per cent of our growers last year) were White British reflecting the demographic features of Norwich, we had growers from many ethnic groups and nationalities – Indian, Pakistani, Caribbean, French, Spanish and others, making GO² a truly diverse community.

Annual Report of Grow-Our-Own (GO²) at Marlpit Community Garden

The success of GO² at Bluebell has led to the extension of the scheme in the Marlpit area of Norwich which has one of the highest levels of deprivation in the city. The Marlpit Community Garden (MCG) is based on the GO² Bluebell model and aims to expand into a fully sustainable community-based gardening scheme where people will not only be able to grow, preserve and cook fruit and vegetables but also be able to experience and learn about conserving the wider environment.



The first phase of setting up MCG is now complete, with a tool shed, composting toilet, greenhouse, plots, orchards, beehives and wildlife areas. Thank you to all the various organisations, friends and well-wishers who gave their help and support. We would like to invite more individuals and families, as well as schools and community groups to join us and make use of our excellent facilities.

Progress made in 2013-14

A total of 26 growers joined of whom 19 completed the first year successfully. In addition to this, schools and community groups took part in growing fruit and vegetables.

A member's story Alison Foss

I have been a grower at Marlpit since the community garden opened in summer 2013. I had been interested in growing vegetables for a while but living in a flat with no access to a garden and no growing experience I hadn't been able to put this into practice.

The Marlpit scheme was ideal for me – 5 minutes walk from home, a small manageable plot, no need to invest in tools, information and help from other growers. I've learned a lot and been very pleased with the produce; my personal favourites being beetroot, radishes, broad beans and sweetcorn. But the scheme is about much more than growing fruit, vegetables and herbs – I have enjoyed the training sessions, community activities such as planting fruit trees, the open days and honey harvest - all good opportunities to meet other members and share experiences. I am certainly looking forward to see the project develop further.

Training and workshops

A well-attended course on Gardening with Nature was held during October 2013. This comprised 3 sessions of particular interest to those gardening on the dry soils of Norwich. The course focused on low input (in terms of fertilizer, pesticides and water) and high output (in terms of interest, colour and wildlife benefit).

A bird box building workshop was held in February, which included installation of boxes in the boundary hedgerows. In-house training for volunteer mentors included; the role of mentors, growing from seed, pruning fruit bushes, and pests and diseases. We also ran a number of workshops on jam and chutney making, vegetable bottling and honey-harvesting.

Two of our volunteer mentors attended a two-day training course at Trafford Hall, Chester on growing fruit and vegetables.

Demonstration plot

A demonstration plot next to the central area is now well established, growing a variety of usual and unusual vegetables. The main objective is to provide opportunities for enthusiastic growers to come and learn about sustainable gardening practices, and to provide a steady supply of vegetables for our volunteers. The work on this plot started last year and our regular volunteers and the volunteers from Armaco Summer School programme based at UEA helped to expand the area.

Volunteering

Since the Spring of 2014, we have been running regular volunteering mornings on Tuesdays (10am to 1 pm). These sessions have multiple benefits: some of our volunteers have been out of work for a long time and their skills and confidence are helped while they carry out essential gardening tasks for MCG and enjoy each other's company. Volunteers are given a free lunch, made using our own produce, and they also get seasonal produce to take home in return for their help. Everyone is welcome to join without any long-term commitment or any particular skills.

Marlpit Newsletter

The first edition was produced in April. Volunteer Alison Foss has co-ordinated contributions and Jim Froud from the Bluebell project has added graphics. So far we've had progress reports on the Marlpit bees, the Honey Harvest, the 1st anniversary Open Day, and some recipe ideas as well as essential growing information.

Events

To celebrate the first anniversary of the opening of the Marlpit Community Garden, an Open Day was held on Saturday 28th of June. The Sheriff of Norwich, William Armstrong (right), and his wife, Monica, attended the ceremony along with growers and members of the local community. Those who came to the open day included our community police officers (below) who helped to plant herbs along the main paths.



Marlpit Bees Tish Kerkham

Honey day – the day when we extracted our first honey from our Marlpit Community Garden bees was a great day for more than one reason.

After the upset of our first colony of bees being stolen just before Christmas last year, we had to start again. In this we were greatly helped by the encouragement and practical help of members of the Norfolk Beekeepers' Association. Richard Watson donated a brood box and super (parts of a hive) as well as raising a 'nuc' consisting of queen bee and thousands of worker bees and young especially for us. Paul Cain and Corriena contacted us with the offer of a swarm which Corriena delivered to us, and John Everett of Applebee Apiary, where we bought our first bees, gave us a complete second hand hive. Stewart Spinks, the government bee inspector for our area, was also very supportive.

Volunteers worked hard to construct the fencing for our bee sanctuary which will make it more difficult for anyone to steal them.

All summer, we watched our bees busily gathering nectar from blossom and wild flowers as well as from the flowers on our plots, such as beans, courgettes and squashes. The pollination they achieved in the process undoubtedly contributed to our bumper crops.

As beekeeper, my tasks included monitoring the hives about every seven days during the season in order to assess the health of the bees and treat for pests and diseases as necessary, and to check for signs of swarming.

Every time I visit the bees I learn something new, and I am constantly amazed by them. Moving into autumn the two colonies were combined. One of them was weaker, and this will give them a better chance to survive the winter.

Craig, one of our volunteers, has been helping with the bees on a regular basis and learning about their management. This is an opportunity we would like to offer to more members. Individuals have also had a chance to look inside a hive for the first time. Next year we plan to buy more protective suits so small groups will be able watch the bees at work and learn about their fascinating lives.



For me, a large part of the fun of honey day was that it brought together a number of Grow Our Own members to help with the work of extracting the honey from the combs using the honey extractor borrowed from the Norfolk Beekeepers' Association. This made it feel like they really are the Marlpit Community Garden bees. We harvested 12 lbs of honey which was shared between everyone who came along to help. Plenty of honey was left for the bees themselves to see them through the winter, supplemented with a feed of sugar syrup.

Another task completed during the autumn was to protect the hive from green woodpeckers which will damage a hive in search of honey during cold weather.

As the weather cools, the worker bees form a cluster round the queen, huddling together and vibrating their wing muscles in order to keep warm. If all goes well the queen will resume laying eggs early in the new year, and the workers will be out again foraging for nectar and pollen on warm days in early spring.

Next year we plan to expand our number of colonies to four. I'm looking forward to seeing many more of our honeybees at work pollinating our orchard, vegetables and wild flowers and to harvesting plenty of the delicious honey they produce.

Forest Gardening Scheme Tish Kerkham

On the original master plan of Marlpit Community Garden is an area labelled 'woodland coppice area to be created'. This proposal has been expanded to take in the idea of creating a forest garden. It will cover an area from the end of the orchard to the bee sanctuary.

Earlier this year I went on a course at the Agroforestry Research Trust in Dartington in Devon to learn about forest gardening. The first morning our tutor, Martin Crawford, took our group of keen students from all over Europe into his twelve-year-old forest garden to see what can be done. We were hushed as we wandered along shaded pathways in dappled sunlight soaking in the tranquility of the place. Every few steps Martin paused to point out some tree or plant, explaining its place in the community of plants and its uses.

The concept behind a forest garden is that all the plants are chosen to complement each other and to be useful, either directly to us or by contributing something needed by other plants. The garden is carefully planned to create a sustainable balance. It is seen on all levels: the canopy layer created by the taller trees, smaller trees and shrubs, perennial plants and ground cover, creepers and climbers linking the levels, and the fungal layer below ground.

Rather than resembling dense forest, a forest garden is more like young woodland with sufficient light for numerous plants to flourish. A wide diversity of plants are grown, chosen for their uses as food (fruit and nuts, vegetables, salad plants, herbs and spices), poles and canes, tying materials, soap, bee plants for honey, dyeing etc and for their contribution to the whole system. Trees, shrubs and perennials provide each other with nutrients such as nitrogen and potassium, ground cover protects the structure of the soil and the effects of pests and diseases are minimised by mixing of species.

Paths and clearings are incorporated into the design to allow for access and enjoyment of the forest garden and a pond may be included.

The course inspired me with enthusiasm for the concept. Now I am tackling the practicalities of trying to design a forest garden that will look and feel right for our site and provide us with a wide range of produce.

We plan to start planting toward the end of the year and would welcome volunteers who would like to help with the project.

Nature Conservation

More trees donated by the Woodland Trust were planted in January to improve the hedgerows. Likewise, we have planted plenty of willow and hazel for coppicing which once fully grown should be able to supply enough beanpoles and pea sticks to our growers.

More than 80 fruit trees – apples (eating and cooking varieties), pears, plums, greengages and mulberries have been planted in the communal orchard area. In addition to this, we planted more than 200 rhubarb crowns, gooseberries, raspberries, and currant bushes next to the orchard. A wild-flower bed has been created along the main path (picture below) leading to the central area;

likewise, more than 60 different types of herbs are being planted. A comfrey bed has now been established and some of our members are making comfrey liquids to use as plant feed.



During the winter, Jan/Feb 2014, hedgerow planting was carried out as well as orchard planting alongside the main growing area (see photo - left). All of this work was done by local volunteers and volunteers from the University of East Anglia. In addition, we have started work to create a wetland 'scrape' to encourage diversity of bird life on the site.

The large area of open grassland next to the orchard requires regular management and the idea is to graze the major portion and hand-cut the rest by traditional hay-making. We will need to keep open a network of paths to allow members to move around easily and transport materials.



After a long gap, horses are now back in the area between the orchard and wetland, helping us to graze the land and provide valuable muck for our growers. They will make an impact on the grass growth, which in turn will encourage wild flowers to flourish.

SLI Finance

During 2013-14, we received a grant of £2943 from Norfolk County Council's Environment, Transport and Development department towards the cost of setting up an orchard in Marlpit. The unspent portion of grants from the Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council, awarded in 2012-13 for MCG, were brought forward and spent in 2013-14.

We also received a donation of £500 from Richard Kaufman and £138 from Waitrose (Norwich) Community Matters during 2013-14.

The overall financial position of SLI looks sound; the Bluebell site is almost self-sustaining in financial terms, mainly because the overheads are shared with MCG. The rental income in Marlpit at the moment is insufficient even to cover the running costs. However, the income from horse grazing and possibly more people joining in the near future may raise a bit more money.

The cost of office rent, which wasn't charged until last year, is on the rise, but the cost of the telephone/internet was lower, due to the compensation paid by TalkTalk for their poor service (see table 3 for details).

Table 3: Sustainable Living Initiative – Annual Account Summary October 2013 to September 2014

	2014					2013			
	Schools Project	Marlipit Project	Marlipit Allotments	Bluebell Allotments	Total	Schools Project	Marlipit Project	Bluebell Allotments	Total
Members' plot rent	370		815	4,224	5,409		110	3,486	3,596
Sales	260				260	3,063			3,063
Grants and donations		24,098			24,098		12,262	22	12,284
Open Day			101		101			127	127
Miscellaneous Sales			125	140	265		23	114	137
Operating Income	630	24,098	1,041	4,364	30,133	3,063	12,522	3,622	19,207
Council plot rent				1,190	1,190			723	723
Seeds and plants			307	578	885		202	673	875
Manure and compost			79	179	258			182	182
Services					0	1,112			1,112
Small tools, repairs & garden sundries		226		31	257	68	944	163	1,175
Conservation		8,491			8,491		869		869
Plot improvements				108	108			0	0
Keys				124	124		565	55	620
Equipment and supplies	248	1,061		729	2,038		206	3	209
Depreciation		6,307	50	159	6,516		6,252	107	6,359
Volunteer costs		30		7	37		54	0	54
Travel					0			0	0
Training for members		965			965	768	270	0	1,038
Direct Expenditure	248	17,080	436	3,105	20,869	1,948	9,362	1,906	13,216
Gross surplus/(deficit)	382	7,018	605	1,259	9,264	1,115	3,160	1,716	5,991
Insurance				424	424		212	212	424

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Office rent		1,020		60	1,080		450	450	900
Programme manager	382	4,618			5,000	1,115	1,385		2500
Accounts		1,380	300		1,680		570		570
Telephone & internet			93	93	186		276	277	553
Stationery and postage			60	60	120		97	96	193
IT Costs			65	65	130		33	33	66
Travel					0		70	70	140
Subscriptions			31	32	63		31	32	63
Sundries			21	21	42		15	15	30
Overhead Expenditure	382	7,018	570	755	8,725	1,115	3,139	1,185	5,439
Operating surplus/(deficit)	0	0	35	504	539	0	21	531	552

Plans for 2014-2015

GO2 Bluebell South Allotments



The team management system introduced three years ago is working well; we have plans to offer training opportunities for volunteers who are willing to be team leaders. This could include training on food hygiene and safety, first-aid and gardening skills.

Our polytunnel, installed some eight years ago, which produces plants for our growers, needs to be repaired. We will also be exploring the option for rebuilding a tool-shed which was burnt down a while ago. This could provide space for storing valuable tools more securely.

Marlpit Community Garden



At the moment, we are unsure whether to go ahead with the community building; the Marlpit Community Centre which is right next to MCG will probably have space available after the nursery moves out to another location later this year. It seems sensible to make use of the existing community building instead of building a new one as long as it meets our needs.

We will explore ways of involving local communities not only in growing food, but also in other activities such as healthy walks in the garden, regular volunteering, and making meals from our own produce. We will be running horticultural training classes once a month to cover all aspects of growing fruit, vegetables and herbs, starting in January 2015. We plan to start establishing our forest garden early next year and increase our bee-colonies from one to four.

Join us

Allotments for individuals and families

You'll get a plot that is big enough to provide food for a small family but small enough to manage with just a few hours' work a week. Tools, seeds, manure and hands-on practical advice on what to grow, will all be provided. We'll advise you when to harvest your produce, and suggest recipes and tips for storing surplus produce for use in the future. We expect more experienced growers to help 'new' growers and everyone to give at least some time towards communal activities such as maintaining tools, weeding paths and composting.

We use only organic methods so the use of insecticides, pesticides and chemical fertilisers is not allowed. Our website www.grow-our-own.co.uk has plenty of gardening information, updates and useful tips for our members.

Plots are available in Bluebell South Allotments, and at Marlpit. The Bluebell site also has specially designed wheelchair accessible plots. Residents of Norwich City Council area are eligible to have a plot in our Bluebell South allotment site while only those living in Marlpit, Larkman and West Earlham are eligible for a plot in Marlpit.

Ours is a very sociable scheme with group training sessions, food-sharing lunches and other group activities. Contact us if you're interested in joining.

Grow-at-Home Scheme

You get advice, seeds and plants to grow at home. You'll also be invited to our social and training events and have access to the website. If you live in Norwich and have a garden, no matter how small it is, and you are interested in growing fruit, vegetables, and herbs, please get in touch with us.

Plots for schools and community groups

Our newly opened site, Marlpit, offers tailor-made plots for Norwich-based schools and community groups. We have a wealth of experience in helping groups to setup and maintain allotments. Ask us for more information.

Volunteering

If you want to learn basic skills in gardening and conservation, make new friends or you already have skills that you'd like to offer, please get in touch.

Sustainable Living Initiative

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