



Love Lewisham

Love growing your own food

Lewisham's guide to creating a community garden





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We feel a great sense of achievement when we work together to overcome a problem or realise a goal. We can only build strong and caring communities if we recognise that we all have a contribution to make.

In Lewisham we are incredibly lucky to have a vibrant voluntary and community sector with thousands of our citizens volunteering on a regular basis. They are involved in a tremendous variety of activities including formally organised community events, giving up their time to manage community groups and simply helping out their neighbours where there is a need.

We also have a huge number of local people actively involved in helping us make the most out of our facilities. We have park-user groups, civic societies, citizens running allotments and a whole range of other ways for people to get involved.

Community gardens offer local residents the opportunity to get together with their neighbours and friends to grow their own food, flowers and plants on an area of unused land.

Over recent years, a number of highly successful community gardens have sprung up across the borough adding to the wide variety of opportunities

for citizens to actively engage in their communities. This is real community empowerment – local people coming together to create something which is sustainable, adds to the environment and makes good use of our natural resources. I would be delighted to see more of these gardens flourishing in Lewisham.

So that is why we are launching our new guide – to encourage local citizens who want to get involved in their own community garden project, by providing them with helpful hints and useful contacts for organisations who can provide support.

I hope you find it useful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Bullock". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sir Steve Bullock
Mayor of Lewisham



It's not a new idea –

people have been growing their own food for thousands of years.

Residents in Lewisham have been showing an increasing interest in growing their own food, and while some people are lucky enough to have their own sunny gardens, balconies or an allotment to grow their own food, what about those who don't have the space?

This guide has been produced to help those who want to grow their own food in a community garden in Lewisham and inspire others who may not even have thought it possible!

It provides general advice about starting, developing and running a community garden, as well as outlining some of the key issues involved. It also provides useful links to organisations that may be able to offer further assistance, together with some examples of community gardens in Lewisham that are already in operation.

So, if the prospect of cultivating a beautiful green space and meeting local people excites you, and you would like better access to good, healthy, affordable food, then read on!





Why grow your own food?

Building communities

Community gardens can develop and build stronger communities.

Learning about growing food is great fun and can pull different kinds of people of all ages, including children, together. Community gardeners can learn new skills, from how to make a raised bed to the techniques of permaculture.

Local residents can use a community garden to grow their own traditional food, which can't easily be found in the big supermarkets. It also provides other participants with an opportunity to grow and try new produce that is not familiar to them.

Also, when communities work closely together to convert a derelict area of land into a beautiful, public open space, it has the potential to reduce neighbourhood crime and antisocial behaviour.

Helping the environment

Community gardens encourage sustainable land management and improve the quality of the local environment, often by turning disused and even derelict sites into havens for food production and wildlife. Community gardens provide safe, recreational green spaces in urban areas and can help improve local air quality.

Local food production can also assist in the reduction of carbon emissions by cutting the need for food to be transported long distances. More food-producing community gardens in Lewisham would help the borough reduce some of the 19 million tonnes of carbon waste produced by London's food industry each year. In addition, by growing our own food we can become less dependent on non-renewable resources, such as oil, which is used to fuel tractors, produce fertilizers and transport and store food.



The healthy option – exercise and nutrition

There's nothing as satisfying as eating home-grown fruit, vegetables and herbs that are fresher and more flavoursome than produce bought from shops. You don't have to worry about whether harmful pesticides and herbicides have been used either.

By being involved in a community garden project, people can learn about growing food the organic way, and as a result, may feel encouraged to eat more fruit and vegetables. It's a good way to get kids to eat their five portions a day! You'll also save on your grocery bills.

For many people, gardening is a relaxing way to get back to nature and enjoy the great outdoors, get some exercise and reduce stress levels – great for the mind, body and spirit.

Capital Growth

Lewisham is joining forces with Capital Growth (www.capitalgrowth.org) to create 2012 new food-growing spaces in London by the year 2012. Capital Growth can offer practical guidance and in-kind support for gardening projects that have signed up to the campaign.

Information on how to sign up your garden can be found in the resources section of this guide.



What is a community garden?

Community gardens are unique, locally managed pieces of land that are developed in response to the needs of the communities in which they are based.

Existing community gardens vary greatly in size, from a few square metres to a park-sized area of several hectares. Most existing community gardens do not own the land they use but are leased for a nominal sum.

As you can see from the examples below, they can be found in schools, housing projects, places of worship, derelict land and on private land. While they all serve as catalysts for bringing people together, some of them focus on growing food to help the local environment, some focus on community education, others on nutrition and exercise. Some simply provide a place for sharing the love of gardening with like-minded people.

School gardens

Many schools are now getting involved in growing food. Forster

Park Primary School has even appeared on BBC TV programme Gardeners World, launching its Dig In campaign, whilst Forest Hill Boys' School have turned a neglected area of their school into a thriving allotment site.

Derelict/disused land

Many people may know of a neglected plot of land that could serve a practical use. Friendsbury Gardens on the Honor Oak estate was one such area that was blighted by overgrown vegetation and fly tipping. It is now a thriving park with raised beds where the local community now grow their own food.

Gardens on housing land

There are many underused plots of land that belong to housing organisations. Lewisham Homes have identified several plots of housing land, such as underused grassed areas, where residents are currently planning on growing their own food.





Orchards

The adventurous amongst you may like to look at bringing orchards back to London, as the Brockley Ward Assembly are doing.

Bee keeping gardens

Bee keeping encourages wildlife to the area while providing pots of honey and helping to save the declining honeybee population.

Container gardens

Some plots may not first appear to be obvious growing sites. But containers, raised beds or even disused one tonne builders' bags could be used to transform areas with solid surfaces into mini allotments producing fresh, sustainable food.

Private land

There may also be underused private land that could be a good plot for growing food. A local resident approached St Saviours Church Yard in Brockley, to see if the church was prepared to allow the grounds to be used for growing food. The project is now used as an informal educational space for children, teaching them about the natural life cycles of plants and environmentally friendly gardening techniques.

So, if you know of a piece of derelict, run-down or underused land in the borough, and think it would benefit from a transformation into a pleasant, public open space, then you should consider starting your own community garden. Here's how.



Choose your site

A plot of land may have already caught your eye in your local neighbourhood or you might want to have a wander round your area to see if there are any potential sites.

Things to consider when selecting your site

Location

Ensure it is within walking distance or a short journey from potential participants in the project.

Check on the aspect of the plot – if you want your plants to grow well, you will need to be sure the site gets plenty of sun.

Ideally, you will want to be located close to a water source.

The site should be reasonably flat and not contain very large pieces of concrete, as large amounts of rubble or debris can be difficult to shift and there could be a cost to have it cleared by machinery. Alternatively,

if the area is paved, you can consider other ways to grow food such as the ‘vacant lot’ idea (see www.what-if.info/VACANT_LOT.html) where you can use large builders’ bags to grow vegetables, or you could take up bee keeping to get your own supply of sweet, local honey.

Security

Ideally, your garden should have a fence around it, with a gate wide enough for a vehicle to enter.

Soil

Before making plans, check the soil is suitable for growing vegetables and whether there has been any contamination. You can contact the Council to see if the land is on the Council’s register of contaminated land. If it is not, then you will still need to get the soil tested, or find alternative means of growing food such as in raised beds (guidance applies as to how these should be constructed) or in large builders’ bags.

Related resources

- ▶ Landshare is a land matchmaking service. You can post a listing outlining whether you are a grower, landowner or helper, and you will receive a response if someone can help you out. There is also a blog where you can chat to like-minded people. Visit www.landshare.channel4.com
- ▶ To see if the land is Lewisham Council-owned or not and to ensure that your plot is suitable for growing food, contact Environment and Community Development Team at Lewisham Council, who can discuss the available options, including how to arrange to take soil samples. There will be a fee for soil tests and Land Registry searches if required. Email communitygardens@lewisham.gov.uk or call 020 8314 2068.



Find out who owns the land, set up a lease agreement and check on insurance

It is illegal to use land without obtaining the owner's permission, so take the information you have about the location of the sites and as a first point of call, contact Lewisham Council. If the land is not Council-owned, you may then have to do your search via the Land Registry.

Be sure to mention to the landowner the value of the garden to the community and the fact that your gardening group will be responsible for keeping the site clean and weed-free.

Prepare and negotiate a lease agreement and terms for use for the site. You should attempt to negotiate a lease agreement for at least three years.

To operate a community garden, you should have public liability insurance cover to indemnify you against being held responsible for the injury, disability or death of people visiting or taking part in your activities. Cover should be obtained for a

minimum of £2 million, however most groups are now insured for £5 million.

You are legally responsible from the day you take over a site. It is strongly recommended that in order to protect your group from any mishaps on site, you take out public liability insurance before any site work is undertaken, even if it's only temporary clearance work prior to signing an agreement.

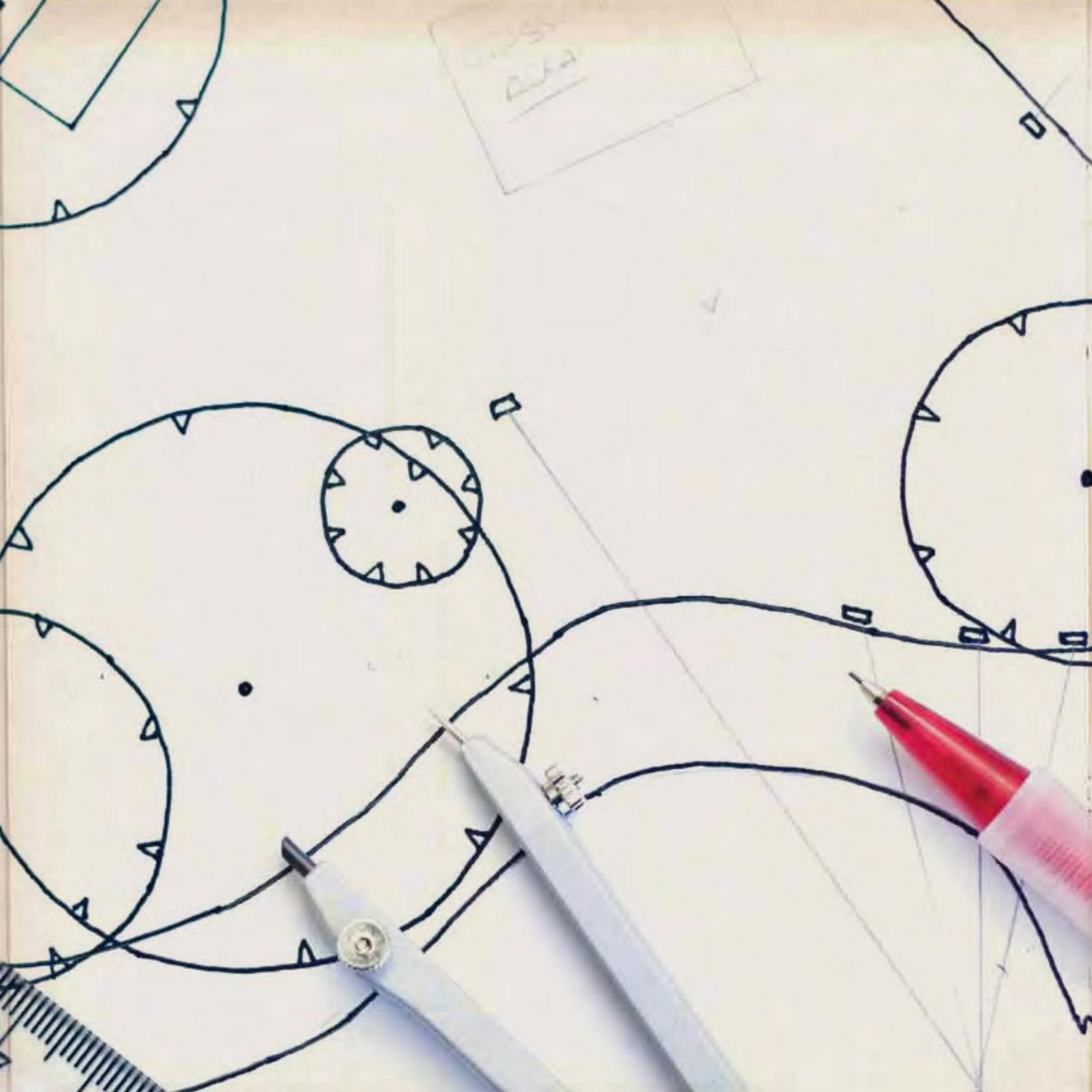
Related resources

- Lewisham Council's Environment and Community Development Team will be able to identify whether Lewisham Council owns the land. If the land is Council-owned, you may be covered under the Council's public liability insurance. Email communitygardens@lewisham.gov.uk or call 020 8314 2068.
- Land Registry can be contacted to identify who owns the land you

may be interested in. Visit www.landregistry.gov.uk. There is a fee for this service.

- The Federation of City Farms and Gardens (FCFCG) operates a preferential scheme with an insurance company that it is familiar with, and has prepared cover which is suitable for small community gardens. Visit www.farmgarden.org.uk or call 0117 923 1800.
- The Environmental Law Foundation specialises in environmental matters and gives free advice. Visit www.elflaw.org or call 020 7404 1030.
- There may also be local people willing to offer their professional services to your project through TimeBank. Visit www.timebank.org.uk or call 0845 456 1668.

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Get your committee together and start making plans!

It is important when setting up a community garden that there is plenty of support for the project from the group, led by a well organised garden co-ordinator. It's a good idea to start off with a small steering group to exchange ideas and if there is sufficient interest, you may then need to establish a more formal management committee to properly co-ordinate duties such as planning events and activities, applying for funding and carrying out legal responsibilities.

Alternatively, you could also join an association that is already constituted, such as the Lewisham Environment Trust, local societies or the ward assembly for your area.

Things your committee will need to consider

- Determine if there really is a need and desire for a garden and, if so, what kind of garden would be most suitable – one that grows vegetables, flowers, trees, or a combination? **Please note that in**

order to take part in the Capital Growth project and its benefits including support, your garden will need to grow food.

- Who will the garden serve – young people, older people, families or those who just want an opportunity to improve their local environment?
- What type of role will the garden play – food production, community building, environmental restoration, beautification or recreation?

- Who are the potential supporters of the garden – businesses, neighbours, local community groups, schools?

- How will you go about recruiting members and keeping records of membership? This is particularly important if you are applying for funding.

Related information

Lewisham Environmental Trust is an umbrella organisation that may be able to assist in the formulation of your group. Email Nicholas Taylor at njwytaylor@hotmail.co.uk or call 020 8690 6492. To get information on local societies in your area email communitygardens@lewisham.gov.uk or call 020 8314 2068.





Now for getting your hands dirty preparing and developing the site

The following is an outline of the main tasks in setting up the actual site. Some of these may not apply if the area you are working on is very small.

Planning the garden

Community members should be involved in the planning, design, and set-up of the garden. Before the design process begins, you should measure your site and make a simple site map, drawn to scale. Hold two or three garden design meetings at times when interested participants can attend. Make sure that group decisions are recorded in minutes, or that someone takes accurate notes.

Recruiting volunteers

Volunteers are a valuable resource and can assist in the development of a community garden in a number of ways, ranging from digging and planting, to leafletting, to carrying out committee duties.

Volunteers come with a range of skills and expectations which need to be managed to benefit both parties.

Clean the site

Schedule community workdays to clean up the site. How many work days you need will depend on the size of the site, and how much and what kind of debris is on site. You will then need to organise volunteer work crews and plan your work day. Please remember to dispose of any waste legally.

The next step is to develop your garden's design further, gather your resources, and if possible, gather free materials.

If your garden is large, include plans for a storage area for tools and other equipment, as well as a compost area. Finally, a rainproof bulletin board is handy for announcing garden events and messages.

Related information

Envirowork Lewisham is a social enterprise run by Lewisham residents, providing employment and ground-based training to unemployed local people through working on open





space community projects and commercial and private landscaping contracts. If you need help with getting your plot developed visit www.enviroworklewisham.co.uk. There will be a fee for their services.

If you need a little extra help in the early days of your garden, then additional volunteers can be sought through TimeBank, www.timebank.org.uk or through Lewisham Council, which has its own volunteering scheme. For further details, contact the Environment and Community Development Team on 020 8314 2068 or email communitygardens@lewisham.gov.uk.

Organise the garden

You may need to consider conditions for membership such as fees and agreement with rules.

If there is to be a membership fee, consider how much you should charge for membership, as these fees could help to cover some of the costs of running the garden. What will active members receive in return for their membership?

You will also need to organise how often gardeners will meet, what tasks they will be responsible for and how tools will be distributed.

How will regular maintenance, in particular weeding, be handled both inside plots and in common areas such as along fences, in raised vegetable beds and in seating areas?

For large groups it is advisable to have a set of written rules so that users know what is expected of them and what standards they should adhere to.

If you are considering dividing your land into plots, think about how they will be assigned, i.e. by family size, by residential areas, by need, by age groups etc.

How large should each plot be and how will they be laid out?

Different users will have different requirements and your planning should incorporate this.



Finances and fundraising

Reducing your need for money

The long term sustainability of your garden can come from in-kind support in the form of good advice, good volunteers and donations of materials and services.

Reducing your need for money comes down to your garden's forward planning, organisational systems and negotiating skills. Ways to consider reducing costs include:

- could you pay less for services or products you regularly use, such as bank charges?
- consider your insurance – is it appropriate and could you pay less?
- do you attract voluntary help and have good systems in place to support volunteers?
- do you get rate relief as a charity?
- can you get preferential discounts from your suppliers?

- do you practice the five R's: reduce, re-use, repair, recycle and review?
- do you encourage and make use of donations of services and resources?
- are there any co-operatives or buying consortiums that you can belong to?
- do you get involved with local time banks?

Raising money within your community

Most community gardens are ideal locations for hosting a variety of social events such as barbeques, harvest suppers, picnics and games, discos and community celebrations. These can be valuable publicity opportunities, and by charging an entrance fee, or by adding some other fundraising element to the event, you can generate income for your garden. You may also eventually be able to sell surplus plants,





cuttings and produce from the garden, like jams, honey and crops as well as home made bird feeders or window boxes.

Securing funding from other sources

As a constituted group you will be able to apply for funding via charitable organisations. There is always competition for this kind of funding. If you expect others to fund your activities and help develop your garden, then it is important that you offer good value for money and can prove that your group is well managed.

Think through a range of potential fundraising channels and critically consider which are likely to be successful for your group, and only apply for funds that are included in your group's overall development plan. It is also advisable to seek to develop a relationship with existing and potential funders.

Related information

The main pots of funding available are from The Big Lottery Fund, visit www.biglotteryfund.org.uk or call 0845 410 2030.

For smaller pots of funding the local assembly in your area may be able to help, for example £5,000 from the Mayor's Fund has been given to the Hither Green Community Association for the group to create a community garden by Hither Green station. The local assemblies are also a useful way of accessing the support of local councillors, who can help you to make connections with other active groups in your area. Contact the Council's Local Assemblies Team on 020 8314 6730 or visit your local assembly's web pages at www.lewisham.gov.uk/localassemblies.

Capital Growth will also be able to provide information on funding and may also have their own funding pot. Contact details for Capital Growth can be found at the end of this guide.



Health and safety

When operating a community garden, the health and safety of all users is paramount.

Common hazards in community gardens are as follows:

- ▶ poisonous plants
- ▶ pathways and walkways
- ▶ use of wheelbarrows
- ▶ use of garden tools
- ▶ use of power and electrical tools
- ▶ compost heaps
- ▶ dogs.

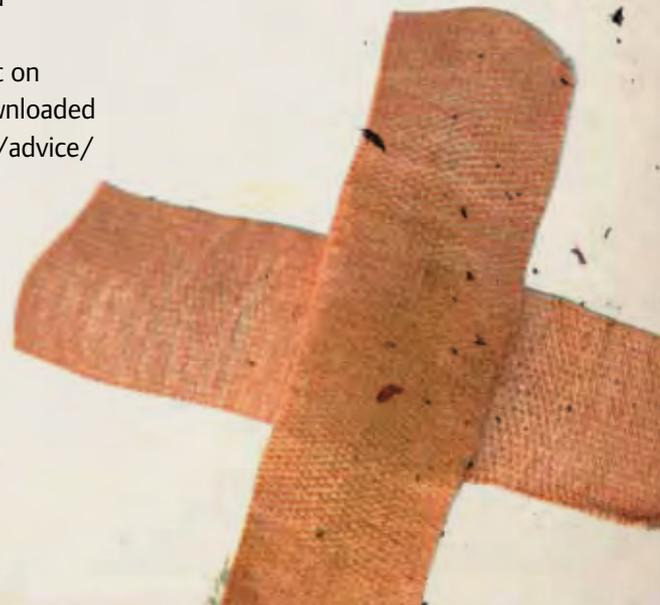
To ensure the safety of the users of the garden you are advised to:

- ▶ have a health and safety policy
- ▶ carry out regular inspections of the site and its facilities, and act on any problems that may arise
- ▶ provide good health and safety information, training and supervision

- ▶ provide preventative advice and appropriate first aid
- ▶ provide appropriate amenities, such as clean washing and toilet facilities
- ▶ investigate and record information on any accidents
- ▶ have procedures for the safe use, handling, storage and transportation of articles and substances.

Related information

Health and safety advice and guidance can be found at www.hse.gov.uk. A factsheet on poisonous plants can be downloaded for free at www.which.co.uk/advice/gardening-factsheets.





How to manage your garden

A high quality, sustainable community garden programme entails much more than just planting seeds and watering at the right time of year. Good management and organisational techniques are essential.

Clear guidelines

Having written rules is very important when establishing a new garden, as they spell out exactly what is expected of a gardener and make it much easier to deal with challenges as they arise.

Some suggested issues that you might like to highlight in your rules and guidelines could be as follows:

- a set fee to help cover garden expenses
- information on what vegetables need to be planted when, and keeping a weekly/monthly maintenance calendar
- if a member is unable to commit to the planned work schedule, notification must be given in good time
- a commitment from each member to keep weeds to a minimum, regularly water and maintain the areas they are responsible for
- a commitment to clear any rubbish on site responsibly
- a code of conduct outlining expected behaviour and respect for neighbouring residents and tenants on and around the site
- a commitment to gardening organically, by agreeing not to use insecticides or weed repellents that will affect other plots
- agreement to a certain number of volunteering hours toward community gardening efforts – include a list of volunteer tasks that your garden requires.

Jobs to do

General maintenance and upkeep

A few general chores might be as follows:

- collection of any litter/debris
- sweeping or raking up stray leaves on walkways and paths
- trimming or mowing any areas of turf
- keeping walkway edges clean
- raking gravel paths
- upkeep of fences, sheds, etc. through the occasional coat of fresh paint
- clearing moss from stone or brick walkways, which could become slippery
- harvesting and storing vegetables.

Fertilizing

If you are starting a new garden, particularly in an urban area, you may find that your garden has only a small layer of rich topsoil, if any at all, and

the soil underneath may be unsuitable for cultivating vegetables.

In addition to this, continuously growing vegetables in the same soil will eventually deplete its nutrients. As a result, you may have to consider adding some fertilizer to maintain the health of your soils and keep your vegetables at their best.

The three major plant foods that need to be available in your garden are Nitrogen (N), Phosphorous (P) and Potassium (K). There are four basic types of fertilizers that can be applied to your garden that include these and other nutrients and they are composts, animal manures, natural or organic fertilizers and chemical fertilizers.

Chemical or artificial fertilizers should be avoided if at all possible, because the regular use of them can actually impede the soil's ability to hold nutrients and could impact on local water resources. For healthy plants and people, ditch the chemicals!

Pests

Whilst there are many beneficial insects that your plants rely on to keep them healthy and productive, there are also some insects and animals that will harm your garden by attacking the leaves, fruits or roots of your plants. So to help you protect your plants from pests, there are various methods

you can employ – physical control, cultural control, biological control and chemical control.

Physical control

This method of control involves physically keeping pests out of your garden with barriers and traps, as well as removing established pests on a one-by-one basis e.g. beer traps for slugs, mesh/wire netting to keep birds from eating soft fruits and upturned juice bottles with the tops cut off to put over young plants to protect them from slugs and birds.

Cultural control

This method involves choosing how, what, where and when to plant in your garden to help minimise attack by pests. Companion planting is one approach to cultural pest control – introducing plants that ward off specific pests. One of the oldest and well-known types of cultural control is the planting of marigolds to ward off flying pests and nematodes, but many other plants can do the job as well. Chives, coriander, and nasturtium can help ward off aphids while rosemary and sage keep carrot

flies at bay. Hyssop, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage and thyme keep cabbage moths out of your garden.

If you know that a certain type of insect pest could be problematic in your garden, timing your planting may be one way to avoid infestation. For example, planting summer squash late in the season so that they mature after squash vine borers have finished laying their eggs can help protect the plants from attack.

Keeping your garden clean is another approach – remove diseased plants, rotting fruits and debris because they will attract pests.

Biological control

It is easy to enlist a little help with keeping the pests in your garden under control. Try to attract pest predators like insect-eating birds, toads, bats, snakes, insects and frogs to your garden. There are many ways to attract these beneficial creatures, and certain approaches will also make your garden more attractive to people. Adding a bird bath or bird house will attract birds, as will the creation of a garden pond.



Old logs laid in a shady part of your garden will help attract toads and beetles, and flowers like sedum and butterfly bush will attract bees and butterflies. You can also purchase beneficial insects, like ladybirds, and set these loose in your garden.

Chemical control

Chemical controls should only be relied on as a last resort, because they can harm the soil and the beneficial insects that you need in your garden. Chemicals are also expensive and will be washed out of your garden when it rains. This run-off can pollute groundwater and waterways. Use chemicals only if you can find no other way to cope with the pests in your garden, and then do so sparingly. Insect-specific chemical treatments, like slug pellets will have little or no impact on the beneficial insects in your garden, but these can still have negative environmental consequences. Always make sure to read instructions carefully, and use only the minimum amounts recommended.

Watering

Watering is best done in the early morning or late evening, when you will lose the least amount of water to evaporation. Watering with a drip line (a hose or tape with holes in it) will help you minimize water loss, as it will deliver the water at the roots of the plants where it is needed.

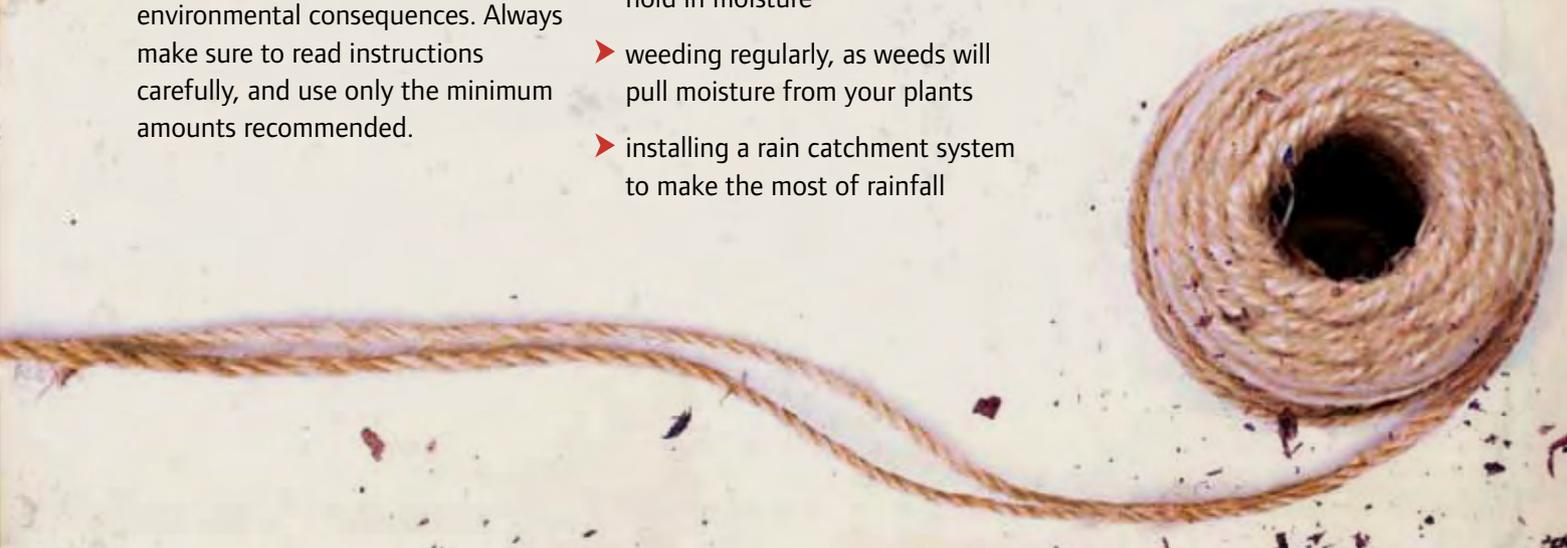
In sunny weather, you should do your best to keep water off leaves, fruits and flowers, where it will do little to benefit the plant and may lead to scorching.

You should try to conserve water whenever you can, and there are a few strategies that are useful to know. Water conservation tactics include:

- planting species that are well-adapted to the average rainfall in your region
- applying mulch to the soil to help hold in moisture
- weeding regularly, as weeds will pull moisture from your plants
- installing a rain catchment system to make the most of rainfall

- using drip irrigation to minimise evaporation
- avoiding planting or transplanting during dry spells
- enhancing sandy soils with organic matter to improve moisture retention.

Knowing how much water to use depends on the types of plants you have in your garden, as they all have different moisture needs. The most efficient way to irrigate your garden is to give it a good soaking once a week, which will penetrate deep into the soil, rather than watering just a little bit each day. As a general rule of thumb, a few types of plants need extra attention to ensure their watering needs are met and these are: transplants, seedlings, flowering vegetables and fruits, and container plants.





Weed control

Weeds are often considered the bane of any gardener, because they rob plants of moisture, nutrients, and light. Knowing a few basic weeding approaches can help keep them at bay. The first trick is to start early, and to remove weeds often in the spring and summer before they have a chance to go to seed. Make sure you remove the entire weed, including its root, as some plants are able to re-grow from just a small piece of root.

It is a good idea to weed during hot, dry periods, because the weeds will be easy to remove and will wither on the surface. When using a hoe, try to dig as shallow as possible to avoid disturbing the roots of your garden plants.

Lastly, it may be wise to learn about the weeds in your garden before beginning to eradicate them. A few plants that are treated as weeds, such as dandelions, purslane, nettles, burdock, and wild garlic, are actually highly nutritious and prized by cooks for their flavour.

Related information

- The Royal Horticultural Society provides information on garden maintenance and growing your own food, with a month-by-

month guide. Visit www.rhs.org.uk/gardening/growyourown.

- Garden Organic – Whether you are a novice gardener or need specific advice on dealing with a pest or disease, you'll find what you need here. Visit www.gardenorganic.org.uk.

Vandalism

Vandalism is a common fear among community gardeners. However, the fear tends to be much greater than the actual incidence. Try these proven methods to deter vandalism:

- Make a sign for the garden. Let people know to whom the garden belongs and that it is a neighbourhood project. Fences can be made of almost any material. They serve as much to mark possession of a property as to prevent entry.
- Create a shady meeting area in the garden and spend time there.
- Invite everyone in the neighborhood to participate from the very beginning. Persons excluded from the garden are potential vandals.
- Involve the neighbourhood children in 'learning gardens'. They can be the garden's best protectors.

- Plant raspberries, climbing roses or other thorny plants along the fence as a barrier to fence climbers.
- Make friends with neighbours whose windows overlook the garden. Trade them flowers and vegetables for a protective eye.
- Plant potatoes, other root crops or a less popular vegetable such as kohlrabi along the fence.

Final thoughts

Record keeping

It is a good idea to keep records to monitor your progress. These can be a combination of visual and written records and are a great way to see how much your garden has changed and developed over time. They also give members and volunteers a great boost to see how all their hard work has come to fruition.

Records are a way of learning for the future, by providing information by which activities to support and manage the garden can be reviewed, as well as the raw material from which reports are produced. Other purposes of record keeping are for publicity and presentations, applications for funding and reporting back to funders on how money was spent, and to inform you of how your planting plans have worked over time.



Success stories

Stanstead Road Garden Project

A photograph of a garden project. In the foreground, there is a concrete path with several small purple flowers. To the right, there is a large, dense cluster of green plants with large, rounded leaves. In the background, there are more green plants and a wooden fence. The text "Stanstead Road Garden Project" is overlaid in white on the image.



Stansted Road Garden Project

Choosing the site

The Stanstead Road Garden came about via a local resident, Ms Rebecca Leathlean, who was fed up with the depressing view of a brick wall and fly-tipping across the road. Having seen an article in Lewisham Life magazine about a community garden at Brockley Railway Station she felt inspired to start up a similar project.

Owner of the land

Having looked into the ownership of the land, she discovered it was owned by building equipment suppliers Travis Perkins. Rebecca then approached the company about developing the area and the company representatives were very positive and supportive of her

ideas. With additional support from local Councillor John Paschoud, and highways officers, she began to look further into options for the area.

Formation of the committee

Rebecca first contacted the Forest Hill Society to see if there were any members in the street. Luckily, there were, and Rebecca initially held a meeting with them and adjoining neighbours.

With the help of Councillor Paschoud, the committee handed out leaflets outlining their ideas to residents in the neighbourhood, and invited more people to help. As a result, Rebecca gained a core team of volunteers who continued to meet every month or two.

In order to make a bid for funding and meet the Travis Perkins' company requirements, the group became a constitution and formed a committee assisted by Groundwork South East London.

Funding

Groundwork, along with Saina Tebble of Gardens by Design, helped the group successfully apply for funding from Awards For All (Lottery Funding) and most recently managed to secure more funding from the Perry Vale Locality Fund, which was

used to fund a highly successful bank holiday beach party.

In-kind support for the beach party was contributed by the owners of a local restaurant, The Dewaniam, who provided food for the event. Ice cream was provided from the Barbaro's ice cream van of Honor Oak, music was provided by the DJs at the Railway Telegraph pub and Irish musicians from the Blythe Hill Tavern. Local artist Lesley Middleton provided scarecrows for photo posing.

Travis Perkins continue to donate tools to the project and offer materials at cost price. Employees also helped by delivering sand for the beach party and storing it free of charge until their next event.

The group continues to fundraise and has managed to raise about £500 to date from commissioning stall holders at events and selling items on eBay.

'We now hope to work on more projects,' says Rebecca. 'As for me, it's lovely to get up in the morning and see roses blooming opposite!'

Preparing and developing the site

Once funding was in place, the Stanstead Committee employed a garden designer, Sue Amos, to work with Groundwork on the project. Groundwork officially managed the project, employing Envirowork Lewisham and their own people, including beneficiaries, to excavate tree roots, prepare the soil and lay the Indian sandstone path. The existing concrete, with approval by Travis Perkins, was sold on eBay. The planting was done partly by Groundwork, partly by Sue and partly by volunteers from the street. After much hard work, the garden was officially opened by CBeebies star Sarah-Jane Honeywell in July.

Managing the garden

The Stanstead Garden members continue to have community planting days, mostly managed by Sue. Local school children have also been involved in making mosaics to go onto the path. Sue also organised a youth club project, which resulted in the beautiful big bird models that currently decorate the wall.

The project has a rota for the volunteers, which now involves about 30 households. The rota covers chores such as watering, litter collection, weeding, etc.

Volunteers from Travis Perkins also do a fortnightly litter check.

The group have a notice board in the garden to inform all passers by about their activities.

Interested parties are also contacted by email and any events are communicated by press releases, flyers, and posters.

Legal, health and safety, and insurance matters

In order to avoid any future discrepancies with the adjoining business regarding ownership of the land, a committee was formed to sign a 'maintenance agreement' stating who would be responsible for what. As a result, it was agreed that Travis Perkins would contribute an annual sum of money to help maintain the garden.

As the garden covers a relatively small area, there have not been any significant health and safety issues. Nevertheless, the committee did consider erecting a pergola and seating area but due to concerns over possible injuries and the potential for attracting anti-social behaviour, this did not go ahead.



When holding events such as the bank holiday beach party, during which the road was closed, the group had to gain the community's consent to close the road for the party and would not have been able to get permission from Lewisham Council to do this had they not provided evidence of this consent along with proof of their public liability insurance. This was inexpensively provided by a company that specialises in providing insurance to small community groups.

Success stories

Frensbury Gardens



Frensbury Gardens

Choosing the site

This garden is located on Pincott Place in Brockley, adjacent to the railway bridge. The area was previously a derelict piece of land prone to fly-tipping, which created an unwelcoming, unsafe environment.

Neighbouring residents, having tired of the look of the area, approached Lewisham Council with a view to clearing and bringing the land back into use for community benefit.

Owner of the land

Research into ownership of the land showed it was owned by more than one party, including the Crown Estates. Purchase of the area was therefore more complicated and was carried out by Lewisham Council's Legal Department.

Funding

Funding was secured via the Big Lottery Fund with contributions from Lewisham Council, Family Mosaic Housing and the South London and Maudsley Trust.

Preparing and developing the site

A soil sample analysis was carried out and recommendations were acted on.

Groundwork, in consultation with the residents, worked on the final design.

The development and construction of the site was carried out by Envirowork Lewisham, who also jointly managed the site for the first year with the local residents. The management of the site thereafter has been carried out by volunteers. The site now consists of a winding pathway bordered by beautiful floral areas and a number of raised beds for growing vegetables.

Forming a committee

Green Scene Council officers in partnership with community members, began to develop a list of interested parties through a series of consultation exercises and workshops. From these meetings, the committee was developed. The recruitment of members is an ongoing process and is aimed at involving as many members of the community as possible.

Managing the garden

A resident steering panel meets regularly to discuss the progress and development of the project and how to keep the garden maintained. With the help of funding from the

"I am new to the area and Frensbury Gardens has been a great way for me to get to know people in the local community. I have a young grandson and we have met other parents and kids through the garden. It has been very good for him."

Norma Hibbert, Lewisham resident.



Big Lottery Fund, the garden now also provides regular free gardening and horticultural activities, involving all sectors of the community, including schools, community centres, pensioners' groups, local businesses, the local health centre and an after school club.

Legal, health and safety, and insurance matters

The main legal issues have been with regards to establishing ownership of the land and securing permission to establish the garden.

The main thing to remember in terms of health and safety is to ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken for any events at the garden. For example, when the launch party was held, a risk assessment was done, actions were taken to mitigate the risks that were

identified in the risk assessment and a licence was obtained to play music in a public space.

For the construction aspect of the garden, everything was carried out in compliance with the Health and Safety Executive Construction, Design and Management regulations (2007).

Insurance is provided by Lewisham Council's insurance policy.

Progress to date

The garden has held activities such as:

- parent and toddler sessions
- winter workshops
- hanging basket workshops
- container gardening workshops
- bulb planting sessions with the local schools and nurseries

- a visit to Hampton Court Flower show
- a certified horticultural course
- themed floristry workshops.

More than 700 people have attended these activities.

The garden will also have a sculpture which was designed with the help of local residents. Once it is completed, it will form the focal piece of the garden.

The project is working closely with the Telegraph Hill Local Assembly to encourage use of the garden and to promote volunteering. The group has also secured further funding from the Telegraph Hill Local Assembly Mayor's Fund to extend this outreach activity and work with other communities in the ward to develop community gardens in their area.



General Links and Resources

Campaigns to get involved in

Capital Growth is a new organisation that is there to help people transform London into a green and productive city, with thriving communities and delicious fresh food! They want to help people all over London create new food growing spaces for their communities in their neighbourhoods and can offer in-kind support, guidance and advice on a range of issues. To assist them in their goal to see 2012 growing spaces in London by the year 2012 visit www.capitalgrowth.org and fill in an application form, or for further information call 020 7837 1228 or email capitalgrowth@sustainweb.org.

London in Bloom promotes, supports and encourages gardening, horticulture and environmental sustainability across London. As well as London boroughs taking part, Lewisham community gardens can be put forward for awards. The Stanstead Strip Community Garden in Forest Hill won a London in Bloom

Neighbourhood Award in 2009. For more information, visit www.londoninbloom.com or call 020 8662 1021. For further information contact Lewisham Council on 020 8314 2277 or email greenscene@lewisham.gov.uk.

Clean and Green Schools is a programme run for schools in Lewisham educating students on environmental issues such as litter, graffiti, waste disposal, energy, biodiversity and transport. This year they are adding in the theme of sustainable food to assist schools in their own food growing projects. Email recycle@lewisham.gov.uk or call 020 8314 2053.

Home composting can be used as a substitute for manures and fertilisers, and improves the structure and health of the soil, making it more fertile. Composting also reduces the amount of rubbish taken for disposal and reduces the cost to householders of dealing with waste disposal. To compost your garden waste,

contact recycle@lewisham.gov.uk or call CallPoint on 020 8314 7171 for a low-cost compost bin.

Local Resources

Visit the **Lewisham Community Garden Facebook** page to share ideas, ask questions and gain support from others in your area to develop your community garden. To access the group visit www.lewisham.gov.uk/communitygardens.

Bee keeping

If you only have a small space you may like to consider keeping bees. Helping protect the honeybee population is important and will provide you with pots of honey. For advice, guidance and training visit the London Beekeepers Association at www.lbka.org.uk. For more local advice visit www.kentbee.com/bromley/index.shtml or contact Mark Emptage at emptageb@aol.com.

Envirowork Lewisham are able to provide supervised labour forces for a variety of horticultural soft and hard landscaping projects, general open space maintenance and ecological conservation work, such as habitat creation. Projects vary from the development of Lewisham's nature reserves and town centre open spaces, to nature gardens for schools, to general open space maintenance for housing trusts and local communities, as well as private work such as garden landscaping and maintenance. At their Mayow Park Nursery, they also have a range of community garden plots which people are welcome to visit to get ideas on how to get a plot started. Visit www.enviroworklewisham.co.uk or call 020 8469 9620.

Groundwork Lewisham combine their skills in and knowledge of landscape design, community engagement and empowerment, employment and skills training, youth work, education, and environmental advice to deliver positive change for local people and places. For further information contact them on 020 8694 5000 or visit www.groundwork-london.org.uk.

General Information

Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG)

promotes, supports and represents city farms, community gardens and school farms throughout the UK and have produced a more detailed version of this guide. Visit www.farmgarden.org.uk or call 0117 923 1800.

Food Up Front supports people to grow food in their unused outdoor spaces. Whether it's front gardens, balconies, windowsills or back gardens, all members are given the opportunity to grow and share healthy, natural food. This helps to reduce food miles and dependency on supermarkets, whilst increasing self-reliance and community empowerment. You can also become a street representative and promote growing food. Visit www.foodupfront.org or call 0772 656 0703.

Garden Organic provides organic gardening advice to enable organic gardeners to focus their energy into increasing the natural health of their soil, choosing appropriate plant varieties, and working with nature to produce a healthy and productive garden. Information ranges from tips

for going organic, organic gardening guidelines, the 10 easiest vegetables to grow, to topical advice including what to do in your garden this month and questions and answers. Visit www.gardenorganic.org.uk for further information.

National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners

represents allotments nationwide, providing membership to allotment societies and allotment gardeners. They endeavour to provide advice and information to members, be they allotment or home gardeners, and to encourage people to live a healthy lifestyle by growing their own food. Visit www.nsalg.org.uk or call 01536 266576.

Permaculture Association promotes an ecological approach to design of gardens and gardening activities. Visit www.permaculture.org.uk or call 0845 458 1805.

The Royal Horticultural Society is the UK's leading gardening charity dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting good gardening. Their goal is to help people share a passion for plants, to encourage excellence in horticulture and inspire all those with an interest in

gardening. For further information visit www.rhs.org.uk.

Sustain is the alliance for better food and farming. The organisation advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. Sustain represents around 100 national public interest organisations working at an international, national, regional and local level. They also run the London Food Link campaign and have a publication called 'Growing Round the Houses' about growing food on housing estates. Visit www.sustainweb.org.

The London Wildlife Trust is the only charity dedicated solely to protecting the capital's wildlife and wild spaces, and engaging London's diverse communities through access to our nature reserves, campaigning, volunteering and education. Visit www.wildlondon.org.uk to see how you can incorporate and support wildlife in your community garden.

The Sensory Trust promotes and implements an inclusive approach to design and management of outdoor spaces, promoting richer connections between people and place, and an equality of access for all people, regardless of age, disability or background. Visit www.sensorytrust.org.uk or call 01726 222 900.

The Soil Association is a charity campaigning for planet-friendly food and farming through a number of campaigns. To find out more visit www.soilassociation.org.

Thrive is a charitable organisation whose activities are varied but are primarily focussed on championing the benefits of gardening to

individuals and organisations, as well as teaching techniques and practical applications so that anyone with a disability can take part and enjoy gardening. Visit www.thrive.org.uk or call 0118 988 5688.



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Şu adrese geri gönderiniz:

Göi trã vè:

Community Gardens

Wearside Service Centre

Wearside Road

Lewisham

London SE13 7E2

communitygardens@lewisham.gov.uk

For other formats, including BSL,

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