

# Leatherhead Community Garden



Committee Report for the Annual General Meeting  
Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2012

## General committee round up

All in all, the last 12 months have been outstanding. The garden has gone from strength to strength with ever growing members, visitors and links with local small businesses. There has been great interest from local primary school aged children and their families wanting somewhere local and safe for them to learn together. Our garden is just the place for families to come along to and work together as a team.

## Memberships

We have managed to attract 39 families to our email list, 152 facebook followers and 23 people following us on twitter. We've have had over 100 different people attend site across the year with the average attendance being 14 visitors per Saturday.

## Achieving our objectives

Listed below are our objectives and how we have achieved them.

- *To promote gardening and learning within the community of Leatherhead.*  
In order to achieve this we have built our link with the Swan shopping centre by taking gardening to the local community. We have worked with them to create and manage their planters in the car park on a regular basis. We have also promoted learning by running wood carving and willow weaving workshops to which volunteers have passed down their skills to new comers. West Hill School ran a successful family learning day on a Saturday which taught students and their families seed propagation, frugal gardening by taking cuttings and soil preparation.
- *To encourage groups and people to grow fruit and vegetables.*  
We have made a great start in the past 12 months by handing over the decision making of what to plant to our volunteers. We hope to develop upon this objective over the next 12 months.
- *To encourage a healthy lifestyle through exercise and fresh produce.*  
All visitors are encouraged to take away with them some of our harvest of fruit and vegetables as well as to share advice on how to prepare and cook them. We haven't actively encouraged exercise like jogging or weight lifting, however, due to the nature of gardening, we have encouraged the use of hand tools wherever possible in the garden rather than power tools.  
We have made chutneys using fresh produce from our garden. This has encouraged not to waste foods and to preserve them.

- *To encourage ecological awareness*  
We have actively chosen to plant single headed flowers that are preferred by honey bees and created two additional habitats around the garden.
- *To build social cohesion*  
The garden has built bridges between its members, the school and the local community. Moving forwards, we hope more people will visit our garden and form more links.

## Events

- *Wood carving & Willow weaving*  
A six session funded project in conjunction with Arts Alive was held at the Garden. Each wood work weekend was well attended, and the pieces of work to come out of the project will last forever. Seating, signs, willow wigwams and a bench were all crafted over the six weekends with over 50 people contributing to our sign on the main pathway
- *Arts Alive Month*  
To finish the Arts Alive celebrations, we were offered an empty retail property on the main High Street in Leatherhead for a day of live music, dance and crafts. We as volunteers peer taught other people on the day raising awareness and connecting with valuable contacts.
- *Farnham Maltings*  
As part of the Art Alive project, we were invited to Farnham to display the work we had done with Ruth Wheeler alongside the other six funded projects. We ran our own weaving workshops for the first time.
- *Pumpkin Carving*  
We harvested the homegrown pumpkins and skilfully carved them up in time for Halloween. Around 30 people joined us for carving and a free lunch of pumpkin soup or pumpkin curry, followed by pumpkin pie.
- *Chickens' First Birthday*  
There is nothing the chickens' wanted for their birthday so they asked us to use our time to help birds less fortunate than themselves. We crafted three types of bird feeder, hung them out around the Garden, and set up the Nature Cam to see the birds feeding. We caught on camera 15 species of bird as well as some young foxes and a badger's backside.
- *Scarecrow competition*  
With seven entries to the competition (including three entries from West Hill School) the competition drew a lot of interest with the local media. Four newspapers covered the story and this further promoted our Garden
- *Orchard planting*  
After a day of successful planting by the students of West Hill with the help of Jim Arbury, RHS Wisley's fruit tree specialist, the volunteers all had a hand in the planting of the last 15 trees. There was a good turn out on a cold March morning plus two families from West Hill who came specially to plant the trees they had sponsored.
- *Fruit cage planting*  
A very hot sunny day spent doing hard graft. New people got into the spirit of things and helped clear all the weeds before planting in the raspberry canes.
- *Family Learning Day*  
A day organised by West Hill to encourage and nurture learning outdoors and out of school

time was attended by five families. Garden volunteers matched the number of West Hill attendees causing a one to one ratio making the day successful.

- *Making Leatherhead Beautiful*

A two day working party to bring new life into old planters left abandoned in the Swan Centre Car Park. All the planters were in bloom by the time of the Olympic Cycle Weekend through Leatherhead

- *Bug hunt*

A two hour bug hunt that included using sweep nets, tree bashing, a forest walk and pond dipping (in trays!).

- *Sunflower Growing Competition*

Everyone enjoyed watching the sunflowers grow and brighten up the Garden. There are now over 25 sunflowers in the Garden.

### Fundraising

- *Olympic Fete*

Therfield School held this event early in the year where we made and sold hanging baskets, potted plants and raffle tickets. Ten volunteers helped man the stall and we raised over £300.

- *Ashtead Village Day*

The infamous village day was a scorching success. Selling similar things to the Olympic fete, we raised over £150.

- *Bytenight Car Boot Sale*

A car boot sale was a new venture for us to experiment with. It was a great opportunity for us to introduce the garden to our immediate residents where we raised £28 up to moment when the heavens opened and the rain poured down. This was the first event where we sold our chutneys and willow hearts.

- *Swan Centre Market Cart*

This was an exciting opportunity for us to run our own market stall in the middle of the town centre. In just 4 hours we managed to raise £90. We have been invited back to run another stall in time for Christmas. The feedback we received from local shoppers was very supportive. Samples of chutneys were available for everyone to try.

### Working with other partners

- Youth offenders
- Friends of Teazle Wood
- Swan Shopping Centre, Leatherhead
- Leatherhead Residents Association

### The next 12 months

We've learnt a lot over the last year about what grows well in our garden and what the local community enjoy participating in. We now hope to focus our attention on what has worked well and to start enjoying what we have on our doorstep. We've planned to work closely with the Friends of Teazle Wood to explore the magical diversity that is a stone's throw away from the garden.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Cheryl Allen for all her hard work and assistance with the fruit cage and orchard meadow, Patrick McCord for his assistance with finding funds, Gary Bates for being the Vice Chairman for the last year and Kayleigh Arunasalon for her tremendous support with admin and event organisation. Special thanks goes to Andy McFarlane for being my inspiration for making the garden what it is. He has a vision of how things will look once the orchard has matured and I can't wait for that time to arrive.

Phil Wessell

Chairman of the Leatherhead Community Garden