

Hello!

Welcome to the twenty-fourth newsletter from the Lambeth GP Food Co-operative. There's plenty of exciting news and updates from our latest activities, as well as some personal reflections and a chance to get to know our team.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. If you have any ideas for future stories or want any more information please get in touch with us by email gpfoodcoop@gmail.com, and don't forget to keep up-to-date with our activities through Twitter [@gpfoodcoop](https://twitter.com/gpfoodcoop) and our website <http://lambeth.gpfoodcoop.org.uk/>



NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2021

How gardening can help

Hi everyone, my name is Tom, a former patient of Pulross after I suffered a stroke in 2019. The Community Stroke team referred me to the gardening project as part of my rehabilitation. I was warmly welcomed by Ed Rosen and volunteers Molly and Muriel, who gently helped me grow vegetables. We grew pumpkin, swiss chard, lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes and a range of herbs, including thyme, spring onion, mint, marjoram and lemongrass.

Then the Covid-19 pandemic struck and I, like many others, was told to shield. This meant a year when I could not attend the project, meet extended family and friends, or go to work. The isolation and idleness were worse than in the movie Groundhog Day. It damaged my physical and mental health. With too much time on my hands, no structure to my days, disabled and frequently falling, I found myself spiralling into depression, dependent on increasing levels of prescribed medications. I was in a very dark place.

I joined the Gardening at Home buddy scheme receiving seeds and regular contact from co-founder Hilda, Ed and Kiu, who helped me through the lockdown.

After one year, the shield was lifted. By this time, I retired from my job on ill-health grounds after a 35 year career in Supported Housing Management. My family and medical team know my passion for gardening, suggested I return to the Pulross garden. I contacted Ed and Molly, who welcomed me back. We now have Julia, Liz, Brunette and nurse Leanne on the team, and the atmosphere is wonderful. So here I am back at Pulross gardens, part of a great team, the sun is shining, and our vegetables are thriving.

In many ways, the therapeutic benefits of the Pulross project may just have saved my life. If, you too, are looking for a volunteer opportunity, gentle exercise, fresh air, sunshine and a place where you'll feel welcomed, why not consider joining us here at Pulross or at any of the other LGPFC gardens?

Thanks, and happy growing!

Thomas Price-Ogunbiyi, Stroke Survivor



Thomas Price-Ogunbiyi gardening at Pulross Garden

Update from Ed

I have been thinking about the different meanings of an old Chinese saying which I first came across in late 2019, "May You Live In Interesting Times". Far be it for me to remind you just how 'interesting' these times are, and perhaps like me you might want our present time to be just a wee bit less interesting than they are. But on the other hand, these are our times, and for better or worse we are living through them together and living through them alone.

Our newsletter is one way we share our interest with you and hope that there is a big, wide, deep common interest that touches us all. This newsletter carries some of our stories from these Times starting with Tom's contribution on the front page in which he describes his personal journey over the past year. Jo is leading the Brixton Hill patients in the Katakata garden each Wednesday morning supported by surgery staff and Francklin from the restaurant. We have included a piece written by Ethel who gardens at Spring Hill surgery in Islington, as it represents one aspect of Lambeth GP Food Co-op's work which is often not as prominent as it might be which is how we share our learning with others and encourage them to build their own models of gardening for health. This is one story from the wider community in which we belong.

I want to thank the nearly 1,000 people who voted for us to become Co-op of the Year 2021 (small, multi-stakeholder category). Sadly, we did not win. What we did achieve was national recognition across the Co-operative movement of doing good. I am very happy with that and overjoyed with us being shortlisted. And since then, the interesting times have not stopped. Here is another shortlist of what we have been up to since our last newsletter.

Two zoom meetings with Vauxhall Constituency Labour Party and Lambeth Co-operative Party to explore their offer of volunteers to work with us; zoom workshop for Newham Council's Citizen's Assembly on the theme of green space and health improvement as part of their Greening the Borough workstream; GSTT's Nutrition and Hydration Week which included a community tea and garden tour at the Pulross Centre where Molly showed patients and staff the wonderful garden and introduced them to our gardening for health programme. Following a meeting organised by Dr Sommerville from GSTT's Stroke Consultants' Committee, we have agreed to support stroke patients to become actively involved in our work at the Pulross Centre and elsewhere. Lambeth GP Food Co-op appeared on a BBC Radio Five Live programme to comment on the recent National Food Inquiry Report. Dr Raj Mitra, a founding member of Lambeth GP Food Co-op put us in touch with the Greener Practice London network, a city-wide network of GP surgeries all of whom are actively engaged in some form of green redesign of their practices.

In early June we welcomed our friend Virginia Nimarkoh who heads up Lambeth Larder to our second Open meeting where she spoke about the Larder's work to support people in food emergency. And on Friday 30th July we began a 15 week pilot gardening for health project with the Brixton-based Health Inclusion Team. Hilda will be facilitating a weekly gardening session at Katakata restaurants garden for refugees and asylum seekers. The Health Inclusion Team provides health and wellbeing support to people who are registered with them and we are pleased to be providing gardening support.

This will be our last newsletter until mid-Autumn. We wish you well over the remainder of the summer and I want to end by thanking everyone who keeps the Lambeth GP Food Co-op show on the road especially Mohah, Kiu, both John's, Jonathan, Anna, Hilda, Raj, Molly, Elisabeth H, Flora, Greg, and many more. Thank you.

Ed Rosen, Project Director, Lambeth GP Food Co-op

Welcoming Jo

Hi, I'm Jo, the new gardener for the Brixton Hill Surgery gardening group, held in the back garden of Katakata restaurant. I'm very happy to have been offered this role and grateful to Anke, the former gardener for passing on her knowledge of this garden to me. Mostly I'm looking forward to meeting the gardeners and getting stuck in very soon!

I started my working life as an archaeologist, digging on sites across the south of England in advance of development. I loved working outdoors and having my hands in the soil most of the time. I moved on to work with historic buildings and have worked for a number of local authorities as well as English Heritage; currently I'm with Lewisham Council.

Alongside my job I have always enjoyed gardening and nature and have done some RHS and Permaculture courses, and trained in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture with THRIVE, a wonderful organisation based in Battersea Park. For a short while I led gardening classes for children in a north London school, and then for 6 years worked with London Wildlife Trust leading a project called Potted History – gardening and reminiscence for older people. I set up groups across Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark with Big Lottery Funding, in residential care homes, day centres, community centres and GP's surgeries. It was very gratifying to enable older people with chronic health conditions to spend time in nature, as well as coming together to chat! We received more funding and requests to run groups, including for Sutton and Merton CCGs, South London and Maudsley Hospital Trust as well as a weekly group at the Centre for Wildlife Gardening funded by Southwark Council.

That project has now ended and so I'm very happy to be able to join the LGPFC and am looking forward to meeting and learning more from the garden and new gardeners at Katakata.

Jo Ecclestone, gardener, Brixton Hill Surgery gardening group

Photo: Jo with Francklin from Katakata and members of the gardening group



Spring Hill Garden Project

Gardens and gardening have a great impact on lives and wellbeing. It seems apt to use the small derelict space, at the front of Spring Hill surgery, to create a garden, a refuge from urban life.

At the moment the soil is almost non-existent, just rough grass covering uneven mounds of builders' rubble. There is very limited budget so far, we rely on the volunteers to bring plants and seeds and hard work. The plan is to build raised beds and troughs and to grow climbers by the wall. It will be nice to have some seats as the project aims to provide support and comradeship to patients at Spring Hill. A small sanctuary on the Guinness Estate side of the surgery. It will be good to create a 'potager' which is no more than the French word for a kitchen garden. Due to lack of space we aim to concentrate on salad vegetables and edible greens which retain leaf, stem or flower colour in winter.

We shall be grateful to anyone who has spare plants, bulbs or cuttings to donate. The volunteers are very friendly, full of enthusiasm and keen to develop the project further. The project also helps volunteers to develop their skills, work as part of a team and provide support to those who wish to drop by, come to see the garden or just come for a chat. All welcome!

Ethel, member of Spring Hill Garden Project Group



Setting up community & gardening groups
on Stamford Hill Estate

Please note our Lambeth GP Food Co-op office will be closed over the summer from Monday 16th August – Monday 6th September inclusive.