

## Hello!

Welcome to the twenty-sixth 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](mailto: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 – MARCH 2022**

## Update from Ed

This issue of our newsletter is focussed on Biodiversity. Our communities will have an active contribution in creating an imaginative approach to making biodiversity a real lived experience for all residents across Lambeth.

We are delighted to be part of the newly formed Lambeth Council Biodiversity Forum which met for the first time last month. Kevin Crook, Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods, Environment and Streetscene describes Lambeth Council's thinking in creating this important forum. Kevin emphasises the leadership role local communities will play in shaping the local biodiversity agenda, an approach which Janine Nelson, Head of Learning at the Garden Museum recognises in her inspiring piece on Caribbean gardeners. Sowing Roots brings to wider public attention the experiences of gardeners with global roots. This perspective is also at the heart of Dr Andrew Ormerod's article. Andrew draws on his experience of researching the concept of the "global garden", first at the Eden Project and later independently supported by the Winston Churchill Fellowship. We look forward to working with all three colleagues during 2022 as we come together to transform our environments and community spaces to enhance biodiversity and sustainability in an age of climate degradation.

On Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February, three Lambeth GP Food Co-op members spent the day at the Pulross Centre preparing the garden for reopening next month. The vegetable garden will be used by patients and staff to learn how to grow vegetables and we will write more about this aspect of our work and our relationship with Essentia/GSTT in the next newsletter. I would like to thank Elisabeth, Greg and Caroline for braving the incessant rain to be in the garden and I would also like to thank the 14 Good Gym volunteers who spent an hour more that evening completing the clearing of the garden.

My final thanks is to Flora Gordon from Urban Growth who is leaving her role as group Leader at Jennie Lee. Flora joined us almost five years ago to lead the gardening sessions which she has done with skill, commitment and good humour. We will miss her and wish her all the best for the future.

Interest in Lambeth GP Food Co-op continues and we have been delighted to contribute to the Co-operative Party's London, South East and East of England Regional Conference following an invitation from Lambeth Councillor Anna Birley. NHS England will be including us in its toolkit on the future use of NHS land for gardening which is due to be circulated across the NHS in the summer. I was pleased to contribute alongside Dan Hopewell from Bromley by Bow to a discussion with Kent GP's as they plan a gardening for health project in Ebbsfleet.

We welcome comments and questions from our readers as well as ideas for future articles. Please contact us at [gpfoodcoop@gmail.com](mailto:gpfoodcoop@gmail.com)

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

## Sowing Roots

Sowing Roots has just concluded at the Garden Museum. The exhibition is the result of an oral history project about the gardening and horticultural heritage of people of Caribbean descent living in south London. It came about partly as a response to the Windrush scandal but also a desire to diversify the museum audience.

We started the project during the pandemic in 2020 and interviewed Lambeth GP Food Co-op community gardener Earline Hilda Castillo Binger (photo below left) and her son Peter. Hilda is originally from Trinidad and came to the UK to train as a nurse. When she retired from nursing, she became interested in community gardening. She's now a Trustee of Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses and still very busy with community gardening at GP surgeries in Lambeth.

A total of fifteen gardeners of Caribbean descent were interviewed by young people about what gardening means to them, growing food and memories of childhood and family traditions. The oral history recordings are now part of the Garden Museum's archive.

The participants were photographed in their growing spaces, these include a community garden on Blackfriars Estate, a garden created at a Sports ground, allotments, private gardens and Loughborough Farm (a growing site for volunteer gardeners). A selection of the photographs is on display at the museum along with objects that have been lent by the participants, including a favourite pair of orange gardening gloves. We have books on loan from the West India Committee, and these too are on display.

We have incorporated the artwork of Jamaican born artist Rudi Patterson into the exhibition and its design. He came to the UK in the 1950s and became a successful model and actor but after a serious water-skiing accident devoted his time to painting and ceramics.

The exhibition has been organized around five themes that came out of the oral histories. The five themes are Remembering, Harvesting, Healing, Empowering and Belonging. Quotes from the interviews have been used throughout to create a sense of the nature of an oral history project.

The exhibition includes a film of the story of Mr. Brenton Pink, resident of Lewisham for many years who passed away in 2017. A larger-than-life character, he painted his house bright colours inside and out, and was very proud of creating a 'little bit of Jamaica' in his front garden.

We had a team of freelancers involved in the project: Jen Kavanagh an oral historian who trained the young people and was involved in the interviews; photographers Federico Rivas and Ingrid Guyon of Fotosynthesis; and two project curators, Elizabeth Cooper and Ekua McMorris. I was involved in coordinating the project in my role as Head of Learning at the Garden Museum.

There will be an online version of the exhibition available after 6th March on the Garden Museum's website. There has been an accompanying programme of events and activities for the public. The project and programme have been funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Janine Nelson, Head of Learning, Garden Museum



## Lambeth Biodiversity Forum

Lambeth's new Biodiversity Forum launched last month, with 26 people attending the inaugural meeting, held at Roots and Shoots in Kennington. Created by Lambeth Council, the Forum is a partnership bringing together nature conservation organisations, representatives from a wide range of community groups, and residents passionate about nature.

The objectives of the Forum are:

- To promote and support action to enhance biodiversity within Lambeth.
- To support, encourage and positively influence the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity as a strategic issue within Lambeth.
- To develop and maintain closer working relationships between those organisations and partnerships operating within Lambeth, with an interest in enhancing biodiversity.
- To have the capability to act as a single voice for biodiversity opinion within the borough.
- To proactively seek to be representative of Lambeth's diverse communities and operate in a fully inclusive manner.



Lambeth declared an ecological and climate emergency in 2019 and the Forum is one way Lambeth will be responding. England is one of the most nature deprived countries in the world, following hundreds of years of habitat loss and agricultural intensification. Yet nature can thrive in urban areas. We have a colony of the rare White-letter Hairstreak butterfly living in Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, and in Brockwell Park in 2021, 85 species of bird were recorded, compared to only 50 in Dulwich Park. This is partly due to topography, but the varied habitats and changes to management in recent years, including re-wilding over 20 acres, are contributing factors. Particular highlights included Water Rail, Redwings, Skylarks; and Whitethroat and Reed Warbler, both breeding for the first time.

The Forum will be closely linked to the Environment Act 2021, which enacted a wide range of statutory obligations on biodiversity. Key among these is a network of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), to cover the entire country. There will be a single Strategy for London, co-ordinated by the GLA, however early indications are that boroughs will have a fairly free hand in terms of producing their own contribution. LNRSs must be community-driven, making use of residents and community organisations to identify sites with potential for wildlife, mapping them all, making sure they are all managed sympathetically for biodiversity, and identifying ways in which sites can be connected. We hope that the Forum will be the catalyst for this local survey work and that Forum members will take responsibility for surveying specific areas of the borough.

Lambeth will be launching its Bee Roads project during 2022 – converting all road verges and land close to roads into linear wildflower meadows, through stripping the existing species-poor turf and planting a wildflower mix. Again, we hope that Forum members will get involved in identifying potential sites and helping with the project – sowing wildflower seed for example. Lambeth has invested an initial £50,000 into the project and has applied to the GLAs Green and Resilient Spaces Fund for an additional £500,000 to accelerate delivery.

There are lots of organisations across Lambeth doing a huge amount of work to enhance biodiversity and we hope the Forum will start identifying, linking and co-ordinating this work to maximise the overall benefit and increase the amount of information being produced.

For more information on the Forum and to get involved, please email [parks@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:parks@lambeth.gov.uk).

Kevin Crook, Assistant Director Neighbourhoods, Environment and Streetscene, Lambeth Council

## Researching “lost crops”

I began researching the science of plant breeding over 40 years ago and have developed a deep interest in understanding the experience of plant breeders especially in Africa and Latin America and other parts of the world as they have an important contribution to make to our thinking on biodiversity. I am especially interested in ways in which their experience of cultivating 'lost' or underutilised crops can offer new insights into how we think about improving our diet and nutrition, drawing on knowledge and understanding from agricultural cultures other than our own.



My passion for understanding the global experience of diversity in crops and how they contribute to indigenous diets elsewhere on the planet began in my teenage years. This was further developed by my work over 15 years at the Eden Project in Cornwall in my role as Economic Botanist. Whilst at the Eden Project I was actively involved in the area of 'lost crops'. These are fruits and vegetables that were mainly located in Africa and Latin America, many of which have had an important place in traditional diets often with real benefits for community health and wellbeing.

These themes were explored in our Global Gardener workshops at the Eden Project as we shared our knowledge and understanding of Biodiversity and Health to include recognising the value of traditional varieties of fruits and vegetables that have almost been eclipsed and hidden by the modern food industry. Drawing on the insights gained by colleagues from around the world I would argue that our communities from Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America have a real contribution to make to our thinking about biodiversity and health improvement as we make progress in these areas.

My interests have continued which culminated recently with the award of a Churchill Research Fellowship (2018). The title of my project was “Community engagement and participatory selection in tree and field crops”. This allowed me to understand how communities get involved in the process of breeding and selecting perennials (such as fruit and nut trees) and annual crops in parts of Africa, Europe and North America.

Could these methods used here be transferable to the UK? The aim of my research is to work alongside communities using participatory engagement methodologies to work together in selecting traditional food crops that can be successfully grown in the UK and might contribute to improvements in their diet and nutrition. A further aim is to encourage deeper interest in plant sciences and in doing so help create empowered food communities.

I am in the process of exploring how these outcomes are best achieved.

Dr Andrew Ormerod, Economic Botanist

*Photo above of Dr Ormerod and colleagues at the World Agroforestry Centre*