

Hello!

Welcome to the twenty-third 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 – MAY 2021

We have been nominated for an award – please vote for us!

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Update from Ed

This Wednesday 5th May, we re-open the garden on Brixton Hill. The vegetable garden is an example of a partnership between our friends from Katakata restaurant, Brixton Hill surgery and ourselves. Jo Ecclestone, our new group leader, will be welcoming Brixton Hill patients to a first session in the garden with weekly sessions continuing during the spring and summer months.

Our gardening at home/garden buddy scheme for people self-isolating due to long Covid or other long term conditions is continuing with new patients being supported by a team of experienced gardening buddies. More on this in our next newsletter.

VOTE FOR US!

Lambeth GP Food Co-op has been shortlisted for the award of Co-op of the Year 2021 in the small multi stakeholder category. We are humbled to have been short listed and stand a chance of being awarded this accolade only if we have sufficient votes. So please VOTE FOR US!

Thank you.

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



Some of the latest photos from our gardens, where we have been able to continue our activities over the last few months.



Suttons is thrilled to support Lambeth GP Food Co-op with a further donation of seeds for their patients, having donated multiple deliveries during the pandemic while some of the community have been self-isolating.

Suttons has provided a mixture of a further 6 varieties to include tomatoes and a selection of vegetables, most can be grown in small spaces making them perfect for growing on a patio or balcony and we hope these will help those who continue to self-isolate to benefit from both the pleasures of gardening whilst growing some of their own home-grown produce from a small space, these include Dwarf French beans and peas, summer favourites of cherry tomatoes and beetroots plus carrots and courgettes to provide a healthy mix.

We hope the selection provided encourages those patients who have seen prior success with growing from seed to continue growing with some of these other varieties, thus supporting their journey in growing their own, whilst keeping spirits high and inspiring the community to engage in growing their own this season.

Clare Mutton

SUTTONS
Est. 1806



What is a forest garden?

Imagine if every hospital, GP surgery, mental health unit and care home had a forest garden for wellbeing. Imagine if we deliberately designed our healthcare environments so that we could experience health and well-being benefits in the space around the building as well as inside the building. We know intuitively that spending time outside in nature, particularly in complex natural biodiverse environments such as woodlands, makes us feel good. This tacit knowledge goes back centuries; for example, Hippocrates the father of Medicine said "If you are in a bad mood, go for a walk; if you are still in a bad mood, go for another walk." Nevertheless, when creating these environments some planting styles offer greater benefits, so we want to introduce you to Forest Gardens!

This planting style aims to mimic a natural forest ecosystem. That means [planting in layers](#), for example considering groundcover, shrubs and canopy. These layers should be complementary, fulfilling functions in the ecosystem such as cycling nutrients, providing harvests throughout the seasons and considering succession of plant lifecycles. Therefore, forest gardens are highly productive, and low maintenance once established. They also benefit wildlife through increased diversity and complexity, and store more carbon than tree planting alone. Regarding [wellbeing and forest gardens](#) it's suggested the same abundance contributes to sensory factors enhancing wellbeing effects, and engaging in such spaces can meet all five ways to wellbeing ([more on multiple benefits](#)).

There are already Forest Gardens in healthcare settings around the country. Stratford-upon-Avon's community hospital worked with staff and a local gardening charity to set up a Forest Garden for well-being. There are stories of staff getting a bit of headspace in the garden during their lunch break; refuelling before going back to work on the busy wards. A care home near Calderdale has worked with a local forest gardener, a school and their residents to design a garden together. This has proven a great intergenerational initiative, and a valuable source of healthy food growing for the care home kitchen. There's also a garden project growing and evolving at the Royal United Hospital in Bath. A doctor in Bath brought a team together to develop this Forest Garden for well-being through telling stories capturing the imagination and the deep-seated desire of a diverse range of staff to make their workplace greener and more sustainable.

These stories and more were captured through the National Forest Gardening Scheme (NFGS) seminar series on forest gardening and wellbeing where Dr David Wickstead gave an excellent presentation about LGPFC and green social prescribing ([watch the recordings on our website](#)).

Since 2009 [the NHS Forest project](#) have planted trees for wellbeing on NHS sites, and forest gardens have a legacy of decades. But these ideas are gaining momentum, with the government recently [committing millions to social prescribing](#) - including [test sites for green social prescribing](#), and highlighting community forests and care farms in their 25-year Environment Plan. Given the context of the climate emergency and COVID-19 recovery, we need the benefits of these spaces more than ever. The NFGS developed [seven principles](#) and a set of '[design guilds](#)' to support people designing forest gardens. If you want to find out more or get advice please get in touch or check [our website](#) for resources – nationalforestgardening.org

Nickie Bartlett and Hannah Gardiner, NFGS Directors

Is there a green answer to our healthcare systems?

My name is Pola Hernández Olivan and, after studying Food Science and Technology, and a Master's degree in European Public Health, I have been working as Food Policy and Projects Officer at Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Europe for the last five years.

I have always felt passionate about the topic of green spaces, and the pandemic has just accentuated its importance for public health. For that reason, when last year I got the chance to delve deep into this fundamental issue, I thought it was the perfect time to think carefully about how green spaces should be mainstreamed in the planning system of our cities and our healthcare facilities, taking into account their multiple environmental, social and economic benefits.

The report "Growing food, growing healthy communities: Opportunities for the European healthcare sector", which features the experiences of growing healthy and sustainable food within healthcare facilities in Belgium, France, Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom, aimed to start a needed conversation and inspire others to treat these spaces as a desirable piece of infrastructure whether we want to transform our healthcare systems to protect human and planetary health from climate change.

The relationship between diet, health, and access to natural spaces now forms an important part of this new way of thinking about health policy. There is strong evidence that poor nutrition is a leading risk factor for various chronic health conditions, such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and cancer. At the same time increasing access to green spaces encourages exercise, provides spaces for socialising, and decreases noise and air pollution.

In recognition of this many healthcare providers are identifying new and creative ways of increasing access to natural spaces for their staff, patients and local communities. Yet, these experiences are scarce and there are still many challenges to overcome at healthcare to create spaces for gardening and growing food within. Local and national authorities are therefore encouraged to take an integrated and holistic approach to their urban greening plans, seeking advice from public health professionals and ensuring the inclusion of healthcare facilities and public health considerations in the planning and design of public infrastructure. Doing so will help lead the healthcare sector itself to chart a course to zero emissions and drive change to achieve health equity and climate justice.

The future has never looked so green!

Pola Hernández Olivan, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH)

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