

Ready Steady Grow! was a knowledge-sharing event held at Cranbrook Community Food Garden on 5th May 2018. Three local relatively new community gardens shared their tips and advice on how to start a garden with residents of other estates interested in doing so! This was compiled and shared afterwards

Getting free plants!

- **Chelsea Flower Show** provide the opportunity for community gardens to collect plants and other materials for free after the show is over. Contact: communities@rhs.org.uk to be notified when this opens again.
- **Edible Landscapes** in Finsbury Park provide training in forest gardening, and free plants: <http://www.ediblelandscapeslondon.org.uk/>
- **Trees for Cities** <https://treesforcities.org/>

Getting stuff you need!

- **Ask** people to help you! If you see something that would be useful, ask for it! E.g. asking workmen if you can have their scaffolding boards when they've finished.
- **Offer** people help - e.g. if you have too many plants, offer them to a local school or business. Who knows what they might have to offer you in return?
- **Freecycle** is a great place to look out for offers of free topsoil, manure, bits of wood, plant pots etc. <http://www.freecycle.org>
- **Nextdoor** is a similar website but which also allows people to offer help as well as things, e.g. you might find someone on there with a van. <http://www.nextdoor.com>
- **Manure** - you can get free manure from Hackney City Farm and compost from the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. However, you do need to dig it out and transport it yourself - perhaps a group of gardens would like to do this together some time and share the cost of hiring a vehicle? The North London Waste Authority will also provide cheap compost - Tahera can provide the contact info.
- **Printing and photocopying** - Tower Hamlets Homes residents can use the Residents' Resource Centre. http://www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk/Get_involved/Residents_resource_centre/Residents_Resource_Centre.aspx Check with your own housing association if they have any similar resources.

Getting the community participating

This can be the biggest challenge for gardens of any type or size. There were lots of useful suggestions, including:

- **Inviting** people interested in gardening from outside the area first to form a core group (this is how Tahera formed their core group at Poets' Corner)
- **Holding events** in the space, even before it's been established as a garden, promoted through posters around the estate. This can help raise awareness locally and can also be used as part of the consultation process (this is part of the process Sarah talked about at their garden in Stamford Hill)
- **Doorknocking** with free plants for residents to have on their balconies/ windowsills (this is how Catherine has gathered community interest at Parkview)
- **Putting up signs** in the space that demonstrate your activities and that show everyone is welcome. You could also consider a mural, or photos and blogs that share your stories as a group (a tip from Mama D).

- **Include cooking/ making/ eating** as part of your event programme to engage people in why we grow (a tip from Mama D). Look at the People's Kitchen for inspiration on community feasts.
<http://www.thepeopleskitchen.co.uk/>

Getting funding

- **Corporates** - think laterally about funding - besides charity funds or UK-wide programmes, can you form partnerships with local groups? Consider approaching local businesses, maybe your local grocer, or the local branch of supermarkets who often have a community fund.
- **Communities Driving Change** - a new programme launched by Tower Hamlets Council: <https://youngfoundation.org/projects/communities-driving-change/> Contact: abigail.gilbert@towerhamlets.gov.uk
- **Tower Habitats Biodiversity Grants** - the council has a biodiversity action plan including a small grant scheme. <http://www.towerhabitats.org/your-habitats/tower-habitats-biodiversity-grants/> Contact: John.Archer@towerhamlets.gov.uk
- **Other borough-based grants** - look out for info from your own housing association - they may have small community grants available through the year, e.g. Tower Hamlets Homes has their Inspiring Communities grants, and the Osmani Trust runs a small grant scheme called CanDo.
- **The Greggs Foundation** is a great source of funding for small environmental projects - they have funded the replacement of our beds at Cranbrook, and various other things at almost all the other gardens who were present at the event! <http://www.greggsfoundation.org.uk>
- **Groundwork** have worked a lot with Sarah via their housing association. <http://www.groundwork.org.uk>
- **The Greener City Fund** <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/parks-green-spaces-and-biodiversity/greener-city-fund> - the next deadline is 18th June with an info session next Tuesday 22nd May.
- **Crowdfunding** could also be an option for certain types of project with high visual and public appeal.

Getting training

- **The Permaculture Ambassadors**
<https://www.permaculture.org.uk/ambassador>
- **The Eden Project** hold community gardening camps
<https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/community-camps>
- **Capital Growth** has regular training days on lots of aspects of running a community gardening space <https://www.capitalgrowth.org/training/>
- **Garden Organic Master Gardener Scheme:** <http://mastergardeners.org.uk/>

Getting helping hands

- **GoodGym** is a running group who meet on Monday evenings, run to a community project, helps out, and then run away again! They've been coming regularly to Cranbrook over the winter helping with tidying, clearing leaves and planting bulbs. <https://www.goodgym.org/areas/tower-hamlets> Contact: laura@goodgym.org
- **Primary schools** - consider partnering with a local primary school, who may be interested in visiting regularly and helping with tasks such as seeding, potting up, planting out. It can fit under their PSHE teaching.

- **Corporate groups** - many banks and big businesses have community volunteering days as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility budget. If you have a big task that needs lots of hands, consider approaching people or companies you know. You could also register with Business in the Community Give and Gain Day scheme, the Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets, and East London Business Alliance, all of whom work to pair up local community groups with businesses looking to do a day's volunteering. We've not had much luck finding corporate groups through these the last couple of years, but it's worth a try!
- **Networks** - you can get lots of help and advice from the networks we mentioned, including the Tower Hamlets Food Growing Network (<http://www.towerhamletsfoodgrowingnetwork.co.uk/>), Capital Growth (<http://www.capitalgrowth.org>), and the Community Food Growers' Network (<http://www.cfgn.org.uk>). It is also worth joining the Allotments and Gardens Council, as through them you can get access to affordable Public Liability Insurance. <http://www.theallotmentsandgardenscounciluk.org.uk/>

Getting set up - the process

Tower Hamlets Homes have a process for starting gardens on the estates they manage – if you live on a THH estate, contact them for the latest version. Tahera's three-step process is also a really helpful way to view it:

Assess - the physical space and the systems in place for managing it.

- See the attached sheet for what this assessment might include, e.g. access to water, health and safety/ fire safety access, soil quality, amount of sun/ shade, whether it is gated etc.
- This is a great stage to include a checklist or audit on how accessible the garden is - who has access to the space, how are you considering people with different needs or from different backgrounds? The Community Food Growers' Network are seeking funding to be able to help gardens do this kind of audit - so join the network to be in the running!

Connect

- With officials - get your housing officer on board
- With locals - people interested in gardening from outside the immediate area first to form a keen core group, e.g. through the TRA network, and then engage residents through posters and doorknocking
- With groups - find a small pot of funding to hold a gathering in the space, engage with other local community groups

Create

- Create your garden! Planning what you want to grow, how you want to work together (e.g. communally like Cranbrook, or individual beds with a membership fee, or your own arrangement?), and gathering your official documents (Poets' Corner and Cranbrook have constitutions and health and safety policies that we are happy to share with you to use as a basis for your own - just let us know!)

Getting to know the gardens

The gardens who shared their stories with us are:

- **Catherine** told us about the small growing space and "Brighten Your Balconies" project at Parkview. The garden is near the Glasshouse Community Centre, Parkview Estate, 161 Old Ford Road, London E2 9QB. They have gardening sessions for residents on Saturdays 10-12, during which visitors are welcome to look around, although there's not space to join in! Contact: secretaryparkview@gmail.com
- **Tahera** told us about Poets' Corner, on Bethnal Green Estate, E2 0HP, opposite the fire station on Roman Road. Their next big event is their summer party on 8th July. Contact: poetscornercg@gmail.com, Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PoetsGarden>
- **Sarah** told us about the allotments and Peace and Wellbeing Garden in Stamford Hill: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63c3YiroH9c>. They hold gardening sessions on the last Sunday of each month from 2-4pm. Their next special event is 24th June, the Great Get-together. Contact: foshgardens@gmail.com, Twitter: @FOSHgardens, Facebook page name: Friends of Stamford Hill - FOSH Gardens