

Blaise Community Garden

Trustees Annual Report for year ended 31 March 2017

1. Activities at the garden

(a) Horticultural activities

Last year we established a perennial border backed along the north wall by fruit espalier and fan trained trees. Near the church wall the bee garden with resident bee hives and pictorial meadow attractive to honey and bumble bees was created during this year and is one of the most attractive features of the garden.

A large variety of fruit, vegetables and plants was grown over the last year, and a formal process of crop rotation was established, with educational workshops provided to volunteers and visitors alike.

(b) Access to all

Significant work has been carried out in resurfacing paths and also in building raised beds to give easier access to all, particularly those with disabilities.

(c) Restoration and maintenance of historical features

We are in the process of transforming the fourth greenhouse to a fruit cage for growing soft fruit, keeping birds and pests out with a covering of galvanised chicken wire.

The specialist propagating greenhouse has had the glazing made good where needed and is used for its original purpose. The large greenhouse adjacent to the propagating house is being securely glazed and is currently used for storage, with future plans for workshops.

one of the boiler houses has had the boiler removed and a new green living roof is planned, and the room will be used for storage.

A project to restore the older wooden framed greenhouse is in the early feasibility phased and we are now considering all options, within financial constraints.

(d) Wildlife and Biodiversity at Blaise Community Gardens.

Having looked at the opportunities presented by the site we have decided to concentrate upon creating an organic resource for Amphibians, Insects, and Birds, because we need to protect and encourage them and because they provide interest and educational opportunities for visitors.

Amphibians such as Frogs, Toads, and Newts have suffered in recent decades from a number of problems from habitat loss to disease, and their numbers seem in decline. The newly-created ponds provide a natural habitat for these and the space around provides a tranquil space for visitors.

2. Events hosted (including collaborative events with FoB and Blaise Museum)

The garden has hosted a varied selection of events in the previous year, in collaboration with Blaise Museum and other organisations. Below is an abbreviated list of events.

- Blaise Dog Show
- Enchanted gardens evening
- Bee keeping weekend
- Bristol Open Doors Day
- Get Growing Trail

- Family Craft day
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Goram Fair
- Plant sales
- Dairy Garden open days
- Bonfire Night
- Christmas Workshop

All of the above are hosted as annual events. Attendance at these events is generally very good, with some events nearly overwhelming the garden, but at the same time giving the public a glimpse of what the garden is all about and increase publicity for the garden.

3. Projects past and present

We have completed the following projects over the last 12 months:

- Clearance and restoration of the south-facing bed for fruit trees and flowers
- Securing and replacing glazing in the specialist propagating house to bring it back to productive use
- Clearance of the lower half of the garden of brambles, so it is now used as a site for beehives, a flower meadow, large pond and three large vegetable beds.
- Construction of a new timber staircase to improve access to/from the meeting room and lower garden
- Installation of kitchen facilities in the cabin
- Extending decking area around cabin to increase visitor seating area on open days
- Completion of 2 inter-connecting ponds and seating around to improve amenity value and encourage wild-life
- Removal of redundant boiler to make storage area within the boiler house.
- Re-roofing and re-flooring considerable part of the large Cabin building so that it is available for meetings and general use
- Creation of new walkways to improve visitor amenity
- Making good and safe the walkway between the greenhouses and the cabin with specialist surfacing funded by a local authority grant
- Clearance of Greenhouse 5 and immediate surrounding area to enable us to evaluate future restoration possibilities, resources permitting.

4. Some interesting figures

- a. Growth of volunteer numbers over the last year

30/6/16	35
31/12/16	52
31/3/17	70

- b. Growth of visitor numbers over the last year

The Goram Fair in 2016 saw around 500 visitors attending the event at the garden. At the very successful Easter egg hunt earlier this year (an event run in collaboration with the Blaise Museum, where visitors there were directed to the garden as part of the egg hunt), we were informed by the staff at the museum who were taking note of visitor numbers, that well over 2000 visitors took part.

- c. Funding obtained pre and post-grant of 5 year lease

Below is a list of grants we have received by direct application:

Date	Amount	Source
Jun 2016	2,160	Wellbeing fund
Jun 2016	1,800	Wellbeing fund
Jan 2017	8,000	Tesco Bags of Help Fund
Mar 2017	3,917	Co-op Community Fund
Total	£15,877	

In addition to these grants, we have received a number of large and small non-specific donations in cash and kind, in addition to a significant amount of money in sales of plants and refreshments at the various open days.

5. Application to BCC for a 25 year lease

To continue the work of the garden to safeguard its future of the garden we need a 25 year lease to secure the overall viability of the project and enable the charity to forge long-term collaborative relationships with other local partnerships, for example, by way of coordinated events to the benefit of the community.

We are submitting a business case to BCC with details of the background history of the project, the structure and governance of the charity and all that has been achieved over the past 4 years since the project commenced. From feedback received from our supporters within the Council, we are very optimistic of a positive response.

6. Summary

The continued success of the garden project rests with the amazing and dedicated volunteers, who all bring their unique blend of talent, expertise, knowledge, creative flair and above all, sheer hard graft. The garden is open to visitors every Wednesday and Saturday between 10.00am and 2.00pm, but volunteers will be there most days. The spirit of teamwork and collaboration is evident at all times and all are mindful of the need to maintain positive and respectful relationships with fellow volunteers, as well as visitors.

I have refrained from mentioning in this report, named volunteers, for their specific contributions, as they are too numerous to mention and we are all aware of the very significant input they have made and what they have achieved. I am, as ever, in awe of how the project has progressed and what has been achieved over such a comparatively short space of time. This serves as an indicator of what can, and will, be achieved in the future and I am proud to be a part of the Blaise Community Garden project.

Claire Ainley
Chair of Trustees, Blaise Community Garden
14 November 2017

