

## **Blaise Community Garden**

### **Chair's report on activity at the garden during the previous year ended 31 March 2018**

#### **1. Activities at the garden**

##### **(a) Horticultural activities**

The gardening activity has mainly concentrated around maintaining the newly-created spaces, including raised beds, the perennial border, the bee garden, pictorial meadow and rockery. The south-eastern part of the garden is being cleared to create a further open space for visitors to enjoy.

A large variety of fruit, vegetables and plants was grown over the last year, and the formal process of crop rotation was followed during the year, with educational workshops provided to volunteers and visitors alike. Facilitators were appointed, to encourage better coordination of growing activities in the greenhouses.

##### **(b) Access to all**

Ongoing work has been carried out in resurfacing paths and also in building additional raised beds and herb gardens, to give easier access to all, particularly those with disabilities, with the creation of additional seating areas for visitors to enjoy the garden.

##### **(c) Restoration and maintenance of historical features**

We have completed the transformation of the fourth greenhouse to a fruit cage for growing soft fruit, and this has proved very successful, keeping birds and pests out with a covering of galvanised chicken wire.

The large greenhouse adjacent to the propagating house is being repaired to facilitate events there. A wooden floor is being installed to make the area safe for visitors to use it for events such as workshops and craft fairs.

One of the boiler houses has had a new green living roof installed, and the room is used for storage.

The older wooden framed greenhouse is to be restored and the project team has been established. The site has been cleared, so a full evaluation of what needs to be done to restore the building, may be made.

A second boiler house sited below ground level will be filled in and a fernery created.

##### **(d) Wildlife and Biodiversity at Blaise Community Gardens.**

Work has continued to create an organic resource for Amphibians, Insects, and Birds, to protect and encourage them and because they provide interest and educational opportunities for visitors.

The newly-created ponds provide a natural habitat for amphibians such as frogs, toads and newts which have been introduced to the ponds, 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.

- Easter egg hunt
- Fairy open doors day
- Feel good day
- Bristol Open Doors Days
- Garden bonanza open day
- 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

With as much of the infrastructure in place, as far as budgetary constraints permit, we have focused on maintenance, but still completed the following projects over the last 12 months:

- Creation of additional raised beds for growing
- Creation of additional seating areas
- Replacement of floor covering in the cabin
- Creation of a green, living roof
- Laying of a wooden floor and repairs to the large greenhouse to facilitate events being held there in safety

### 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
31/3/18	46

It is believed that the reduced number for the last year was the result of natural wastage, simply because members joined but then did not participate in any garden activity, so their memberships were not renewed.

#### b. Growth of visitor numbers over the last year

The Goram Fair in 2017 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. The fairy open doors day attracted an overwhelming 3000 or so visitors to the garden.

#### c. Funding obtained during the year

We obtained one grant in May 2017 of £3,917 from the Co-op Community Fund by direct application.

In addition to this grant, we have received a total of £3,907.05 from large and small non-specific donations in cash and kind, and from sales of plants and refreshments at the various open days.

Total income for the year was **£7,824.05**

#### **5. Application to BCC for a 25 year lease**

We are now campaigning in earnest to secure a 25 year lease to safeguard the future of the garden. This will 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. This will also be necessary to secure appropriate funding to continue the various projects at the garden.

We have submitted 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. We have received a very positive response from supporters within the Council, and informal agreement in principle has been given, subject to lease terms being agreed. It is also hoped that this will include additional buildings not currently let to the garden.

#### **6. Summary**

The garden continues to go from strength to strength and is becoming a popular place for visitors, as is demonstrated by the increasing visitor numbers on the open days held. The garden is open to visitors every Wednesday and Saturday between 10.00am and 2.00pm, but volunteers will be there most days.

The huge contribution made by the dedicated volunteers is evident from the progress made over the past year, as is clearly shown by the photos taken throughout the year. It is expected that this progress will continue apace, with the granting of a 25 year lease, which will provide an opportunity to secure increased funding to enhance the infrastructure, take on additional buildings and increase the amenities currently available at the garden, for the benefit of the community.

**Claire Ainley**  
**Chair of Trustees, Blaise Community Garden**  
**14 January 2019**

