

# WCGN



## ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021



# OVERVIEW

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2020 had seen WCGN's activities severely curtailed because of the pandemic. 2021 started quietly because England remained in lockdown during the spring, with restrictions on even modest gatherings only lifting in July. After that, many were cautious about attending events, even if they were held outside.

The focus during 2021 was on supporting members to get back outside and enjoy their community gardens after the prolonged lockdown earlier in the year. This was achieved through encouraging existing gardens to host events for network members and local people with assistance from the WCGN team, recruiting new gardens to the network and increasing the use of information sharing, especially through a wider use of the network WhatsApp group and the website. An aim to promote a greater diversity of network members underpinned many of the activities of WCGN this year.

A project officer, Ali Yellop, was recruited to be the active person "on the ground", liaising with network members, supporting the events, managing the local advertising of them, reaching out to new gardens and posting on instagram. WCGN is acutely aware of underrepresentation of people with protected characteristics in the gardening profession, particularly with regards to race, colour, and ethnicity, and we were keen to recruit a project officer from amongst the diverse communities that make up our membership and local area. We were delighted that Ali, who lives locally, joined our team and she has been fantastic at building on new and existing relationships.

Debbie Mitchener ably supported the organisation from afar, recruiting the project officer and providing her with ongoing support, co-ordinating the programme of events, sending out newsletters, keeping the website up to date – including writing blogs and commissioning others to do so – compiling reports to funders and making funding applications for next year.

**WCGN**

Management Committee



# EVENTS

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## **Plant swap**

**Event organised by Walworth Society, with support from WCGN**

**Where: St Peter's church garden, Faraday Ward**

**When: Saturday 22nd May**

**What: Residents brought their plants to give away and took away the offerings from others. This was a chance to catch up with each other after the long winter and spring lockdowns. It was very well attended with many plants being exchanged. We advertised this event.**

**Feedback: Attendees commented on how happy they were to be outside, to be able to chat with each other and exchange plants.**



## **Butterfly Count Garden Event**

**Event organised by Collinson Street Garden, with support from WCGN**

**Where: Collinson Street Garden, SE1, Faraday Ward**

**When: Saturday 24th July**

**What: £75 worth of plants that attract butterflies were donated to the garden by WCGN - Walworth Garden supplied the plants keeping to a circular economy model. Hannah managed the event and baked biscuits. Unfortunately there was heavy rain and the event was cancelled.**

**Feedback: Hannah was very grateful for the donated plants, because several pollinating plants had been removed from the space.**



## Children's fun day

**Where:** Gibbings House, St Giles Ward.

**When:** Friday 13th August.

**What:** A fun afternoon for the children, starting with planting seedlings and moving onto crafting, using different techniques to make leaf and flower prints. WCGN led the activities and provided refreshments. Lead network member: Sam Jones

**Feedback:** The children clearly enjoyed the event, and also enjoyed the opportunity to meet neighbour children for the first time.



## Managing a small plot and planting for wildlife

**Where -** Walworth Allotment Association, Fielding St, Newington Ward.

**When:** Sunday 15th August.

**What:** A workshop led by horticulturist, Chris Collins, for allotment members, network members and members of the public. One of the allotments served as an example of how a plot could be used to maximise yield whilst using the principles of organic growing and creating wildlife havens. WCGN paid for Chris Collins' attendance and for refreshments and publicising the event.

**Lead network member:** Olivia Carlton

**Feedback:** Some attendees made notes. Several attendees stayed for a couple of hours after the workshop, chatting about various gardening issues with Chris.

Walworth Allotment Association

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Invite you to a workshop with facilitator Chris Collins. To learn how to develop a small plot, whilst supporting wildlife & planting for biodiversity.

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To reserve your free ticket & for more details: scan the barcode above or email [wcnprojectofficer@gmail.com](mailto:wcnprojectofficer@gmail.com)





## Froglife Event

**Where:** Rockingham Community Allotments, Chaucer Ward.

**When:** Saturday 21st August.

**What:** A session which focused on how we can encourage amphibians in the city to thrive, to identify them and help support them in the threats they face through increasing urbanisation. Session hosted by Froglife, a nationwide conservation charity. WCGN paid for the facilitator and refreshments and publicised the event.

**Lead network member:** Winston Miller

**Feedback:** This session was very well received, by both adults and children. Many local children turned up on the rainy afternoon, thoroughly enjoying naming creatures, bringing nets into the pond, and finding baby frogs around the site.



## Creation of a short documentary about community gardens.

This is a joint project with Pullens TRA and was funded by the Walworth Society.

**Where:** Pullens Estate (Newington Ward); Alberta Fruit Commons (Newington Ward); Brandon Estate (Newington Ward); Rockingham allotments; Surrey Square School.

**When:** filming took place on 17th and 18th September. The documentary will be available sometime in the winter and will be posted on our website.

**What:** A short documentary showing interviews with community gardeners from five of our member gardens and footage of the gardens. The interviews covered the history of their gardening spaces, community involvement, children's projects and their hopes for the future. The WCGN project officer co-ordinated all of this.

**Lead network member:** Vince Brown

**Feedback:** This is eagerly awaited.



## Cooking and craft sessions for Surrey Square School

These sessions were organised as a collaboration between Edible Rotherhithe and WCGN. Edible Rotherhithe does a lot of work with this school. Our input was given through our project officer, Ali,

Where: Surrey Square School, Faraday Ward.

When: Four consecutive Fridays. 17th September to 9th October (a postponed session will take place on Friday 5th November).

What: Crafting with leaves and plants, making pumpkin seed pesto, making salad boxes, with lots of related learning during each session.

Feedback: The children got a great deal out of every session. The WCGN project officer led these sessions and shared her skills with Edible Rotherhithe staff; they can replicate this work in future.



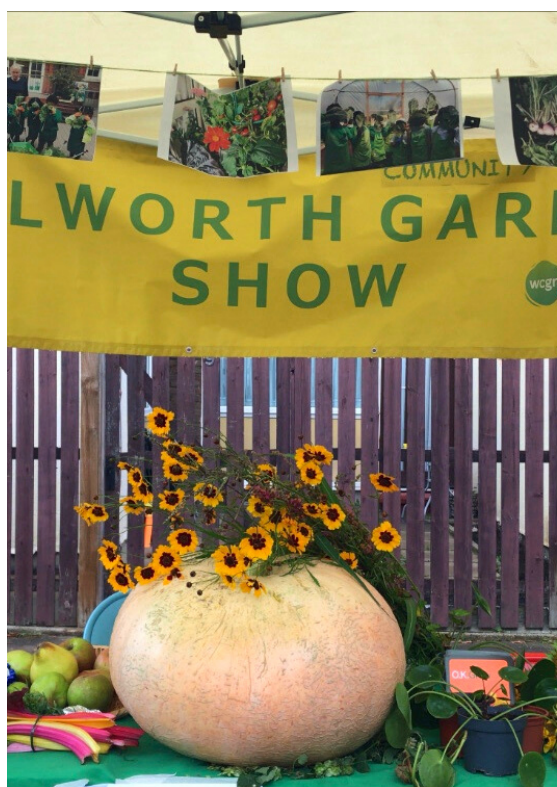
## Garden show at the neighbourhood gathering on Tatum Street

Where: Tatum Street, Faraday Ward

When: Sunday 19th September

What: A community get-together to celebrate the resilience of the area during the pandemic. WCGN provided a garden show stall, with lovely produce from several network members and some photos of produce. We had the opportunity to talk about the network and advise people who want to create a community garden.

Feedback: Attendees showed a lot of interest in the network. People shared information about their projects.





### Brandon Junior Gardening Area

**Where:** Brandon Estate, Newington Ward.

**When:** Launch event on September 25th

**What:** This exciting project started with sessions for children using some donated oil drum planters and developed into the creation of a purpose designed area funded by Southwark Council's Cleaner Greener Safer funding. Network members participated in the project in several ways. WCGN provided refreshments at the launch event and some financial support for one of the launch activities.



Several other events were planned but cancelled for various reasons.



# OTHER NEWS

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## **Reaching out to new gardens.**

Ali, our project officer, spent a lot of time reaching out to new gardens. This proved to be very time consuming. Recruiting new members to the network has not been easy, but it is worth putting in the effort, because once new members join, they get a lot from the network, and some become very active participants.

The new gardens who have joined /are thinking of joining the network this year are:

Elmington Estate Garden; Doddington Estate; Manor Place and Penton Place allotments; Castlemead; Brandon Three; Brandon Alcove (aka Brandon Two); Glengall Wharf Gardens; Kipling Estate.

## **Network meetings**

Prior to the pandemic, the network met monthly at each others' gardens during the growing season. This has not been resumed. Just two meetings of the full network were held this year, to date. A Zoom meeting on Wednesday 24th February and a face to face meeting on Thursday 16th September. The latter had been planned to be the AGM, but this was postponed to November. It was used primarily to honour the memory of a member, Carol Wheatley, of Newington TRA, who died unexpectedly on 3rd September.

## **WhatsApp group.**

At the end of September this year, the group had 59 participants. 30 of these joined the group between April and September. This reflects the increasing interest in the network that has been generated by our members, and in particular by our project officer reaching out to existing member gardens and to new gardens. The WhatsApp group was used extensively this year. Members asked for and received advice, shared equipment, gave away spare bulbs, plants, wood chip etc, signposted each other to events, resources and advice about gardening issues, and shared general news.



# SOCIAL MEDIA

## Website

The website is used much more actively this year. There is now a calendar of future events, reports of past events; blogs; a map showing member gardens, each of which has its own page; links to resources.

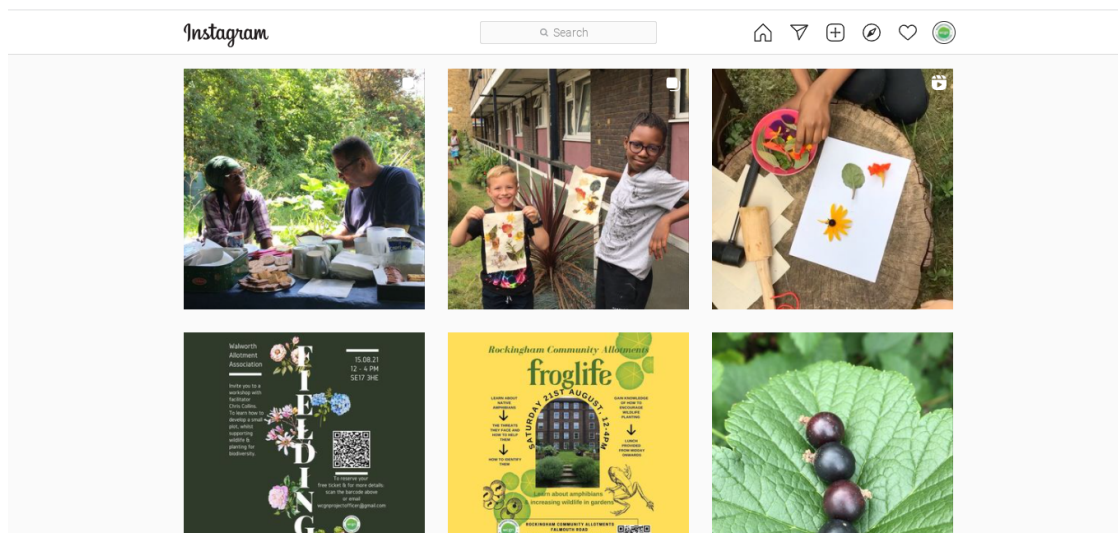
[www.walworthcgn.co.uk](http://www.walworthcgn.co.uk)



## Instagram

Instagram stories and posts have been used this year to advertise events in advance and report on them afterwards.

[@walwo\\_rthcgn](https://www.instagram.com/walwo_rthcgn)



# OUR ORGANISATION

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## **Organisational Information about WCGN**

Twenty six member gardens and allotment associations are listed on the website.

## **Steering group voluntary members:**

Richard Galpin – vice chair. Alberta Street Commons.

Peter Balazs – treasurer. Tabard Growers.

Olivia Carlton – secretary. Walworth Allotment Association (Fielding St).

## **Paid contractors:**

Debbie Mitchener – project manager – 9hrs a week – mid April – mid November

Ali Yellop – project officer – 14 hours a week – end May to end December.

## **Funding:**

Southwark Neighbourhood Funding for wards:

Newington, Faraday, North Walworth, Chaucer, St Giles.

National Lottery Community Fund

Wakefield and Tetley monies carried over from 2020 because of pandemic.

