Triangle Community Garden

Created and cultivated by people of all ages and abilities at Ransom's Rec Hitchin, Herts

Annual Review 2024-25

Fun at Sunday Garden Club

Growing Ability's first strawberry!

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Welcome to our Annual Review for 2024-25

It's been an exciting and fulfilling year with lots going on and much more on the horizon. Grant funding success has enabled many practical improvements to take place on site, paving the way for several new projects and an enhanced ability to run existing ones. An expanding programme of workshops, projects and forest school activities has allowed us to reach and benefit more people. And we're excited at the prospect of extending our activities out into Ransom's Rec. with the Ransom's Meadows project. None of this would be possible without the energy and support of our outstanding staff and volunteer team, including our new Project Manager Hayley Lanfear.

Our vision is for **'a community where people feel happier and more fulfilled through a connection with the natural world and an understanding of our place in it'.**

Our aim is to help people of all ages and abilities to **'connect, grow enjoy!'**, through gardening and contact with the natural world. We do this through:

- Supporting physical and mental health using social and therapeutic horticulture, arts and crafts, cooking and a focus on healthy living
- Providing volunteering opportunities,
- Running skills workshops
- Holding community events
- Building local biodiversity and
- Fostering an understanding of why this is important

We're active in three areas within Ransom's Rec (near Hitchin station): the Allotments, our Community Nature Garden and our riverside Forest Garden. The areas vary in character and each has different challenges and rewards. All three sites continue to thrive under the loving care of our Garden Clubs and Growing Ability.

Our **Garden Club** volunteers provide invaluable care and management of our greenspaces under the sensitive and patient guidance of our site and horticulture manager Steve Granger.

Here's some of the feedback we've had from Sunday Garden Club:

'Absolutely loved it! Steve is a fountain of knowledge'

'Another great morning. We always learn so much'

'Great atmosphere, really enjoyed it. Satisfying to see the changes in the forest garden over the months'

You can read about our **existing, new and upcoming projects** inside, together with information on the impact they deliver and the people behind them.

As always we say **thank you** to our supporters, be they staff giving above and beyond, volunteers giving of their time, companies and individuals giving funds, or people supporting our events. Special thanks go to our Gold sponsors **The Letting Quarter** and longtime corporate supporters **Crane BSU**.

Vicky Wyer, Chair of Trustees

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Triangle Community Garden: Registered charity No 1145243, Company Limited by Guarantee No 07676360
For more information please email info@trianglegarden.org

Growing Ability

Growing Ability is our social therapeutic horticulture project for people with additional needs, including learning disabilities, autism, brain injury and severe or enduring mental illness.

The project operates primarily from our allotments but we're regularly active at the Triangle Garden and Forest Garden, and in Ransom's Rec.

Growing Ability sessions take place in a safe, caring and stimulating person-centred environment. This approach allows each participant to focus on their individual aims while building practical, reflective, and social skills. Through nurtured learning and meaningful community activities Growing Ability helps attendees or 'gardeners' as we call them, to build confidence and self-worth, strengthen their independence, and develop life skills.

They gain valuable experience in horticulture, gardening and food growing, as well as cooking with the produce they grow. They've made delicious things like plum crumble, courgette muffins, and green tomato jam. They also have the opportunity to sell their creations at local events and our monthly stall. This year, they used their skills to create beautiful pollinator-friendly hanging baskets, cut flower bouquets and wooden herb troughs, which have been sold really well. The monthly stalls are a real win-win for Growing Ability. Seeing people admiring and buying the things they've made or grown is a huge source of pride for our gardeners, and brings them closer to feeling valued in the 'able' world. The sales generate valuable funds for the project, and the retail experience is very useful for those seeking work in that sector.

Running a successful vegetable plot requires skills such as planning ahead, organisation, decision-making, fine motor skills, literacy and numeracy. It fosters creativity, team-work and resilience as participants share responsibilities for their plots. Here's what one gardener's mum has to say:

'[Growing Ability] is a huge support to [his] mental health, he needs to be busy, and he loves being outdoors. He has learned so much about growing plants, especially a huge variety of vegetables. He feels very comfortable speaking to staff about any problems he might be having both within the allotment groups and with his life in general. There would be a huge void in [his] life if he didn't have Growing Ability, it gives him a sense of purpose, and he feels he is making a contribution.'

We currently hold four half-day sessions a week, with 6–8 participants per session. Each session is led by two experienced care professionals and supported by at least one volunteer. There is a session fee of £12.64-30.24/hr depending on support need, which can be paid via Direct Payments, Personal Independence Payment or Individual Service Fund. Alternatively, gardeners can seek Commissioned Care from Adult Care Services; or self-fund.

Making herb planters

Crane cheque presentation

Growing Ability welcomes young people transitioning from school or college

Please contact us for details:
info@trianglegarden.org

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Growing Ability continued

Inevitably as the living wage and cost of materials rise, the gap widens between what we can reasonably charge, and what it actually costs to run this provision. So we are increasingly grateful for donations and sponsorship from local businesses like **Crane** and **The Letting Quarter** to enable this valuable work to reach the people who need it most.

Maintaining a steady flow of new participants is essential to sustain the success of our service and we are aware of the need to grow in scale, to achieve financial stability.

Across the last year we've had a steady increase in new gardeners attending, prompting us to prepare to start a fifth session. Sadly a couple of gardeners left us recently due to reasons beyond our control, and another longstanding gardener has moved out of the area. So we are back to 17 gardeners this September (the same number as last year).

However, there is a steady local demand for Growing Ability, which continues to be recognised as a welcoming, transformative space - particularly for young adults who are moving from education into the wider world. We are pleased to see this need increasingly met through our outreach and partnerships.

We are currently working closely with Greenside school to help offer a place for a student they are re-engaging with, and we hope this leads to longer term provision for this young person and many others transitioning from school or college.

I joined the team in January 2025, and it's been a busy time for us all - we celebrated the organisation's **25th Anniversary**, and have successfully completed a PAMMS (Provider Assessment Market Management Solution) inspection for Herts County Council. This is the equivalent of a CQC review for non-residential services and we were delighted to achieve a **GOOD** rating again.

This year, Growing Ability participants have enjoyed visits to Hitchin Museum, Hitchin Garden Centre, and Wimpole Hall, plus a Quiz night at The Millstream and they got to enjoy a wonderful BBQ hosted by Crane. They have also taken part in a wide range of creative and enterprise activities, including our 'Growing Gang' venturing into Hitchin Town to plant up the town centre raised beds outside Next and WH Smith. And they have helped create our beautiful new mosaic, now installed in the community nature garden.

Ongoing monthly stalls, visits, talks & trips are some of our regular activities and I am fully focused on what we can build on and enhance in the next 12 months, over what we are already doing at Growing Ability.

I would like to thank and congratulate our staff team and volunteers for their constant professionalism, care, enthusiasm and dedication, and extend appreciation to our gardeners and their families for their continued feedback and engagement.

Hayley Lanfear, Project Manager

Our Hanging Baskets

Town centre planters in progress

Growing Ability monthly stall

196 sessions

17 individuals

588 volunteer hrs

2 joiners, 2 leavers

7 off site trips

12 GA stalls

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

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Branching Out

3 full-day Easter sessions

12 half-day Summer sessions

10 attendees in total

Branching Out – for Young People

Thanks to part-funding from the Neighbourly Trust, we were able to run a successful and fully subscribed Easter holiday scheme for young people with additional support needs. **Branching Out** took place across three days in April and had 9 attendees in total (6-8 per day).

The young people who attended took part in a variety of nature-based social therapeutic horticulture activities at our allotments and in the park including litter picking, nature observation, planting, building raised beds and arts and crafts Each session was run by two members of TCG staff plus volunteers.

The benefits were multiple – stimulation and meaningful activity, nature connection and the proven positive effects on mind and body, social interaction with established friends and new ones, and an insight into what Growing Ability has to offer for those on the cusp of leaving education. Feedback was so good we were asked to run sessions across the summer, which we did, from reserves, two half days per week for six weeks in July and August this year.

This testimonial from a parent says it all:

"After just three days at the gardening project, I've seen a remarkable change in my son. His confidence has visibly grown as he masters new skills in a supportive environment designed for adults with learning disabilities. The programme provides structure and purpose whilst nurturing his independence in ways I hadn't thought possible. The sense of accomplishment he feels when showing me what he's planted and learnt is invaluable. This programme isn't just about gardening—it's developing life skills, social connections, and genuine joy. Regular attendance would provide consistent growth opportunities that would benefit him tremendously in all aspects of his life. The community you've created gives both him and our family hope for a more independent future."

Hayley Lanfear, Project Manager

Decorating pots at Branching Out

Our new raised manger beds

Planting up the herb manger bed

Improvements on the Ground

A lot of investment has gone into improving our spaces over the last year thanks to £20K of NHDC's Prosperity Fund.

The communal surfacing of our allotments was upgraded this spring to a stable, even surface of compacted granite fines, providing reassurance for our gardeners, many of whom have mobility issues, visual impairments or both. Thanks also to Maydencroft for the excellent installation of that and of our new summer house at the end of allotment 2b, which is perfect for small group work. Two large rainwater catchment tanks funded by Herts Community Foundation's Green Grant will help our growing spaces be more drought resilient.

We were able to install five raised manger beds thanks to a generous discount from Harrod Horticulture which now provide wheelchair-friendly growing spaces.

Tree management at our community garden sites has made a significant difference to the light levels there, improving perceived safety and benefiting nature. The reinstatement of our pond, thanks to NHDC, has been very welcome. Ponds are biodiversity hotspots – despite their small size they support a vast array of life. And we're delighted with our new mosaic by Montet Designs depicting nature through the seasons.

Vicky Wyer, Volunteer Fundraiser

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Family Forest School and Triangle Tribe

This is our third year of providing Forest School opportunities at the Triangle Garden, in collaboration with **Tanya Dickson at Culturewood CiC**, and we're delighted to report that almost all sessions have been fully booked across the year. Feedback has been excellent.

Our provision covers a range of age groups with Family Forest School activities catering for families with children aged 3-12, and Triangle Tribe tailored to families with older children aged 12-16, with more of a bushcraft focus.

We're very grateful to Hitchin Youth Trust and North Herts Council's Community Fund for part-funding Family Forest School and Triangle Tribe, respectively, from July 2024 to July 2025.

Triangle Tribe:
Over the last year, we've provided a range of engaging activities including:

- Survival Skills: Covering basic survival techniques.
- Ancient Fire-Making Techniques: Exploring traditional methods of creating fire.
- Knife Skills: Crafting spoons using basic carving techniques.
- Crafting with Natural Resources: For example, making blowpipes from elder branches or crafting stick star decorations.
- Pewter Work: Designing moulds and smelting pewter over the campfire.
- Bat Walk & Talk: Exploring the natural world
- International Campfire Cooking: Preparing and enjoying foods from different cultures over the campfire.
- Mindful Moments: Many activities integrate mindfulness and wellbeing, with some sessions including simple breathing exercises and other mindful techniques.

Intended outcomes are to build individual and community resilience, strengthen family bonds, tackle isolation, create new networks, nurture interests outside the digital world, foster environmental awareness, reduce anxiety and encourage safe exploration of risk boundaries. Here's a quote from one of our Triangle Tribe parents:

"Being outdoors and doing something practical has helped my daughter with her anxiety and without it [she] would be quite socially isolated from real human interactions. She's happier after the sessions and spends time with me which is getting harder as she hits her teens."

Family Forest School sessions have a slightly different structure, offering a more open-ended approach. Each session provides access to a range of hand tools and natural resources, allowing children to explore and create freely.
Popular themes include:

- Enjoying physical activities such as swinging in hammocks, using tree swings, or trying out the slackline.
- Crafting items like wands, swords, blowpipes, pea shooters, bows and arrows, fishing rods, and more, by peeling sticks and using tools.
- Gathering around the campfire to toast marshmallows, enjoy hot chocolate, and reflect on the session together

This approach allows children to revisit and repeat favourite activities, fostering a sense of familiarity and mastery while encouraging creativity and play.

Family Forest School meets monthly, every fourth Sunday morning 11am-12.30 plus half-terms and holidays. **Triangle Tribe** meets every third Friday evening 6.30-8.30pm. Sessions need to be booked in advance as places are limited. Both initiatives are neurodivergent-friendly. We've also started providing weekly Forest School sessions for groups from Toad Hall Nursery as of May 2025.

Tanya Dickson, Culturewood CiC

10 Triangle Tribe sessions
59 attendees including
31 young people

13 Family Forest School sessions
251 attendees including
124 children

10 Forest School sessions for Toad Hall Nursery
18-20 attendees /week

Learning fire skills at Triangle Tribe

Forest School toast marshmallows

To book your place at Family Forest School or Triangle Tribe please visit trianglegarden.org/events

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

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Our Garden Clubs

Fruit picking at the Forest Garden

Planting up the pond

To find out more about joining Friday Garden Club please contact Steve Granger via steve@trianglegarden.org

To book your free place at Sunday Garden Club visit trianglegarden.org/events

Friday Garden Club meets every Friday morning from 10am for some gentle guided social gardening. It is open to anyone, and its purpose is to maintain and develop the Triangle Garden and Forest Garden for the benefit of people and nature. Members enjoy learning new gardening skills, meeting new friends and being active in the fresh air, while making a positive contribution to the community and biodiversity. There are also regular trips and outings, and a shared allotment. **Sunday Garden Club** meets once a month on the second Sunday of the month 10am-12, and is open to those who can't attend on a Friday, including families with children.

Friday Garden Club numbers attending this year were in double figures for most sessions. The highest attendance was in April with 14 people attending one Friday. The total volunteer hours for Garden Club sessions this year have been 822, up 34 from last year.

With the help of North Herts Council (NHC) the pond has been relined and enlarged. Friday Garden Club and volunteers from Crane have been working to make the area around it a usable, inviting space for groups to take part in activities such as pond dipping next year, when hopefully there are more inhabitants in the pond. Garden Club planted native marginals, most of which seem to be thriving.

Garden Club continues to work in the Community Nature Garden, where a lot of new planting has taken place, with plants donated by volunteers. New areas have been developed around the Christmas tree, just outside the entrance, and in the Forest Garden. Here, an area of natural dye plants has been added, again with a lot of donated plants. Last autumn's bulb planting gave a good display in the Spring, and more bulbs are being planted this autumn.

Friday Garden Club members had an interesting trip to the British Library this summer to see the Unearthed exhibition, about the history of gardens, community gardening and plants. Lots of ideas came out of that visit!

Due to holidays and time constraints, Garden Club didn't grow plants for a May farmers market stall but did produce another bumper crop of jams and chutneys to raise funds for the garden for which we're very grateful.

Sunday Garden Club has become established with a core group of volunteers and families attending each month, spending time maintaining the community nature garden. Last Autumn they planted bulbs, over the winter native bare root hedging and in the spring a donation of plants from a fire resistance rooftop test project in London.

In January they took part in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch and families had chance to make willow bird feeders.

Crane continues to volunteer with us every month. This year we have had over 50 members of staff join us. They have carried out a range of activities, such as installing more rainwater storage tanks on the allotment so we can harvest rainwater from the new summerhouse. A group cleared the old fencing around the pond and installed new fencing and mulching over a larger area, so more people can fit in around it for pond dipping. After the allotments were resurfaced we had a soil 'mountain' on allotment 2B, and another hard-working group from Crane spent a morning filling a raised bed and levelling the rest so it was ready for our groups to use. We have some regular volunteers now from Crane that often come, and new people join each session. As always we're very grateful for their support.

Steve Granger, Site & Horticulture Manager

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Community Events and Workshops

Each year we put on a number of workshops and community events to engage and connect people with the natural world, spread the word about what we do, and raise funds for our work.

As this review runs from 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025 let's start with 2024's September **Summer Fete**. Once again we expanded the event to include more stalls, activities and entertainments, this year joined by some new artists and dance groups including Neon Skies and Wild Soul Sisterhood. Our aim as always is to raise awareness of the community garden and our work, and showcase our local collaborators, like jewellery tutor Tuuli Parker, The Yoga Shed and Tai Chi practitioner Three Treasures Chris. The event was really well-attended and raised over £1000! Almost double last year's profits.

Hot on the heels of the fete came our October **Apple Day** in Hitchin town centre. A celebration of English apples, local food in season and environmental sustainability, the event was a great success despite a very wet morning. Once the sun came out things picked up and even after the cost of hiring the square we made a respectable £640.

Our March **Quiz Night** raised over £350 and provided a lovely fun evening for us all. We're very grateful to **The Millstream** for their support in hosting this event.

In May 2025 we celebrated **25 years of the Triangle Garden** with a 'blossom day' gathering for all our staff, volunteers, gardeners and their families at the community nature garden. Although it was cold, the weather stayed dry for us and the garden looked beautiful, decked out with naturally-dyed bunting. This was made last year specially for our anniversary with the help of Nature's Rainbow, a fitting tribute to the much missed Susan Dye. Speeches and toasts were followed by a rousing performance by the Hicca Hoodlums and a special fire ceremony to herald the spring, based on the traditions of Beltane. Everyone wrote their favourite memory of the garden on a 'blossom tag' and hung it on the apple trees. A sight to behold!

In 2025 we introduced a number of **new workshops** to our calendar, building on the skills of our staff and volunteer team and collaborating with some great new external tutors and volunteers.

The Savvy Herbalist Tracy Rothery held four **Herbalism Workshops** at the Pavilion which were a lovely addition to our events calendar. And with help from Hitchin Nature Network, we hosted a talk on the **Wildlife of Hitchin** by Phil Barron, an autumn **Bat Walk** and two summer **Bug Hunts**. All were well-attended.

Garden Club volunteers Gill and Lesley ran two successful **Festive Wreath Workshops,** and Steve Granger used his extensive expertise to run a very well-received full day **Forest Garden workshop** for us, as well as workshops on **Fruit Pruning, Veg Growing, Food Photography** and **Botanical Cyanotype**. Is there no end to this man's talents? Here's some feedback from participants:

'Fantastic informative workshop, really enjoyed it' 'Great course/tutor, patient and knowledgeable – inspiring' 'Really interesting' 'Great ideas'

As always our five **Seasonal Foraging Walks** led by The Hitchin Forager did very well, and raised valuable funds for our work.

Feedback on workshops and events has been consistently good. Thanks to all who helped at our events and of course to our hardworking band of events organisers:

Gemma, Mel, Vicky, Isabelle and Steph

To check out our events programme or book onto a workshop please visit www.trianglegarden.org/events

Kids' activities at our Summer Fete

Bug Hunting on the Rec

4 community events
21 workshops:
1 Bat Walk / Talk
1 Forest Garden Workshop
2 Festive Wreath Workshops
1 Fruit Pruning Workshop
1 Veg Growing Workshop
1 Hitchin Nature Talk
2 Family Bug Hunts
5 Foraging Walks
4 Herbalism Workshops
2 Photography Workshops
1 Botanical Cyanotype Workshop

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Man Made Meals class of '25

Sharing what we've cooked

Kendall demonstrating

Man Made Meals does Baking

2 courses of six sessions

2 baking sessions

12 attendees

5 volunteer tutors

Three courses planned per year

To register your interest for Man Made Meals please email us on info@trianglegarden.org

Man Made Meals

This year saw the launch of our Man Made Meals cookery project – aiming for 'confidence in the kitchen for men', particularly men living alone, recently bereaved, or caring for a loved one, who have never had to fend for themselves before, let alone cook for others.

Inspired by the Lewes-based 'Man with a Pan' project, an initiative that struck a chord with founding trustee John, this was a project waiting to happen. And the idea happened to coincide with him stepping back to a 4-day working week.

Gathering fellow enthusiastic home cooks Mike and Elaine, John and Vicky made a project plan and started seeking outreach collaborators and applying for funding. Launched at Apple Day 2024, our Man Made Meals Crowdfunder was a huge success raising over £5000 including match funding we secured from the Aviva Community Fund. A Council grant to upgrade and equip the pavilion for cookery classes also helped and soon we were ready to start our first block of six classes.

After a dry run at the Pavilion inflicted on friends, a lot of frantic recipe writing, and very welcome offer of help from volunteer Julie, we welcomed our first six men in February and our next six in June, aiming to run three blocks of six weeks per year, engaging 6 new men each time.

The idea is to teach transferable skills, the 'why's and 'how's of food prep, cooking, nutrition, budgeting and food hygiene, in a simple and accessible way. We deliberately chose recipes that could be jumping off points for different variations, encouraging experimentation and the use of taste and eye over a reliance on weighing and measuring.

Key skills taught include safe chopping, how long to 'sweat' an onion and why, how to develop flavour through caramelisation, and how to transform everyday vegetables like cabbage into mouthwatering dishes. Participants cook in pairs, and each session is a combination of demonstration by the tutors and food prep and cooking by the men, followed by a shared meal, and a portion of food to take home.

After the course all the men reported a significant rise in their confidence level in cooking, mostly from 2/6 at the start to 5/6 at the end (on a scale of 1-6 where 6 is very confident). All said they would cook at least one more meal each week from scratch, with several keen to cook 2-3 more. When asked what the course meant to them participants said:

"Given the confidence to attempt dishes and now happy to prepare food for myself and others"

"Found the course perfect for what I needed. I will expand my cooking at home with a well-rounded repertoire"

"It has given me an incentive to rely less on my daughter who provides me with 5-6 meals a week"

"Given me the confidence to try my hand after a lifetime of not cooking"

One participant was particularly keen that we should offer classes in baking in addition to the standard MMM course. Always up for a challenge we tried to work out how we could do this without overloading our volunteers. Enter Kendall Hurley of Fife Bakery who we met through Webbs the Greengrocers (great supporters of MMM). Kendall, a professional pastry chef and experienced tutor, offered to run a couple of baking sessions which if successful could become a regular thing. Needless to say the participants loved it and we will do more Man Made Meals Does Baking.

Vicky Wyer Triangle Garden

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Our People

This year we've welcomed a number of new people to the Triangle Garden team and said farewell to some staff members trustees, and volunteers. Project Manager Julie Zirngast left in January to move closer to family, and Support Worker Helen Fitch Hunter moved on in the spring as her own circumstances changed. New joiner **Pippa Luck**, who replaced Helen, has also now moved on – to a new life in Australia! And it's farewell to trustees Andrew Green, Adrian Stones and Gareth Hills who resigned last year after long and dedicated service, for which we thank them. We wish them all the very best.

Growing Ability volunteers Sue Malcolm and Kevin Banks stepped back from supporting our sessions this year. We owe huge thanks to them and to current volunteers **Yolanda, Sarah and Carole** for their hard work and dedication to Growing Ability.

Several new staff members, trustees and volunteers joined us over the last year:

- **Hayley Lanfear** joined in February as Project Manager, from a background in the care and education sector, and has been an asset to the team from day one. She was made for the role and we can't imagine now how we managed without her!
- **Zoe Betts** provided much needed cover at Growing Ability sessions on a freelance basis over the summer
- **Joel Daramola** joined us in September, as GA 1:1 support worker after proving his worth without doubt during a stint as a volunteer for our Branching Out summer scheme
- **Caz Borensztajn, Steph White and Holly Butcher** joined as trustees over the last year, with expertise in project management, events and HR, and lived experience of disability
- **Julie Mackley** joined us as a Growing Ability volunteer and also at Man Made Meals where she supports our volunteer cooks **John Wyer, Mike Blackman and Elaine Petch**

We'd also like to thank our amazing staff team of **Steve Granger, Liz Millbank and Dulcie Buckenham** for their fantastic work at our GA Branching Out and Space to Grow sessions this year.

As always we say a big thank you to our wonderful Garden Club volunteers who help to keep our sites so biodiverse and beautiful, to our Growing Ability gardeners and their supportive parents and carers, our events team, our trustees, our accounts volunteer Funmi, and all our collaborators, supporters and funders.

Hayley (left) and Steve (right)

GA volunteer Sarah (left) and Pippa (right)

Dulcie (right) at Wimpole Hall

The Pavilion

It's great to see our Pavilion continuing to host creative workshops such as **Tuuli Parker's** glass fusion and silver clay jewellery classes, and we thank Steve Granger for his ongoing Caretaker role.

External hires provide welcome income for our Garden Clubs which have no formal funding stream. At the equivalent of £8-12/hour for community or private hire, the pavilion is very good value.

This autumn it will be host to evening cookery classes for young people from One YMCA's Anderson House.

And in the park Chris Nutley of **Three Treasures Tai Chi** continues to run weekly outdoor Tai Chi classes every Friday morning, bringing grace and positivity to the park. Beginners always welcome!

Vicky Wyer, Chair of Trustees

Tai chi with the Pavilion behind

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Treasurer's Report

The financial year to 31 August 2025 ended with a surplus of £9,880, after the small deficit of £6,540 in 2023-24. The main reason for this surplus was a £10K grant received at the end of this year, to be spent predominantly over the following financial year.

This takes our reserves to £55,760, which is 52% of annual turnover, and within our reserves policy parameters of 18-58%. These reserves are important to ensure the charity can withstand financial risks such as loss of clients, long-term staff sickness or (and we hope this is never needed) the winding up of the charity if circumstances required it.

This year our income from donations and fundraising was similar to last year. The main fundraising income being £5,363 raised for the 'Man Made Meals' initiative, which included match-funding from Aviva. Regular events like the Summer Fete, Apple Day and Quiz nights at the Millstream also generated funds and fulfilled their role of community engagement for the organisation.

Our programme of talks and workshops contributed too, and we thank our tutors for their collaboration. Thanks also go to Hitchin Nature Network and The Yoga Shed who raised funds on our behalf. Donations from Crane and Sponsorship from The Letting Quarter were also very gratefully received.

We remain very aware of the hard truth that the charity would certainly have made a substantial deficit if it had to rely solely on fees from clients; so fundraising, donations and company sponsorship make a huge difference.

This year grant income increased substantially to £34,457, up from £4,152 last year. We are grateful for the support received from ASDA (£1,000), Herts Community Foundation (£11,573), Herts County Council (£384), Neighbourly Community Trust (£1,500) and North Herts Council (£20,000) which funded the improvements set out on page 4.

Our main expenditure is on salaries for the five part-time members of staff, with wages totalling £48,426. Our dedicated staff and volunteer team continue to be the vital backbone of all the charity's achievements.

Our thanks and appreciation also go to those who continue to support our work by volunteering, and attending events and workshops. Special thanks go to Vicky, our Chair, for her continued dedication to fundraising and to Funmi, our volunteer Accounts Assistant.

Abbreviated accounts are included with this report. The full accounts in the format required by the Charity Commission are available on our website.

Isabelle Robinson, Treasurer

Triangle Community Garden (AKA Hitchin Community Gardens)
Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st August 2025

	TCG Funds	Restricted Funds	Specified unrestricted Funds	Total	Last Year 23/24
Income from:					
Charitable Activities	5,984.10	49,011.85	0	54995.95	42406.4
Donations and Legacies	6,114.85	2534.9		8649.75	8079.04
Grants	0.00	34,456.50		34456.5	4152
Fundraising	9,024.40	187.11	0	9211.51	9618.65
Gift Aid Reclaim	396.25		0	396.25	0
Investment Income			0	0	0
Other Income			0	0	0
Total	21,519.60	86190.36	0	107709.96	64256.09
Expenditure on:					
Charitable Expenditure	12,731.62	54,965.15		67696.77	67494.21
Raising Funds	11,272.60	18,860.47	0	30133.07	3301.7
Total	24004.22	73825.62	0	97829.84	70795.91
Net Income	**2484.62**	**12364.74**	**0.00**	**9880.12**	**6539.82**
Transfer between Funds	928.20	826.10	102.10	0.00	0.00
Net Movement in Funds	3412.82	13190.84	102.10	9880.12	6539.82
Total funds Brought Forward	37115.38	8866.67	102.10	45879.95	52419.77
Total Funds Carried Forward	**33,702.56**	**22,057.51**	**0**	**55760.07**	**45879.95**

Triangle Community Garden: Registered charity No 1145243, Company Limited by Guarantee No 07676360
For more information please email info@trianglegarden.org

New projects and future plans

Priory School students planting

Mosaic in progress, and installed

Last year we set ourselves some quite challenging goals to mark our 25th year, partly prompted by internal strategy sessions and partly as a result of the outcomes of community surveys.

Having bolstered our financial stability and raised our profile locally, thanks to sterling work by our Project Managers, we looked at how we could increase the benefits that we could provide to people and nature in the wider Rec, creating some lasting improvements on the ground. In our last Annual Report we set out several planned initiatives and we can now report on their ongoing progress:

New Garden Clubs: In 2025 we started a fortnightly Garden Club for students aged 12-16 from **The Priory School**. Unfortunately for various reasons, this did not materialise in the way we had hoped, but it did prompt us to make contact with other local secondary schools and we have had the first of several visits by students from **Hitchin Boys School**.

Space to Grow Support Group: in collaboration with local autism charities, we devised a programme of regular nature connection / social therapeutic horticulture (STH) sessions for parents/ carers of young people with autism, coupled with half-term and holiday family sessions - **Space to Grow Families** - which started this summer. Both these projects are funded by Herts Community Foundation (HCF).

New Shoots for Carers: also funded by HCF, this project provides a six-week block of half-day sessions of nature-connection / STH for mental health, framed around the five ways to wellbeing in a nature-based setting.

Although the first block started outside the reporting period of this Annual Review, I'm pleased to say that feedback was excellent with several members signing up to our Friday Garden Club as a result.

New Mosaic at the Garden: this was a wonderful project to be able to complete for our 25th anniversary. It involved all our groups contributing to the design and creation of a new circular mosaic under the guidance of community mosaic artist Audrey Montet. Celebrating biodiversity through the seasons, we hope you agree it's a stunning addition to our central meeting space. We're delighted that the old mosaic was able to be partially saved and several panels will be installed up at our growing spaces on the allotments.

Our feasibility study into the business case for a **Community Café/Coffee Hatch** at the Pavilion, funded by Herts County Council Locality funding, showed that the rise in wages, cost of coffee, and cost of living generally made this prospect much less promising than originally thought, especially given our reliance on outdoor seating and the British weather. So we've parked it temporarily while we focus on other things. Notably Ransoms Meadows!

Ransoms Meadows is a project to improve the Rec for people and nature. Having drafted proposals for new **woodland edge and meadow planting** at the Rec., we consulted with NHDC and the Countryside Management Service, and held a public consultation at the Pavilion in July. Thanks to favourable feedback all round we were able to secure £20K of funding from the National Lottery Community Fund which will be used to install large swathes of wetland wildflower meadow, carry out tree and shrub planting, and build benches and habitat towers. The meadow planting will be carried out by contractors in September 2026 and this spring we will be holding hard and soft landscaping work experience sessions for young people in temporary accommodation and volunteers from local businesses to complete the rest of the project.

Vicky Wyer, Chair of Trustees

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org