



ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Grow Community – Sopwell

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To Our Community

A huge shout out to everyone who has contributed to the Grow Community this year! We started the year still in 'COVID-times' and have had to deal with hot and dry weather in the summer months. Despite these challenges, we've had a fantastically productive year. Our new back beds and herb beds have established well, and the children's area and wildlife patch are thriving too.

Thanks as always to the core team, our steadily-growing group of volunteers and our partners for all that you do. You are all stars! Also, thanks to our funders for enabling us to do even more great work.

Financial Highlights

We've generated a great income this year from our regular events and activities, and have also benefitted from grants and business sponsorship. All going towards furthering our aims!

We have continued to spend the generous grants we have received in previous years across a range of items - supporting the development of the garden and activities in line with the purposes of the grants.

Looking Ahead

We'll continue with our infrastructure plans at the Berners Drive Community Garden: rainwater-capture structure and social area are priorities. Also, we're hoping to establish a wildflower meadow at another location in the area, and take on responsibilities for some of the planting at the new Cottonmill Community and Cycling Centre. All needing new volunteers to step up and help from time to time. Watch this space for further developments!

Chair: Kate Swindells	Secretary: Jo Cooney	Trustee: Gail Jackson
Treasurer: Alison Shipperlee	Trustee: Lee Wood	Trustee: Sonya Jefferson

Financial Summary

Financial year 01.09.2021 – 31.08.2022

At the end of the financial year the funds of our organisation stood at £3586.65.

We have continued to spend the generous grants we have received across a range of items supporting the development of the garden and activities in line with the purposes of the grants. Some infrastructure projects such as the bench and rain-water collector are still in development and we have around £1000 from these grants towards these as well as other minor items and hall hire.

We are pleased to find that donations from our events and seeds/seedling stalls have generated enough income at £735.50 to cover a large proportion of our estimated ongoing running costs. These include key outgoings such as insurance but also aspects needed to keep the garden developing such as seeds, compost and supporting community events around sustainable garden-ing. It's great to see that with the level of activity achieved in a year impacted by Covid we are close to financial sustainability.

Income

- £150 from Soil Association 'Food For Life Get Togethers (FFLGT)' towards seeds, compost & equipment
- £100 from Ayletts towards seeds, plants, compost (Gift Card)
- £735.50 from fundraising activities, including donations at our events and at our seeds and seedlings stall

Expenditure

- Outside of insurance we have had no major single expenses
- We have invested in more equipment including a lawn mower as well as consumables including plants, seeds and compost
- We have started to pay bank charges and have had one-off costs for DBS checks.
- Going forward we are looking to change our bank account to Metro which does not currently charge for a community account.

Income and Expenditure 2021/2022

Income & Expenditure 2021/2022			
Income (£)		Expenditure (£)	
Organisation grants/sponsorship/donations	250.00	Equipment	227.55
Events & Activities	735.50	Consumables	337.89
Income from 2020/21	149.29	Hall Hire	100.00
		Promotion	135.06
		Insurance, Subscriptions & Memberships	302.00
		Operating costs (bank/web/DBS)	172.80
		Expenses from 2020/21	1168.80
Total income	1134.79	Total expenditure	2444.10
Of which:			
Monies to be paid in	0.00	Expenses still to be reimbursed/banked (but accounted for)	10.75
Balance brought forward 01.09.2021	4895.96		
Bank balance brought forward 01.09.2021	4863.46		
Petty cash	32.50		
Funds of the organisation	3586.65		
Bank balance brought forward 01.09.2021	4863.46		
Petty cash	32.50		
Income	1134.79		
Expenditure	2444.10		
Bank balance at 31.08.2022	3558.82		
Ayletts Gift Card	6.08		

Financial year: September 1st to 31st August



- To promote the benefits of sustainable, localised food production
- To promote the benefits of reduced food waste
- To encourage and enable local residents to: grow their own food at home and in community spaces; reduce food waste; share surplus food in the community and with local charity groups
- To promote wildlife conservation and restoration projects and encourage local residents to participate in these projects
- To connect ongoing initiatives and bring the community together through activities related to the above aims

Our projects

- Berners Drive Community Garden
- Abbots Avenue West Planters
- Seeds & Seedling Stall
- Grow and Give
- Events:
 - Wreath making
 - Gardening workshops
 - Open garden day
 - Pop-up seedling stalls
 - Spudfest
 - And more!

See more on our website: growsopwell.org

Highlights of the Year

Autumn saw bountiful harvests from local growing. We sowed winter salads and held an informative composting workshop (courtesy of the RHS) at the community garden.

Business sponsorship from Ayletts Nursery enabled us to buy plants for our herb garden, and we planted up the two rosemary bushes, to allow them to establish over winter.

Back by popular demand, we hosted another online food garden question time – all about Autumn in the Garden.



Winter

We love wreath-making and were thrilled when Phyllis Sweeney offered to facilitate it this year. The day started with a foliage forage in the green spaces in and around Sopwell, followed by a late-afternoon workshop. We all had a brilliant time!

We don't hunker down in the winter here. We also kept busy with wildflower seed-bomb making and seed packet filling ready for the Christmas gift market – another invaluable fundraiser for us.

With supermarket-rescued bread and our own herbs, we made ready-made packs for Christmas dinner stuffing too.

It was a bit chilly, but the rain held off for our Christmas party down at the garden in December. We had a good laugh!

In the new year, we hosted a planning session to finalise our plans for the growing season ahead – we'll be repeating that in 2023 too.



Spring

Spring, as always, was a super busy time.

Starting up working parties again

We were all glad to be back together at the garden and kick-off new projects including the herb beds, children's area and 'back beds' growing loads of beans, sweetcorn and potatoes.

We held welcome sessions and were pleased to welcome lovely new volunteers.

SpudFest!

Ayletts generously donated seed potatoes again this year. We distributed these to local school children to #HaveAGrow with. So cute!



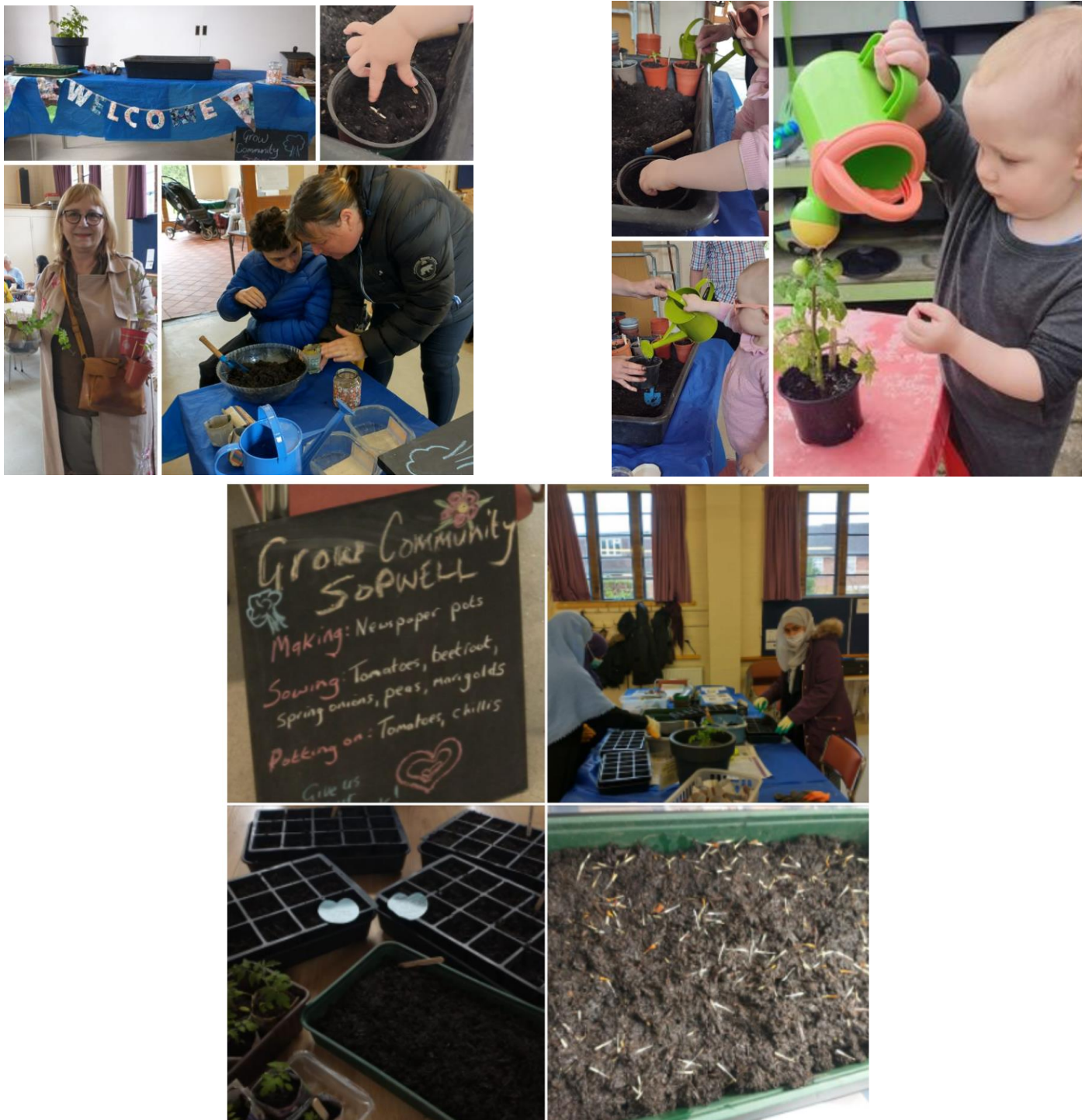
Online

We hosted another online food growing question time and launched our website to keep up our online offerings.

Sowing sessions with local community groups

We began Spring sowing sessions at St Julian's community café and with Salaam Women's Café group, reaching even more people to #growtogether.

People sowed seeds to take home for themselves, as well as for the community garden and seedling stall.



Seeds and Seedlings Stalls

We continue to give away seeds and seedlings on our stall outside Kate's house at 71 Leyland Avenue. Lots of volunteers help with sowing and potting on, and we appreciate seed and plant donations from other growers too.

This year, with a grant for the Soil Association 'Food For Life Get-Togethers' fund, we expanded our May Bank Holiday 'Pop-up seedlings stalls' project. As well as additional stalls (on people's driveways across Sopwell), we were also able to offer up a greater selection of seedlings.

As always, this proved very popular – lovely to see everyone having a good grow at growing their own food.

Later on in May, Wilderhood Watch's latest street group (Prospect Road) hosted a joint stall with us, adding to the growing trend to garden for food and wildlife.



Open Garden Day

Our Open Garden Day – our event for the Sustainability Festival – was a great success. Great attendance, conversations and connections around growing your own food and wildlife.

Again, the Soil Association 'Food For Life Get-Togethers' grant helped us to expand our seedlings offerings.



Summer

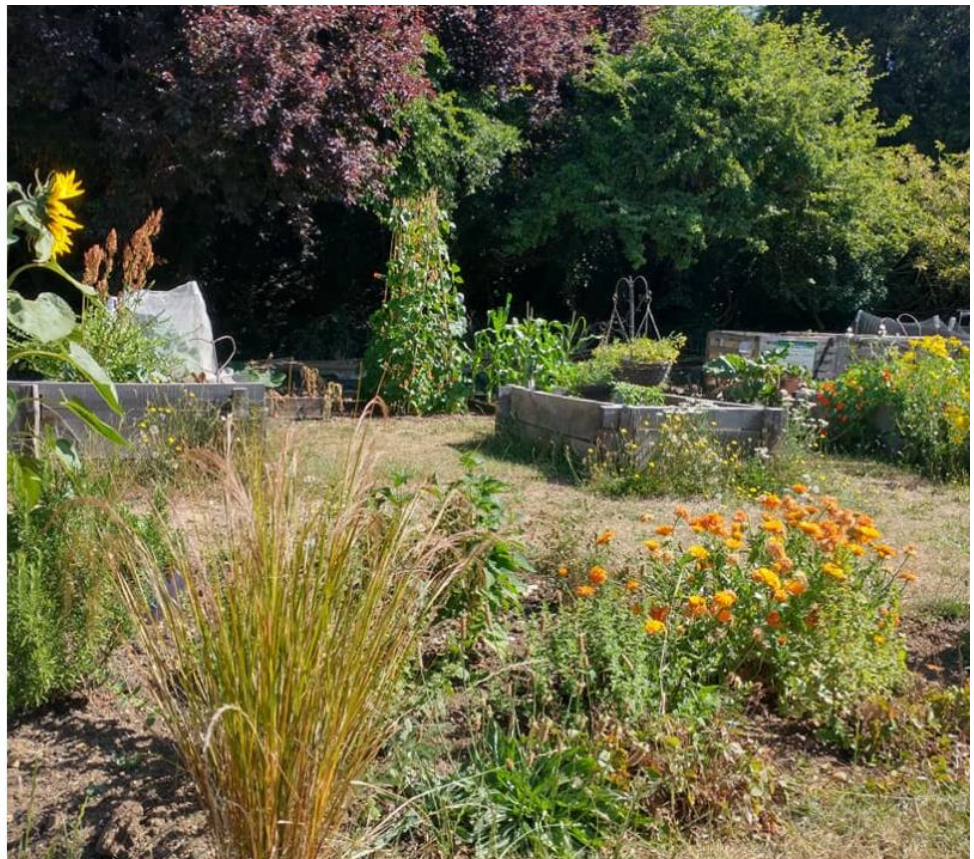
Despite challenges with drought and heat, our community garden has thrived, thanks to our champion waterers! Even the snails are happy!

We rely on rainwater from volunteers' water butts as much as possible to water the garden, as this is better for the plants and also for our rare chalk stream – the Ver. Did you know that water company Affinity Water takes 28 million litres from the Ver every day, leaving it about half as low as it should be, and meaning it often runs completely dry in long sections.

Admittedly, it has been a long time coming, but we are tantalisingly close to erecting our rainwater capture structure over the water butt and compost bins. Watch this space!

The summer also saw the return of Communi-Teas on alternate Tuesday evenings. A chance to unwind and chat with your cuppa and like-minded friends.

Other highlights included a hot, but fun, Larks in the Park at our new community centre. Thanks to everyone who helped out at our stall.



Grow and Give

Once ripe, all the food grown at our community garden is available for picking and eating. Look out for the signs alerting you to what's ready.

We continue to provide surplus fruit and vegetables from our growing spaces to local food banks and our wider community, and encourage others to do the same.

Now our fantastic community centre is up and running, we were really pleased to be able to donate a trolley for donations. A great partnership initiative between ourselves, the local allotment society (Cottonmill and Nunnery Allotment Association, St Albans Community Pantry and also the centre managers, EveryoneActive.



Growing at home

We love seeing everyone's social media photos from growing at home, it's always so inspiring. Keep all your photos coming in, as well as asking for and providing growing advice from community members.



Dishing Up

The Grow Community share recipes and get us all drooling with their creations with locally-grown ingredients – delicious!



Connecting with other local community groups and partners

We really enjoy connecting with other local community groups and partners, helping to further our common aims. Many thanks to all involved this year (some already mentioned):

Salaam Women's Café, St Julian's church, St Albans and District Foodbank, St Albans Community Pantry, Ayletts nursery, Wilderhood Watch, Cottonmill and Nunnery Allotment Association, St Albans Rainbow Trail, Sustainable St Albans, Mandeville and St Peters primary schools. We're always happy to work with new partners, so drop us a line.

We have also become a member of St Albans Climate (and biodiversity) Action Network – a partnership of local 'green groups' and St Albans City & District Council.