

METROPOLITAN PUBLIC GARDENS ASSOCIATION



Annual Report and
Accounts 2023



*South Essex Crematorium LB Havering
BfL recipient*

*Front cover: Fairchild's Garden, LB Hackney
See page 27*



ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2023

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OFFICERS 2023

President

Hugh Johnson OBE

Vice Presidents

The Marchioness of Salisbury
Sir David Howard Bt
The Master, The Worshipful Company of Gardeners
Rosie Atkins EMH FLS
Joyce Bellamy MBE
Alistair Gould
Wesley Kerr OBE
Christopher Woodward

Chairman Rex Thornborough MStJ RD

Vice Chairman Nicholas Evans

Hon Treasurer Tara Healy-Singh

Hon Secretary Mark Bridger

Hon Grants Officers Louisa Mansfield / Nicola Freshwater (temporary)

Hon Minutes Secretary Nicola Freshwater

Executive Committee

The Officers as above
Shirley Brihi, Benedict Bull, Marjorie Dowbiggin, Ruth Lin Wong Holmes,
Jodie Jones, Mark Lane RVO, Graeme Maynard, Annabel Ward

Hon Legal Adviser Patricia Robertson KC

Trustees

Rex Thornborough MStJ RD, Alistair Gould, Nicholas Evans

THE CHARITABLE PURPOSE of the MPGA is the protection, preservation and enhancing of public gardens, disused burial grounds, churchyards and open spaces or land situated within the Metropolitan Area of Greater London; the provision of seats and the planting of trees within places of public resort and the encouragement of public interest in the cultivation of gardens or similar public areas.

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INTRODUCTION FROM PRESIDENT Hugh Johnson OBE

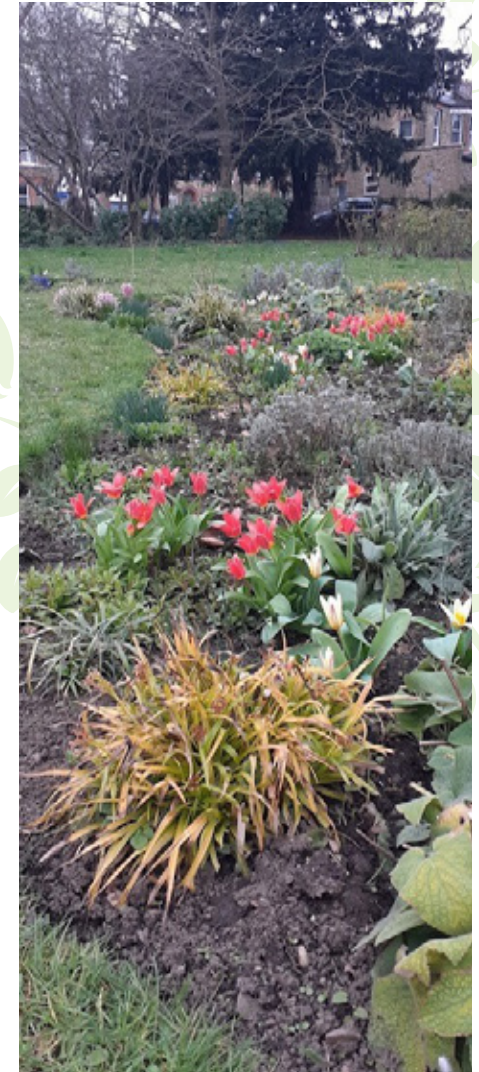
There's nothing to beat local knowledge. Often it's only the neighbours who really know of a problem or see an opportunity to improve matters. Even just a word with a Council officer can point to a solution. Sometimes it needs a more concerted approach - for which the MPGA can be a catalyst, or sometimes a project leader.

We play many roles, but the essence is that we all want a greener London and look out for opportunities to bring nature (or at least greenery) to more people, especially in the over-developed parts of town.

I headed for Battersea Power Station recently on the new extension of the Northern Line (goodness, it goes fast, rattling and banging, south of the river). By mistake I got out one stop too soon, at the new Nine Elms station, to be confronted with what looks like Kowloon: massed featureless tower blocks without even the washing lines that give Kowloon its hint of humanity. Greenery? Not a leaf. Where are the elms? (I'm told there are now seven, close to the spanking new U.S. Embassy).

Londoners are good at improvising snatches of nature: window-boxes, pots with lonely pelargoniums. Enterprises such as the proposed Lambeth Park, across the road from the Garden Museum, are welcome signs of future leafage on a serious scale.

Meanwhile the MPGA urges every authority, every organisation, every business - indeed everybody - to look around to see what green opportunities they can find, encourage or create.



The Rose Garden, LB Ealing



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Rex Thornborough MStJ RD

The more things change, the more they remain the same! However, looking back over the last year still emerging from the effects of the Covid pandemic, it is easy to forget how much had changed due to the effects of the various lockdowns.

Applications for grants rocketed from zero to exceptional levels as life began to return to normal and, in the midst of all this, we had to cope with the resignation of our Grants Officer Louisa Mansfield. We were hugely grateful to Nicola Freshwater for temporarily taking on this task as a replacement was sought.

Unfortunately there was a national rail strike and an underground strike on the day of our AGM, which made travel into and within London virtually impossible, so the decision was made to cancel the meeting and hold it online. The venue booked was the Essex Church in Kensington and we are most grateful to them for agreeing to the cancellation without any charge to the Association.

This of course meant that the presentation of the London Spade, which this year was given to Danny Clarke for his services to horticulture, had to be made on another occasion as reported elsewhere.

We are taking steps to modernise our public facing appearance by the setting-up of a Virtual Office which will give us a central City address and central phone number as we move towards seeking

funding from a variety of business sources to add to those which already support us. With the potential for a virtual office to broaden our footprint we aim to grow our income and our grant giving.

Huge thanks go to Taylors of Holbeach for their continuing support of the Bulbs for London project, to Bulldog Tools for their continued sponsorship of the London Spade award and to CBRE for their support of Elms4London. We thank all our supporters and especially Rochfords for their corporate contribution.

My personal thanks go to all the Executive Committee without whose tireless efforts none of this would be possible. Particular mention should be made of Shirley Brihi, for Bulbs for London amongst other things and Mark Lane for getting the successful Elms4London (E4L) project off the ground, or should that be into, the ground! To the Executive Committee for their unstinting work and Mark Bridger as Secretary. My thanks also go to our President, the irrepressible Hugh Johnson, and our Vice Presidents for their support and guidance over the past year with particular mention of Wesley Kerr and Christopher Woodward.

As with all charities, funding is an increasing problem in the current financial climate and we need to improve our income in order to continue our work and give financial support via grants to those making a difference to London's green spaces.



Thornhill Square Gardens, LB Islington

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023

Our AGM was sadly beset by problems. Threat of a tube strike led to a last-minute decision to change the scheduled event at the Essex Church in Notting Hill and instead hold the AGM online. Unfortunately technical problems then meant that Danny Clarke, the evening's keynote speaker and recipient of the London Spade award, was unable to participate. In addition, President Hugh Johnson was suffering from laryngitis and had to rely on Chairman Rex Thornborough to deliver his address.

The Chairman thanked the Committee who give so generously of their time. He also thanked the President and Vice Presidents for their support over the past year. He thanked the MPGA's sponsors: Taylors Bulbs, Fred Foot and Bulldog Tools, the Worshipful Company of Gardeners and their Master, and Joseph Rochford Gardens, together with CBRE for their support of Elms4London.

He noted that the protection of green spaces is more important than ever given the pressure for housebuilding. The MPGA will campaign that there should be no use of green space for building until all brownfield sites have been exhausted. The creative use of gardening should be encouraged as part of the planning process to improve air quality and mitigate flooding, and deliver schemes that are more imaginative.

The Spade (provided by Bulldog Tools) was presented virtually to Danny

Clarke, aka The Black Gardener, for his contribution to protecting and enhancing London's green spaces, and a formal presentation took place in person at the Garden Museum in December.

Danny's speech was circulated to attendees following the AGM. In it he talked about how he came to be involved in community gardening, via his involvement with Tayshan Hayden-Smith, after the Grenfell fire disaster. From starting out with guerrilla gardening, together they later formed the Grow to Know CIC, "to try to make the world of gardening more inclusive, accessible and diverse thereby encouraging a wider demographic, whether it be professionally or for pleasure, to get involved in the industry at any level they choose".

Minutes of the previous AGM and the 2022 Annual Report and Accounts were approved, as were the appointments of Officers and Committee members.

Mark Lane gave a presentation on Elms4London, a project that aims to bring back elm trees to London by planting disease-resistant clones in all the London boroughs, working in unison with other organisations. Its core aims are to distribute disease-resistant elms across London, create elm hubs, especially in central London, create elm nature corridors and raise awareness of the wildlife benefits of elms.

THE LONDON SPADE AWARD

The London Spade was awarded to Dannahue (Danny) Clarke for his contribution to horticulture. As mentioned in the Chairman's Report, unfortunately the AGM had to be moved on line and the actual presentation delayed. It eventually took place on 13 December at the Garden Museum, hosted by Christopher Woodward, one of our Vice Presidents.

Danny is a British garden designer and television presenter who first appeared on our television screens in 2015 as BBC's Instant Gardener. Since then he has appeared on a variety of gardening programmes including coverage of the Chelsea Flower Show. Danny has also had a rose called 'Dannahue' named after him by David Austin Roses. The proceeds go to support one of his charities.

Born in Oxford of Jamaican parents, he found his way into horticulture after a variety of jobs and styled himself as 'The Black Gardener' following the commercial success of 'The Black Farmer'. He also runs a garden design company with the same name. Danny is a passionate believer that access to a garden should be the right of everyone and he is involved with several charities which bring horticulture to young people and disadvantaged communities.

One of Danny's charities, Grow to Know, came about following a meeting with Tayshan Hayden-Smith after the Grenfell fire. Several community gardening projects followed, involving volunteers and community members. Many of these were done in conjunction with well known

brands, eg Penguin Random House, Nike and the Grosvenor Estate.

As Danny says, we come from the earth, we return to the earth and in between there are gardens. He is certainly a very worthy recipient of the London Spade for 2023.



Rex Thornborough (Chairman) presenting the Spade Award to Danny Clarke



*The 'Dannahue' Rose
Photo courtesy David Austin Roses*

GRANTS 2023

Mary's Garden, St. Mary's Churchyard, Stoke Newington LB Hackney

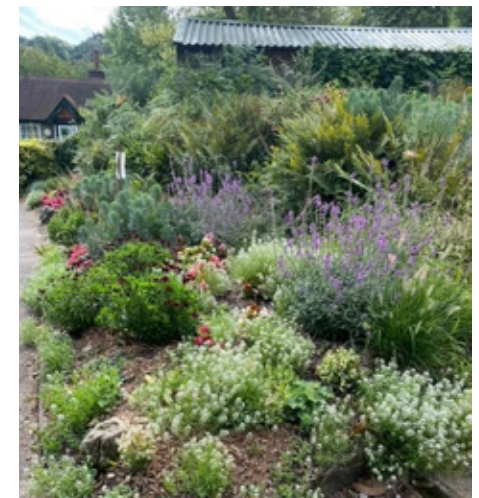
Following consultation through listening circles with local groups and individuals, members of St Mary's Church in Stoke Newington developed the idea of a project to create Mary's Garden, a community garden on land next to the church. This proposal would help tackle one of the recurring concerns that came up over the course of the community circles: mental health issues and social isolation. Community members are given the opportunity of working together to design, create and maintain the garden. The focus of the garden is to develop a community orchard with fruit trees and perennials, using the techniques of permaculture to ensure a positive environmental and social impact. The MPGA was pleased to provide practical help to get this project off the ground by funding the purchase of water butts and tools.



*St. Mary's Church Stoke Newington
LB Hackney*

Coombe Wood Gardens LB Croydon

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) have an office within Coombe Wood in Croydon and in recent months they have begun running sessions with local volunteers to try to improve the management of these public gardens. Historically the terrace garden area has included ferns, evergreen topiary and a large number of annual plants in the primary beds. The grant was used to replace the annuals with more environmentally friendly and practical perennials.



*Coombe Wood Gardens
LB Croydon*

Coram's Fields

LB Camden

Located in Bloomsbury, Coram's Fields have been providing vital access to green spaces for underprivileged children and young people for over 80 years. More recently, they have started to develop garden areas on the east and west sides of the park, utilising land that was previously undeveloped. This includes a wildlife garden and two other gardening areas, all of which are almost exclusively maintained by a volunteer group. They were seeking funding to aid in the development and maintenance of these areas. The MPGA awarded funding for the construction of more raised beds and planting to improve the accessibility of the growing areas.



Coram's Fields,
LB Camden

Elders Voice Therapy Garden, Kensal Green

LB Brent

Elders Voice is a small, local charity in Kensal Green that supports older people. They were keen to develop their building to become a real community hub, and the south-facing back garden had already been decked to create level access for those with disabilities. They asked the MPGA for funding to help improve this space. "We want to make the Elders Voice Therapy Garden a place to enhance the mental and physical health of our older clients by providing them with a beautiful space where they can both relax and get involved in its upkeep." The charity also wanted to tidy up the small front garden which suffered from litter and anti-social behaviour. The funds provided by the MPGA were spent on soil, soil conditioner, compost, grit and bark to improve soil conditions and drainage. A wide selection of plants was purchased to suit the conditions, and the Charity reports that "our members enjoy having a task to focus on once a week, such as watering or weeding".

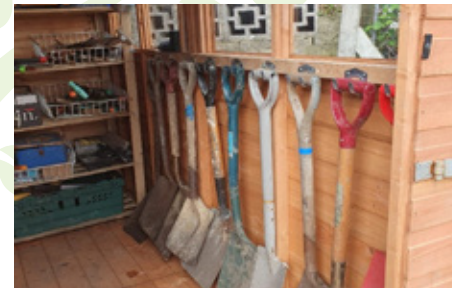


Elders Voice Therapy Garden, Kensal Green
LB Brent

Grow Lewisham Community Garden

LB Lewisham

This community garden currently contains planted beds and two pond areas. The garden has a core group of volunteers and a wider network of friends, visitors and user groups including a local SEN school. A grant was awarded to enable them to purchase a new tool shed for the garden. Sessions were run with volunteers to gradually construct the shed, with a total of 21 volunteer attendances. All of the gardening tools have now been stored in the tool-shed and organised so they are visible and accessible. The project has been extremely successful in improving volunteers' skills and, based on the interest in outdoor carpentry, the group have since successfully gained a small pot of further funding from the Co-op to carry out more sessions with their volunteers.



Tool Shed, Grow Lewisham
Community Garden



Autumn Harvest, Grow Lewisham Community Garden

Dr. George Rice Community Garden

LB Sutton

This Community Garden is in the centre of Sutton and features a social orchard. The grant was used to buy tools for the Garden. They are currently clearing and preparing the land with the help of volunteers and local students who have learning disabilities and autism. The students use the garden as an outdoor classroom. The new tools have helped make the garden more accessible and enabled the students and volunteers to carry out their tasks.



Pruning loppers, Dr. George Rice
Community Garden

Maggie's Garden, Norbury LB Croydon

Litter Free Norbury, a registered charity dedicated to making improvements in Norbury, had already raised £2,500 from local residents when they applied to the MPGA for a grant of £1,126.70 to complete the creation of a new community garden on a patch of derelict ground. The site, behind the Hermitage Lane Bus Stop, had been a hot spot for fly tipping and graffiti until a group of volunteers began clearing it in late 2022. Today the plot has been transformed into a colourful pollinator-friendly memorial garden dedicated to respected councillor Maggie Mansell, who passed away in 2019 after serving her local community for over 25 years.

'The garden has transformed this previously scruffy corner of Norbury,' says team member Lisa Patient. 'It is a very small space, so we designed it to have maximum impact from the kerb, and also from the top of the number 250 bus. We now have a weekly group of volunteer gardeners that tend the garden, some of whom live in flats with no outdoor space, although it is sometimes hard to get the work done because so many people stop to admire the garden and ask us about the plants.'



Maggie's Garden, LB Croydon

Moore House Farm LB Lambeth

This project is within a community garden on Benton's Lane Estate in Lambeth. The project started with an ornamental flowerbed and then moved on to develop into a food growing area for fruit and vegetables. The grant was used to purchase gardening tools for the volunteers in the community gardening group who maintain the garden. Future plans for the garden include the creation of a pond, wildflower areas, and interpretative signage.



Moore House Farm, LB Lambeth
Volunteers at work

Mountford Estate Garden LB Hackney

This project is within the Mountford Estate in Hackney. The residents wanted to transform two areas that were prone to fly-tipping into green sanctuaries. The grant, which was requested by the Mountford Growing Community, was used to purchase fencing, sleepers for raised beds, and plants including shrubs and fruit bushes. One volunteer said they were 'really very appreciative of the grant - there are always residents who want more space to grow their own food and flowers and this grant made a huge difference'.



Mountford Estate Garden
LB Hackney

Pro Bono Economics Garden LB Southwark

Pro Bono Economics is a charity whose focus is on improving wellbeing. They rent their offices from Southbank University and the building had an overgrown outdoor space next to it on Thomas Doyle Street. In line with their organisational aim of improving wellbeing, they wanted to install a small garden for people to be able to take time out to participate in gardening. It will also enable them to use the outdoor space to improve wellbeing, as well as adding some much needed greenery to this area. The grant was used to purchase compost, topsoil and picnic benches. The garden has been well used on a weekly basis since the grant, and has seen people actively helping out in the garden as well as using it as a leisure space.



Pro Bono Economics Garden
LB Southwark



Maggie's Garden, LB Croydon

Russell Road Community Kitchen Garden

LB Kensington & Chelsea

Formerly a car park, the Russell Road Community Kitchen Garden now contains 44 raised beds with full disabled access. With minimal space for communal planting or gathering, there are however marginal areas sited at the boundaries where space has been utilised for small fruit trees and herbs. The group wished to develop this further to enable more planting of herbs for the community to share, and to attract and support pollinators and improve biodiversity. Changing to a hotbin composting system would provide a more efficient and hygienic system of composting, encouraging more people to get involved, providing a much faster method of composting, and thereby helping the community garden to be more sustainable. Funding was awarded by the MPGA for compost bins, compost and planters.



The Community Gardeners

Sunshine Community Allotment

LB Ealing

Sunshine of Hounslow, a community allotment, is a purpose-built facility for people with disabilities. The group is run by elderly and disabled volunteers for whom English is their second language. They provide support to local residents with disabilities and dementia to grow their own seasonal vegetables and flowers throughout the year. Some of the produce grown at the allotment is donated to members of the local community, which was particularly valuable during lockdown. A monthly lunch for local residents helps to combat isolation and improve their mental and physical wellbeing. The group applied for funding to construct more raised beds to increase the amount of growing space available, and the MPGA was happy to provide a grant towards this.



*Sunshine of Hounslow Community Allotment
LB Ealing*



Soil delivery for raised beds, Sunshine of Hounslow Community Allotment

Queen's Promenade

LB Kingston-upon-Thames

Queen's Promenade Friends received a grant to plant up a section of the River Thames running between Surbiton and Kingston, which had become unkempt and misused by local dog walkers. 'The promenade is a prime location and visited by thousands of residents every day,' says Friends Chairman Stefan Gross, who set up the volunteer group in 2019 with the aim of improving the area for the benefit of the many walkers, joggers, rowers and sunbathers who frequent this area.

Volunteers had already cleared the site when they approached the MPGA for funding to buy a well-considered selection of plants. 'Everything has settled in well and we are confident the plants will keep growing over the years,' says Mr Gross. 'This formerly almost bare and litter strewn area has now been restored to beauty, increased its biodiversity and created a lovely spot for the whole community to enjoy.'



Queen's Promenade



Queen's Promenade, LB Kingston-upon-Thames

Regents Canal

LB Hackney

Wild East Collective was set up to regenerate an unloved part of Regents Canal, close to Broadway Market and Victoria Park. Raised beds were supplied and filled with wildlife-friendly plants, a series of benches and a community library. 'We noticed that the tow path was neglected despite being a popular walkway for so many people, and contacted the Canal and River Trust (which owns the land), to ask for permission to adopt a portion of the canal for the project,' says co-founder Jaime Steers. Rapidly attracting a group of over 30 young and enthusiastic volunteers, the collective had already built a series of raised beds and connecting benches when they contacted the MPGA for a grant to purchase membrane liner, soil and plants. Since then this volunteer-led initiative has had a positive impact both on the neighbouring residents and the many tourists and workers who pass through this revitalised space.



Regents Canal, LB Hackney

Pitzhanger Manor Gardens

LB Ealing

Pitzhanger Manor is a uniquely elegant historic house, designed in 1800 by the influential British architect, Sir John Soane, set alongside a contemporary art gallery. The gardens provide an invaluable resource for the Manor's visitors, volunteers and participants in their education and outreach programmes, including an extensive Outdoor Learning programme which encompasses activities designed to engage learners of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, focused on the Kitchen Garden. A dedicated team of volunteers cares for its gardens and public footpaths, but they were desperately short of tools. Volunteers were bringing their own tools to site, but having a store of Trust owned tools would increase accessibility and allow more local people to volunteer, independent of means. The MPGA was pleased to fund these much needed tools.



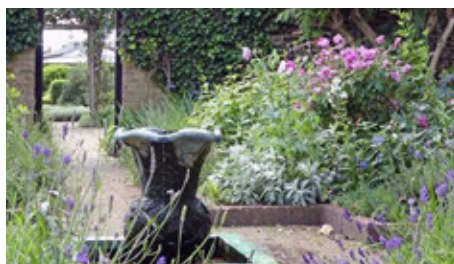
Pitzhanger Gardens, LB Ealing

The Museum of the Home Garden

LB Hackney

The Museum of the Home, formerly known as the Geffrye Museum, has undergone an award-winning redesign in recent years and the MPGA was approached to help fund major refurbishment in the North Garden. The ambitious plan was to transform this previously shady thoroughfare into a fully accessible Discovery Garden for children and their families, supporting hands-on learning about environmental issues, wildlife and sustainability while improving the wellbeing of participants and visitors.

These plans were developed in collaboration with pupils from two local primary schools, who were also invited to participate in building, planting and maintaining the new garden under the watchful eye of the museum gardening team. The MPGA grant was used to purchase raised planters, a cold frame and potting shed.



Museum of the Home, LB Hackney

Royal Trinity Hospice Garden

LB Wandsworth

Royal Trinity Hospice is the oldest hospice in the UK and has been caring for people living with life-limiting illnesses since 1891. Located on the edge of Clapham Common, the hospice is the only dedicated end of life care provider for 900,000 people living the area. The gardens were where Samuel Pepys' recovered from illness in the 17th Century when the building was owned by Sir Denis Gauden. Maintenance of the garden is crucial and would not be possible without the tools on which the gardeners rely. The previous tool shed was an old wooden one which was decrepit, leaking and insecure, putting their tools at risk of damage and theft. The MPGA grant was used to purchase a new shed that is sufficient for their gardening team's needs, offering weather resistance and added security.



Royal Trinity Hospice, LB Wandsworth

Haggerston School Garden

LB Hackney

Haggerston School in Hackney was designed in 1962 by celebrated modernist architect Erno Goldfinger, and has received Grade II listing in recognition of the importance of the building. Originally established as a girls' secondary school, in recent years student numbers have increased significantly while the provision of outdoor seating areas remained the same, so the MPGA was asked to provide funding for a number of new picnic tables and raised planters. Since the school is also open to local residents, who visit outside traditional hours to make use of the educational, recreational and sporting facilities, we were happy to provide a grant of £500 to enhance the grounds for the benefit of the whole community.



Haggerston School, LB Hackney

ADDITIONAL AWARDS

London Open Gardens

Once again we were delighted in 2023 to support the London Open Gardens event. Over 110 gardens across London participated, giving visitors a wonderful choice of gardens to visit. Amongst these were seven new gardens which opened their gates for the first time to the event, including Omved Gardens in Hammersmith and the roof garden at 25 Cannon Street, EC4.

There are so many private, secret and little known gardens across the London which are open for this one special weekend and each year we try to visit several of them. It's always a dilemma when deciding where we should go! This year we visited three very different gardens - the Charterhouse Courtyard Gardens, Eaton Square Garden and St Quintin Community Kitchen Garden in North Kensington.

Charterhouse Square Courtyard Gardens is a rare green space on the edge of the City, which comprises the square and six courtyard gardens. This was redesigned in 2017 by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan thanks to an HLF grant. The Charterhouse is an alms house and home to over 40 residents. The seven acre gardens form a beautiful oasis in this very built up part of the City and comprise a pond, roses, herbaceous borders and several mulberry trees, as well as a wide variety of garden herbs used in the kitchen. We also spotted the tree which we presented to the Charterhouse in 2019, *Magnolia Sieboldii*, which seems to be doing well.

The Charterhouse

(Photo courtesy of Claire Davies) London Parks and Gardens 2023 annual Open Gardens event.



25 Cannon Street Roof Garden looking towards St. Paul's, City of London



We then went on to visit the much lauded **Eaton Square Gardens**, which consists of six rectangular gardens which run along each side of the main through road. The Square was originally laid out in 1826 by Thomas Cubitt. It's a peaceful retreat with formal lawns and shady pathways, with beds providing seasonal colour, usually only open to residents of the Square. When we visited it was a hive of activity and seemed to be very popular with visitors. It was a particularly hot day and people were resting and picnicking with friends and there were also some delicious cakes on sale.



Eaton Square Gardens, Gold Winner London in Bloom 2023 City of Westminster

St Quintin Community Kitchen Garden is in North Kensington, a very built up urban area which serves the local community, who grow fruit, vegetables and flowers on the site in 48 raised wooden beds. The garden was created from a disused tennis court in 2009, since when it has received many awards. It's a wonderful green space, greatly appreciated by its plot-holders and the local community. When we visited we were very impressed by their volunteers who provided visitors with tea, coffee, homemade cakes and were also selling plants. Two of the plot holders were showing their artwork and one, who grows woad on her plot, was selling handmade fabric goods.

As in previous years, the organisers had an army of volunteers helping out at each of the sites. We met several of them at each of the gardens we visited and they were all very much enjoying the day. Our three visits during Open Gardens Weekend proved to be hugely interesting and left us with a strong sense of wellbeing.



St Quintin Community Kitchen Garden awarded 'Outstanding' from London in Bloom 2023 RB Kensington & Chelsea

(photo courtesy of Peter Buckingham, London Parks and Gardens 2023 annual Open Gardens event.)

London in Bloom

London in Bloom works to make London a greener and more pleasant place to live, work and visit, which very much ties in with our aims and as such we are very happy to continue our longstanding relationship with them. They reach out to every part of London and we applaud the work and enthusiasm of the organisers, individuals and volunteers who make it possible, particularly Peter and Anne Holman who have run the London in Bloom Scheme so successfully for many years.

The London in Bloom campaigns and competitions provide something for everyone who wishes to conserve our green heritage and improve the quality of life in the capital. It's a wonderful event and not only improves the way London looks, but helps to change the face of many neglected parks and green spaces.

In 2023 over sixty gardens were accredited as 'Outstanding', ranging from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association in Croydon to the Warwick Road Community Garden in Kensington and several gardens with which we have been involved, such as Bedfords Park in Havering, King Henry's

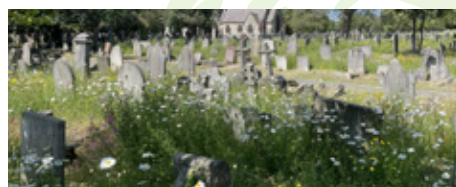


Golders Hill Park, LB Barnet

Walk Garden in Islington, and the Eden Nature Garden in Lambeth.

Many of the parks and gardens which received awards have in the past been given MPGA grants and bulbs through our Bulbs for London scheme. We were also delighted to see several Fanny Wilkinson gardens in the prize winners list, namely Myatts Fields (Gold), Vauxhall Park (Gold), Duncan Terrace (Gold) and the Museum of the Home (previously Geffrye Museum) who received a silver gilt award.

The scope of London in Bloom is very impressive when one considers that the participants range from the small community garden such as St Mary's Secret Garden in Hackney (Silver Gilt), right through to the Large Park Category. The Gold was won by Golders Hill Park, which is managed by the City of London Corporation, and the park was the overall winner in the Large Park Category. Large commercial schemes also featured, eg Canary Wharf, Kings Cross and Team London Bridge, which won Gold and was the winner of the Business Improvement category. All play their part and make a huge contribution to the way London looks, for which we are all very grateful.



Queens Road Cemetery, LB Walthamstow
Gold Award winners



Old English Garden, Danson Park, LB Bexley

London City Farms

London City Farms Harvest Festival 2023

The London City Farms & Community Gardens Association Harvest Festival is a highlight of the Association's calendar, bringing together young people and their supporters from many of London's community farms and gardens to celebrate the fruits of a year's hard work with a weekend of camping, activities and friendly competition. Now in its 25th anniversary year, this is always a joyous event full of fun and the occasional stray goat, which culminates in a mass tug-of-war competition. The MPGA was delighted to sponsor the awards for Best Display of Seasonal Produce and Best Display of Seasonal Flowers and Foliage. Committee member Jodie Jones represented the MPGA for the judging of these classes and presented framed certificates and cash prizes to the worthy winners from Phoenix Farm, White City, and Culpeper Gardens in Islington.



Runner up: Community Growing Digital
Photography Category
Spitalfields City Farm, LB Tower Hamlets



Overall joint winner Horticulture &
Home Produce Category
Phoenix Farm, White City W12
LB Hammersmith & Fulham

(joint winner with Culpeper Community Garden,
LB Islington)



Judges: L to R: David Boulton, former Master WC Farmers; Mark Patterson of Api:Cultural; Richard Choksey, Soc Farms & Gardens; Jodie Jones of the MPGA

BULBS FOR LONDON

Each November finds us busily sorting through the huge number of requests we receive for the bulbs offered by Taylors, our partners in the Bulbs for London scheme. However, in 2023 it was a very different story as Taylors had had a record sales year and virtually sold out of bulbs. This was excellent news for them but unfortunately meant there were no bulbs left for us! However, we both agreed we wanted to keep the scheme going if possible and not lose the momentum of this highly successful joint venture. To ensure the continuity, Taylors thankfully managed to put together three boxes of mixed bulbs which they wanted us to offer to three badly neglected gardens or sites which we felt would benefit.

The three we chose were Lamash Community Garden (Southwark), Raynes Park Station Embankment (Merton) and Ray Park Community Garden (Redbridge), all of which were delighted. Photographs

from each site are shown above/below on the facing page. The bulbs have significantly improved the three sites and in particular you can see that the embankment at Raynes Park Station has been transformed.

With just these three sites receiving bulbs in 2023, we had very few images, so we asked the 200 sites which we had supplied in 2022 to send us pictures of their Spring bulbs in bloom. The results were magnificent and show how well the bulbs flourish in their second year, which of course is due to the very high quality of Taylors bulbs. We're highlighting a few of these with one or two comments from the recipients.

For the record the Bulbs for London scheme has been running since 2012 and in this time Taylors have supplied us with around 1 million bulbs which we, in turn, have given to over 1250 parks, gardens and green sites across the London boroughs. This is an amazing achievement and our thanks once again go to Taylors.



*Brunswick Gardens
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea*



Lamash Community Garden, LB Southwark



Greatfields Park, LB Barking



Waterloo Millenium Garden, LB Lambeth



Raynes Park Station Embankment, LB Merton



St Peter's School, LB Westminster



ELMS4LONDON

The Elms4London campaign continues to promote the idea of restoring elms to the urban landscape and, in the process, it has also helped raise the profile of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association. Mark Lane, Chair of Elms4London, reports on a record-breaking year for the initiative and predicts it will continue to gather momentum in the future with increasing sponsorship and ever wider distribution.

Summary and spread

2023 was a tremendously successful year for the Elms4London campaign. Through the late winter planting period we were able to distribute 114 disease-resistant elm trees to 26 separate sites across 19 London boroughs, representing a notable increase on the previous two years when an overall total of 110 trees were planted.

This great achievement can be attributed to a number of key factors including the generosity of our sponsors, the hard work of the Elms4London committee, and the help and enthusiasm of our network of friends and associates in spreading the word far and wide.

We are particularly grateful to CBRE, who chose to celebrate a key milestone in their history with a financial commitment that will enable us to plant 250 elm trees in a five-year period. This sponsorship has assisted us immensely in making trees more widely available. In addition, we thank a number of private individuals who have contributed financially to the E4L campaign, and would encourage others to consider following in their footsteps.



As the sums donated have increased, the committee has worked hard to ensure that the money we raise is being used to greatest possible effect. Our latest innovation is the creation of Elm Hubs, which have proved an important tool in ensuring optimum distribution of trees. We define a Hub as a single site where the recipient plants between five and ten elm trees, thus generating more significant habitat potential than would be offered by a solitary specimen. In 2023, Elm Hubs were set up by eight different recipient organisations, each of which had large areas of land suitable for the planting of elms. We are now encouraging these organisations to apply for additional trees, chosen from a number of alternative elm varieties, to produce a genuinely mixed plantation that should prove considerably more sustainable than a community made up of a single cultivar.

In the three years that the E4L initiative has been active, it has rapidly captured the public's imagination and we have received positive and encouraging feedback not just from direct recipients but also from many other interested parties. Our revamped High Rise Elms poster, which highlights the important habitat opportunities provided by an elm tree, is now available for anyone who would like a copy and has proved a useful tool to communicate our message. At a time when environmental issues in general are increasingly recognised as a cause for concern, it is gratifying to be able to report that our aims and objectives have never been better or more widely understood.



Brookside, East Barnet

Tree selection

We continue to partner with The Tree Musketeers, an inspirational volunteer-run nursery on Hackney Marshes. This group cultivates whips of *Ulmus* 'Lutece' which are field grown in their Community Tree Nursery until ready to be sold to us as good-sized trees.

We also work with Langthorns Plantery and Joseph Rochford Gardens, which has enabled us to procure top quality, good sized trees of five different disease-resistant cultivars:

U. 'Lutece' (Nanguen): This Dutch hybrid forms a large tree with ascending branches and most closely resembles the native European elms. Will begin flowering after seven years. Tolerant of a wide range of soils and growing conditions.

U. 'Vada' (Wanoux): A Dutch hybrid with a narrow, ascendent growth habit ideal for areas with limited space or as street trees. It is of moderate vigour and will accommodate most soil conditions.

U. 'Columella': A Dutch hybrid with very upright growth producing a tall, fastigate tree as it grows, which will broaden with maturity. Will flower after eight years but can be susceptible to drought in hot summers.

U. 'Wingham': An Italian hybrid, although named after the village in Kent where it was trialled, this cultivar is of complex parentage. Struggles on chalky or clay soils but produces good performance on well-drained soils, where it can put on strong growth when young.

U. 'Stavast': A more infrequently planted Dutch clone renowned for producing a good, strong root system.

U. minor subsp minor: {Smooth-leaved Elm'} Seed sourced from extant trees in Hackney and grown to plantable sizes at The Tree Musketeers nursery. Chosen by landowners who would like to augment their existing wild areas

Royal seal of approval

The MPGA Committee was honoured to be able to gift King Charles III with a fine specimen *Ulmus* 'New Horizon' to celebrate his Coronation. This tree came from Hillier Nursery and was planted by the Buckingham Palace gardens team in February 2024 in a prominent position on the Main Lawn facing the West Front in Buckingham Palace Garden.

Elms4London Committee

Mark Lane (Chair) (MPGA)
Rex Thornborough (MPGA)
Ruth Holmes (MPGA)
Jodie Jones (MPGA)
Nick Evans (MPGA)
David Shreeve (Conservation International)
Tony Leach (Parks for London)

See elm planting pictures on page 28

2024 UPDATE

This year we had hoped to resume all our committee meetings in person at our London venue. We didn't quite manage this, but generally we feel that more is achieved by getting together face to face. Unfortunately, even when it came to our AGM, we were not able to meet in person. We had intended to hold it at the Essex Church in Kensington, but due to a threatened tube/train strike, we had to switch the event online which was very disappointing. 2024 promises to be a much happier occasion as we are returning to the Garden Museum in Lambeth where we have held a number of very successful AGMs in the past.

Website

Our website is proving popular and we work hard to keep it relevant and up to date, although there are still one or two small issues still to be resolved. The 'donate' button is taking longer to bring on board than anticipated, but it should be up and running shortly. We are also waiting for the Legacy Form to be finalised – it's a work in progress and the problems should be resolved very soon. All our work is carried out by volunteers, who do their best but their time is limited.

MPGA Officers

Our Congratulations go to MPGA Vice President **Rosie Atkins** and Committee Member **Mark Lane** on their remarkable achievements this year.

Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth honoured Mark by elevating him to **Commander of the Royal Victorian**

Order (RVO) on his retirement in 2022 as Gardens Manager for the Royal Palaces. At a private audience in November 2023, Mark was subsequently installed by King Charles. Mark is a Committee Member and responsible for our Elms4London project.

Rosie was honoured with the RHS Peoples Award - the Elizabeth Medal of Honour (EMH).

This is given to those who distinguish themselves in the service of horticulture, with only 63 medals being held at any one time. Rosie launched 'Gardens Illustrated' magazine in 1992 and became Director of Chelsea Physic Garden in 2001. In 2021 she chaired a panel on funding charity gardens at Chelsea Flower Show, which became Project Giving Back.

Blue Plaque – Lady Marjory Allen (1897-1976)

In view of the fact that the MPGA had been honoured in 2022 with a Blue Plaque for Fanny Wilkinson, English Heritage contacted us at the beginning of the year to ask our advice regarding a Blue Plaque which they wanted to award to another female landscape architect. This was Lady Marjory Allen, who was very active with the Landscape Institute as well as being a child welfare advocate. Representatives from the MPGA attended the unveiling on 1 May, when the plaque was installed at 22 Lawrence Street, her home in Chelsea, followed by a reception at Chelsea Old Church Hall. Several members of the Landscape Institute were present and other interested parties from the London gardening world.

Database

We are still ploughing on with the database, with the excellent assistance of our volunteer database specialist Dr Hazel Russman. So far this year we have entered a further fourteen Reports, written in a different format and with less detail, which meant they had to be read more carefully to extract the appropriate information. In spite of this, good progress has been made and we are delighted with the number of years covered to date. Again, none of this could have been achieved without the expert help of Dr Russman and we thank her sincerely for her hard work. In the long term we have to think about how the database will be made accessible, how it will be presented and whether a charge will be made to users.

Archives

Eventually we will be handing over to the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) the numerous copy Reports we have managed to obtain going back to 1882. Some of the Reports are at the LMA but the majority are not and this will ensure that the reports and the vital information they contain will be lodged in one place. Most of the Reports are copies of the originals, which have been obtained from institutions across the country and indeed from across the world.

Archive Queries

We continue to receive a considerable number of archive queries to which we do our best to respond. These come from universities, academics and students, as well as residents who are seeking information about their local gardens, churchyards and green spaces.

An interesting query which came in last year was from Shadbolt Park in Worcester Park. We were approached by a member of their committee for a catalogue they were trying to track down, which they assumed would be in our archive. This had been produced for the MPGA in 1937/38 by the well known botanist W J Bean, who listed all the trees which were in situ in Shadbolt Park at that time. We did not have a copy of this catalogue with our 1937 or 1938 Report, but after some clever detective work managed to find one. This enquiry resulted in a good outcome for them and for us as we both now have a copy of the catalogue – a very rare and interesting document which was in danger of being lost.

Fairchild's Garden

We are delighted to report that the refurbishment of Fairchild's Garden, which was laid out by Fanny Wilkinson in 1892, is now complete. The garden, which is in Hackney and very close to Columbia Road, will be officially opened to the public later this year. Hackney Council and the contractor, Blakedown Landscapes, are responsible for this amazing new scheme, for which they are to be congratulated.

Originally known as Hackney Road Recreation Ground, the garden contains the tomb of renowned horticulturalist Thomas Fairchild who lived locally and died in 1720. He was the first person to scientifically produce an artificial hybrid known as 'Fairchild's Mule', a cross between a Sweet William and a Carnation.

ELMS FOR LONDON PLANTING



The Friends of Biggin Hill planted two Ulmus 'Vada' into Mine Shaw LB Bromley



Waterloo Millenium Green Volunteers from BOST planted an Ulmus 'Columella' in Waterloo Millenium Green, LB Lambeth



The Master of Charterhouse plants an Ulmus 'Columella' at the east entrance of Charterhouse Square, LB Islington



An elm hub of five Ulmus 'Wingham' were planted by the Friends of Paddington Old Cemetery, LB Brent



Walthamstow Village Vada planting LB Waltham Forest

MPGA FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

31 DECEMBER
2023

Statement of Financial Activities

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	2023	Capital	Total	Total
Notes	Income		2022	2021
	£	£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Gross dividends received	13,716	-	13,522	12,471
Deposit account interest and Gift Aid interest	274	-	-	1
Subscriptions with Gift Aid Recoveries	400	-	-	550
Donations & subscriptions (Individuals)	805	-	6,980	8,030
Corporate Donations	1 13,750	-	-	-
Total Incoming resources	28,945	-	20,502	21,052
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Grants, affiliation fees & London Spade	17,738	-	10,738	11,677
AGM & related expenses	2 905	-	2,837	1,936
Office expenses, including web design & IT	1,789	-	1,344	1,296
Special Projects (ELMS)	3 9,681	-	1,816	-
	30,113	-	16,735	14,909
Net incoming/(outgoing)	-	-	3,767	6,143
Net movement in funds	-1,168	-	3,767	6,143
Balances at 01/01/2023	20,818	-	-	-
(cash held at METRO bank)				
(investments: M&G+CCLA)	-	342,424	-	-
(CCLA/COIF: cash deposit)	-	6,416	-	-
Balances carried forward 31/12/2023	19,650	348,840	-	-

Balance Sheet

31 December 2023

FIXED ASSETS

Investments at M&G + CCLA

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash at bank and in hand

Total Current Assets

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Creditors

NET CURRENT ASSETS**TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES**

Approved

R M Thornborough
ChairmanMs. T. Healy-Singh
Hon. Treasurer

Note	2023	2022
	£	£
4	342,424	334,290
	19,650	6,414
	26,066	15,608
	-	-
	26,066	15,608
	368,490	349,898

Notes to the Accounts

31 December 2023

ACCOUNTING POLICIES

- (a) Expenditure is dealt with on an accruals basis, which includes making provision at the year end for grants approved which have not yet been paid.
- (b) Dividends, interest and life subscriptions receivable are credited when received.
- (c) Investments are shown at their market value at the year end. Realised and unrealised gains or losses on investments are credited or debited to the Capital account.
- (d) Contributions received as a result of appeals for capital are credited to the Capital Account.
- (e) **Policy on reserves.** The total of grants approved over any given period is chosen to keep income and expenditure broadly in balance and avoid the accumulation of large cash balances. It is therefore not appropriate to specify a precise level of reserves to be maintained.

INCOMING RESOURCES

1. CORPORATE DONATIONS

Joseph Rochford Gardens Ltd have donated £1,000 to the MPGA grants fund. The Elms4London project has received two corporate donations. These were from Bartlett Trees Ltd (£2,000) and CBRE who has undertaken to contribute to the Elms planting scheme over a five year period and has promised additional funding in 2024/2025.

2. RESOURCES EXPENDED

LIST OF GRANTS:

Name	Amount (£)
Coombe Wood Garden, Croydon	585.00
Coram Fields, Camden	1,000.00
Dr George Rice Community Garden, Sutton	588.00
Elders Voice Garden, Brent	1,000.00
Grow Lewisham Community Garden, Lewisham	1,017.52
Haggerston School Garden, Hackney	500.00
London City Farms & Gardens Trust	600.00
London in Bloom	1,000.00
London Parks & Gardens (Open Gardens 2023)	1,070.00
Maggie's Garden Norbury, Croydon	1,126.70
Moore House Farm Community Garden, Lambeth	345.00
Mountford Estate Garden, Hackney	1,500.00
Museum of the Home Garden, Hackney	700.00
Pitzhanger Manor Gardens	215.26
Pro Bono Economics Garden, Southwark	1,020.00
Queen's Promenade, Kingston upon Thames	500.00
Regents Canal (Wild East Collective), Hackney	984.40
Royal Trinity Hospice Garden, Wandsworth	623.44
Russell Road Community Kitchen, K&C	1,256.26
St. Marys Garden, Hackney	1,000.00
Sunshine Community Allotment, Ealing/Hounslow	1,000.00
TOTAL	£17,631.58

Notes to the Accounts

31 December 2023

2. RESOURCES EXPENDED

Events

The cost of catering and venue hire was lower than in 2022 as the AGM had to be held virtually, due to transport strikes throughout London on the day. The venue did not charge us a cancellation fee. This saving was somewhat neutralised by greater than usual web maintenance and IT expenditure.

3. RESOURCES EXPENDED

Elms

The cost of tree supply, delivery and planting was £9,681 and represented the single largest project activity for MPGA funding in 2023.

4. INVESTMENT ASSETS

As at 1 January 2023

As at 31st December 2023

Holding in Units

M&G Equities Investment Fund for Charities	COIF Income Units
£	£
137,547	190,327
134,315	208,109
9,360	10,486.77



GET INVOLVED AND JOIN THE METROPOLITAN PUBLIC GARDEN ASSOCIATION

The MPGA is a long established charity founded by Lord Meath in 1882, which has remained true to its principal objective - the protection and improvement of public spaces across the London boroughs.

How the MPGA does this has evolved over the years, but our hard-working team of volunteers still remain committed to providing modest grants and expertise to the many dedicated local groups who create, maintain, beautify and improve the Capital's parks and green spaces.

Diminishing government funding and growing development is putting huge pressure on our green spaces, large and small. We endeavour to monitor all public gardens and green sites under threat and support campaigns and petitions where we feel we can make

a difference. This all takes time, effort and of course funding.

If you are passionate, as we are, about the environment and protecting London's parks and green spaces for ourselves and future generations, do make a donation towards our work and become a member of the MPGA. Full details are on the form overleaf and our Annual Report will also keep you abreast of our activities.

Our Membership Form can be found overleaf or downloaded from our website www.mpga.org.uk



GET INVOLVED AND JOIN US

Name _____

Company Name (if applicable) _____

Address _____

_____ Post Code _____

Tel day _____ Mobile _____

Email _____

Signature _____ Date _____

SUBSCRIPTION RATE - ANNUAL

Adult £25 Student/over 60 £15

LIFE SUBSCRIPTION - single payment

Adult £250 over 60 £150

CORPORATE - single payment

Corporate £500

I want the MPGA to treat all my donations as **Gift Aid**. I am a UK Taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax/Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference. *Please tick box.*

DONATION £ Cheque/Banker's Order enclosed £

BANKER'S ORDER FORM/DETAILS FOR BACS

Bank _____

Branch _____

_____ Post Code _____

Sort Code _____ Acc No _____

Acc Name _____

Signature(s) _____ Date _____

Please pay MPGA the sum of £ _____ immediately and again on 1 January 20 _____ and on 1 January each subsequent year until further notice.

BANK METRO Sort Code 23 05 80 Acc No 31202116
Acc Name Metropolitan Public Gardens Association

RETURN FORM WITH CHEQUE/BANKER'S ORDER TO:

Hon Treasurer, MPGA, 60 Worlingham Road, East Dulwich SE22 9HD

ALTERNATIVELY, make a BACS payment and email the Treasurer with your details mpga.treasurer@gmail.com



*Victoria Embankment Gardens, City of Westminster
Statue of General Sir James Outram*

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