



SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE



Forth and Borders

Good Practice Guide No.3

Community Wildlife Gardens

What is a community wildlife garden?

A community wildlife garden is located close to where volunteers and users live, and is created and maintained by the community, for the benefit of people and wildlife. Such gardens offer many benefits including an attractive place for recreation and relaxation, habitat creation, biodiversity, food production, community composting and therapeutic pastimes. Community gardens can bring people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds together with a common goal.

Who should be involved and how?

Successful projects tend to get lots of people involved at an early stage. Consider:

- What are you aiming to achieve through garden developments?
- How will you publicise your group?
- What resources do you have within the group such as expert gardeners, access to tools, access to computer equipment, use of a hall?
- Who might offer you help and advice?
- Who else in the area might lend you resources?
- What structure will your group take and how often will you meet?
- What other groups in the area might be involved, eg: schools and community groups?
- How might the wider community become involved?
- Do any agreements need to be made over use of the land such as a lease agreement?
- Do you need a constitution or a bank account?

Groups working on community wildlife gardens have taken different approaches:

The "In-Bloom" Committee of the Community Council developed **Cockenzie and Port Seton Secret Garden** in East Lothian. The project was initially publicised via the Community Council newsletter, notice boards, local press and word of mouth. Involvement in the BBC's Beechgrove Garden then led to further publicity.

Residents at the **Thistle Foundation** at Craigmillar in Edinburgh undertook training to create various garden features.

Meadows Yard Local Nature Reserve in Edinburgh is a good example of a community group getting others involved including the Ranger Service and conservation volunteers for practical tasks; as well as the John Muir Trust, the Historical and Amenity Society, Scottish Wildlife Trust, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Growing Concern and Community Police. Scottish Water helped by filling up the pond during dry spells.

Redhall Walled Garden in Edinburgh is open to the public, sells plants, offers the garden as an educational resource to local schools and organises activities at annual open days.

How will you raise funds to create and maintain your garden?

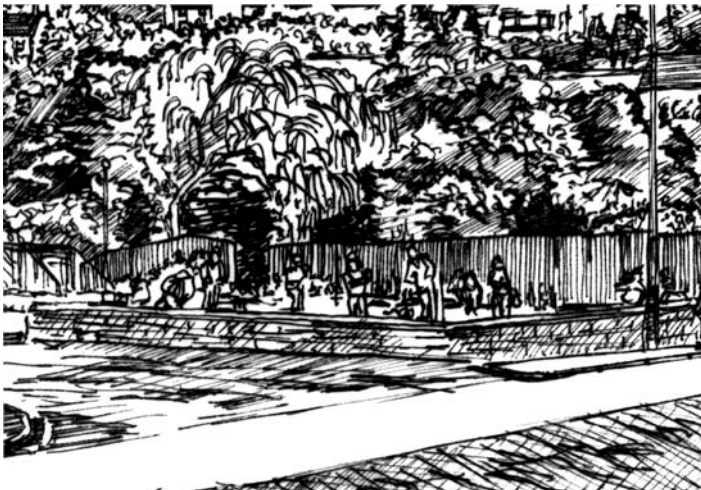
A number of organisations might offer a grant for a project that fulfils their requirements e.g. Local Authorities, Awards For All – see SNH Good Practice Guide No. 1 for contacts. This usually requires a little research into who offers grants for the sort of project you have in mind, what information they require and when the deadlines are.

The **Thistle Foundation Garden** received grants from Millennium Awards, Give it a Go, Edinburgh Green Belt Trust, Lloyds TSB, Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Partnership and many more.

Many community garden groups have successfully raised funds for their project through sponsorship from local businesses.

Cockenzie and Port Seton Secret Garden in East Lothian was supported by local businesses such as hairdressers, the Health Centre, roofers and plasterers, a garage, a chip shop and the CO-OP.

In-kind contributions also provide valuable resources. For example, the local council might be involved in strimming a meadow or providing small trees; local nurseries might provide bedding plants and the local college might be a useful source of volunteer labour.



Lasswade Community Garden in Midlothian received in-kind donations from local garden centres; the local Councillor and local residents provided bulbs and plants; volunteers spent time on planting, maintenance and administration and a local engineering firm agreed to manufacture and donate a time capsule.



What do you know about your site?

Before the start of any project it is always useful to know as much about your site as possible to maximise the effect of any developments you make.

- Who uses the site?
- How is it used?
- What grows there already?
- What conditions prevail, such as soil, wind, sun/shade, drainage, next to sea, etc.
- What plants will grow well in those conditions? For example if planting in shallow soil either choose plants that will do well in that situation or think about raised beds.

The garden designer for the **Firrhill Dream Garden** in Edinburgh worked with the Day Care Centre's clients, staff and volunteers to work out what people wanted to see in their wildlife garden, bearing in mind the physical restrictions of the site.

Some other things to think about when planning a community wildlife garden:

- What other factors may affect the garden such as informal paths, rabbits etc.?
- Consider potential vandalism and plan for it. For example, place interpretation boards out of easy reach; site items that might be a vandalism target in view of CCTV cameras; choose vandal-proof materials or buy spares and replace damaged items; encourage would-be vandals to have a more positive input in to the project.

At **Cockenzie and Port Seton Secret Garden** in East Lothian youth groups were involved in an art project and are encouraged to use the garden for nature projects. It is interesting to note that throughout the project there has been no vandalism.

Being safe on your site

On any site or for any activity, health and safety, and insurance must be considered. See page 4 for sources of further information.

Think about:

- Risk Assessment of any activity.
- Have you got insurance?
- Personal protective equipment such as gardening gloves.
- Training of those using any tools; and using the right tool for the right job.
- First Aid and emergency procedures such as access to a telephone.
- Substances hazardous to health.
- Passers by; eg: you may need to set up barriers and look-outs for practical tasks.
- Underground workings such as pipes or cables should be considered before digging large holes.
- Notifying police, fire, and ambulance e.g. you may need to notify the local fire brigade if you are burning waste in case anyone thinks it is a house fire.
- Consider any disruption to facilities or neighbours caused by activities, eg: taking down a tree next to a road.

Craigencalt Ecology Centre near Kinghorn in Fife is open to the public and works with volunteers and groups. The site is insured for public liability and the buildings are insured. Staff looked carefully at legal and child protection issues. For staff members and volunteers working with children, criminal records checks are carried out. Schools are generally responsible for carrying out their own risk assessments for group visits, although a member of staff is available to assist if required. Safety talks are included for activities such as rock pool guddling and use of practical conservation tools.

When working with children, consider

- Adult to child ratios.
- Minimum ages for activities.
- Protection of children and vulnerable people.
- Unaccompanied children (see page 4 for sources of further information).

Other things to consider

- How will you maintain the garden?
- Ceremonies to celebrate completion of works; remember, some events require entertainment licences.

- Local history, characteristics of site/area and developments in keeping with this.

The group developing the **Cockenzie and Port Seton Secret Garden** incorporated wave patterns to reflect the area's connection with sea fishing.



Attracting wildlife to your community garden

A great deal of information is available on the subject of wildlife gardening (see page 4 for useful resources). Consider:

- Planting native species and those that provide food for insects and birds, e.g. nectar-rich plants, shrubs with berries and plants that produce seeds.
- Creating a variety of habitats such as hedgerows, meadows, ponds and wet areas, scrub and woodland areas.
- Creating areas for nesting and shelter such as bramble patches, stone walls and piles of logs, and put up nest boxes.
- Gardening organically.

At the **Firrhill Dream Garden** in Edinburgh, the Day Care Centre's users are now able to access, enjoy and work in, the garden with ease thanks to the creation of raised beds, seating and handrails. The increased biodiversity has made the garden a more appealing place to visit and sit. The pond is a habitat for aquatic invertebrates, frogs and newts, and a water source for birds and mammals. Hedging and the butterfly garden have created a better habitat for attracting birds and insects and the bog garden and meadow have further increased the garden's wildlife value.

Contacts

Scottish Natural Heritage in Forth & Borders:

Laundry House, Dalkeith Country Park,
Dalkeith, Midlothian, EH22 2NA. Phone:
0131 654 2466

46 Crossgate, Cupar, Fife KY15 5HS.
Phone: 01334 654038

Anderson's Chambers, Market Street,
Galashiels TD1 3AF. Phone 01896 756 652

Website www.snh.org.uk

SNH offers grants to help people actively manage and enjoying the natural heritage in their area. For further details see Good Practice Guide No. 1 'Applying to SNH for a Community Grant' or contact your local office. The SNH website includes sections on **Greenspaces for Communities**, **Garden for Life**, **Community Gardens** and **Publications**. **Garden for Life** leaflets are produced by SNH and cover a number of aspects of wildlife gardening including plants that are best for attracting different kinds of wildlife. You can borrow the Beechgrove Garden's **Community Gardens pack** from your local SNH office.

Local Authorities might help with funding through Community Grants Schemes. Ranger Services and Biodiversity Officers may be able to offer advice.

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
Ballallan House, Allan Park, Stirling,
FK8 2QG. Phone: 01786 479697 Website:
www.btcv.org.uk

BTCV has produced a number of publications related to practical conservation and community gardens. Publications are available at a small charge or can be downloaded free from the website. BTCV also offers insurance cover for affiliated groups.

Scottish Wildlife Trust

Cramond House, Cramond Glebe Road,
Edinburgh, EH4 6NS. Phone 0131 312
7765. website: www.swt.org.uk
The SWT website offers information sheets.

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens

The Green House, Hereford St,
Bristol, BS3 4NA. Phone: 0117 923 1800
Website www.farmgarden.org.uk
They offer information and support.

Wildlife Gardening Websites

Try www.wildlondon.org.uk or
www.SpaceForNature.co.uk or search for
Wildlife Gardening.

Wildlife Gardening Books

There are many good books available on wildlife and organic gardening such as Chris Baines' *How to Make a Wildlife Garden* ISBN 0-241-11870-0 and Geoff Hamilton *Successful Organic Gardening* ISBN 0-86318-200-3. A number of books are available for loan from SNH in Dalkeith.

Central Scotland Forest Trust

Hillouseridge, Shottskirk Road, Shotts,
North Lanarkshire, ML7 4JS. Phone: 01501
822015. Website: www.csft.org.uk
CSFT can offer advice and possibly funding in West Lothian and Falkirk. Contact the Community Liaison Officer.

SNH would like to thank all those whose projects feature in the case studies. For more information please contact:

- Cockenzie and Port Seton Community Council In-Bloom Committee, c/o Community Council, East Lothian Council, John Muir House, Haddington, tel: 01620 827827
- Craigencalt Ecology Centre, Kinghorn, Fife KY3 9YG. Phone: 01592 891567 www.cfec.org.uk
- Firrhill Day Centre, 257 Colinton Road, Edinburgh, EH14. Tel: 0131 441 7162
- Meadows Yard Local Nature Reserve Management Group, c/o City of Edinburgh Council Ranger Service, 69 Braid Road, Edinburgh. Phone: 0131 447 7145
- Scottish Association for Mental Health Redhall Gardens, 97 Lanark Road, Edinburgh EH14 2LZ. Phone: 0131 443 0946
- The Thistle Foundation, Niddrie Mains Road, Edinburgh, EH16 4EA, Tel: 0131 661 3366, Fax: 0131 661 4879, <http://freespace.virgin.net/walker.kim/intro2.html>