



# Sydenham Garden

*A growing community*

Sydenham Garden is an award-winning local charity that aims to transform lives through therapeutic activities. We deliver a range of events and opportunities for the local community, but our service focuses on Lewisham and Bromley residents experiencing mental ill health or other significant illness, enabling them to improve their quality of life, social interaction and physical and mental health in a supportive community environment.

## Sainsbury's Local Charity of the Year!

We are delighted to have been chosen by Sainsbury's Superstore in Sydenham to be their charity of the year. Thank you so much to everyone who nominated us!

Sainsbury's staff have already raised £2,350 and will be helping us in lots of ways - from staff volunteer days at De Frene Allotments, to fundraising activities in store. We have been invited to help customers with bag packing (see [Dates for your Diary](#)) - a great opportunity to raise awareness of our work and raise funds. Let us know if you can spare a couple of hours to help.

Would your workplace like to help Sydenham Garden? Please get in touch.



## Dates for your Diary

Every Wednesday until end of September

Market Stall at Sydenham Garden - entrance via Holland Drive off Queenswood Road. 10.30am - 1pm

15th August

NGS Open Day - CANCELLED due to building work - many apologies

27th November

Christmas Fair at Sydenham Garden - 11am-3pm

30th & 31st October and 4th & 5th December

Sainsbury's Bag Packing Fundraiser - call if you can help

See [www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk](http://www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk) for more info and dates of other events and activities.

## Come and Visit our Market Stall

Since launching the stall in May, we have already had over 100 visitors! Co-workers have been working with staff and volunteers to promote the stall and man it every Wednesday. The aim is to enable co-workers to develop their planning, budgeting and enterprise skills, as well as build their confidence and provide opportunities for interaction with the wider community.

Wazir, Ogbe and Monique recently attended a participatory budgeting event organised by Voluntary Action Lewisham, where organisations that



applied for Lewisham Strategic Partnership funds voted on each others' projects. We were thrilled to be voted 3rd out of 15 projects, receiving a grant of £7,299. As well as helping pay for planning and promotion of the stall, this money will also buy a "pop up" gazebo, a cold water dispenser for refreshments, storage and stock.

We have already sold over £600 worth of plants, organic produce, cards and craft items - why not pay us a visit and relax with a cold drink!

The stall is open every Wednesday until the end of September, from 10.30am to 1pm. Access is through the gate on Holland Drive, off Queenswood Road.

## Co-worker Profile: Catherine Evans

**Catherine joined the Art & Craft group at Sydenham Garden in February this year after seeing one of our newsletters at another support group she attends. Catherine says she thought it sounded fabulous and got herself referred.**

Catherine had been suffering with anxiety and agoraphobia which had also led to depression. She had been at her worst during last year but has slowly been able to see things improve over the last few months.

Catherine says she has now realised just how therapeutic and healing art and craft can be, as it “takes you out of yourself” and concentrating on what you are creating allows you to relax. Catherine has also completed the print-making course and found it a great achievement for herself and a lesson in beginning to value herself again.

Suffering with agoraphobia has meant that Catherine’s social life has been very restricted. Being given the opportunity to meet with people in a supportive

environment has also been key in her journey to recovery. She has been able to connect with people who understand her needs. Catherine feels that everyone helps each other in different ways within the group and is very keen to be able to give something back.

Prior to her illness, Catherine had been working as a manager of a local branch of a charity and is keen to get back to work when the time is right. She is making little steps towards this end goal and is keeping her mind and her eyes open for opportunities to see where life takes her.

**Katie Hooper - Outreach and Development Worker**



## Art & Craft Latest

Art and Craft has been on the move! We are very grateful to Sydenham Green Health Centre for lending us their education room while the new building is growing. Like all nomads we have been weaving and making felt! The photo shows feltmaking in progress.

**We are planning to welcome everyone to an exhibition for the New Year in the new Resource Centre - watch this space!**

If anyone has any remnants of cotton fabric for patchwork / quiltmaking and appliqué, please let us know.

**Sarah Sikorski -  
Art and Craft Session Leader**



## Calling all Online Shoppers!

We are now registered with a **FREE fundraising service** where you can raise funds for Sydenham Garden when you shop online with thousands of retailers including Amazon, M&S, John Lewis and Argos. Just go to [www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/sydenhamgarden](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/sydenhamgarden) next time you are about to make a purchase and follow the links from within their site.

## Garden News

I started as Therapeutic Garden Worker at Sydenham Garden at the start of May and I've been getting to know the people and plants that make this such a special place.



The garden is now in the full bloom of summer, with co-workers' earlier seed sowing work paying off as the sunflowers soar and vegetable beds spill over.

In one bed we have used a Native American system called "Three Sisters" where pumpkins trail around the base of sweetcorn and runner beans climb up it. The vegetables support each other physically and nutritionally as well as help suppress weeds and deter predators. We have also planted up straw bales with heat loving plants, including aubergines and peppers.

**We were very excited to see the stag beetles reappear in the nature reserve and the pond has been hosting lots of newts, dragonflies and damselflies.**

Co-workers have also been working hard to give plants the VIP treatment ready for sale at the Wednesday morning Market Stall. In the next few months we will start to select and sow our winter greens such as kale, cabbage, pak choi and kohlrabi, with plans for a thriving winter vegetable garden.

**Claudia Sartori - Therapeutic Garden Worker**

## De Frene Allotments News

Lots of work has been taking place at our allotment site. Co-workers and volunteers have filled a skip with rubbish from the site, and six raised beds have been made, ready to be filled with topsoil. A small pond has been sunk into the ground and its first inhabitant, a frog, was recently spotted.

A new area is being constructed so that we can have our breaks in the shade, and with the recent addition of a portaloo, things are becoming more hospitable for people on the site. We have also recently purchased a camping kettle, so we can now have tea and coffee in between the hard work.

**Steve Meddemmen - De Frene Session Leader**

**Our vision for the De Frene Allotment site is an operational Market Garden enterprise, providing new opportunities for co-workers, locally grown food to the wider community and a sustainable income stream for the charity.** We are working hard to fundraise for the big investment that is needed to make this a reality.

In the meantime, we are getting by with the resources we have available - mostly our very hard working volunteers and co-workers! **If you would like to make a donation, volunteer or find out more about our plans for the site, please contact us or see our website.**

## Message from our Chair

It's a great joy to watch our new resource centre building grow steadily. I have been trying (not very successfully!) to imagine how it will feel to be inside the community room in which we hope to base so many of our future activities. One thing I'm sure about is that the generous windows in this room and the decked area outside will mean that our architects' desire to make the experience of the building blend with the garden outside will have been achieved. Despite our certainty, we hope to welcome you

all to an opening event soon so you can judge for yourselves!

I would like to give special thanks to Monique Dall'Occo, Social Enterprise Development Manager, who is moving on after two and a half years with us. Monique has worked very hard in focusing our minds on the potential of Sydenham Garden's De Frene Road site as a market garden enterprise, and we hope to make use of the plans she developed in the near future.

I would like to wish all our co-workers and supporters a very good summer.

**Dr Jim Sikorski - Chair of Trustees**



## Where are they now?

### 60-second interview with people who have moved on from Sydenham Garden

Tracy A. spent around 18 months with Sydenham Garden before she decided to leave and move on to other services.

When Tracy first met us, she was finding it very difficult just to leave the house, but she wanted to meet more people and do some gardening. She first joined the Wednesday afternoon Garden session, and later started Art & Craft on Wednesday mornings.

Whilst she found the creativity of Art & Craft very therapeutic, the social contact also helped her to move her life forward. Tracy says the main change for her was her improved confidence, which helps her to leave the house and to get about more easily and with joy. Spending time at Sydenham Garden each week allowed Tracy to regain some strength so she could tackle a few issues holding her back in life.

She has moved house and now uses Bromley Mind's services three days a week. Tracy's new found confidence means she is able to tackle her concerns and issues head on.

At Mind, she attends life skills classes, which teach her assertiveness, stress management and other useful skills, mixed in with some low level CBT and person centred planning. Tracy is looking ahead to a brighter future.

**Daniela Fleckenstein -  
Outreach and  
Development Worker**

## Healthy living, healthy minds

**10 top tips to look after your mental wellbeing from the Mental Health Foundation (<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>)**

- 1. Eat a balanced diet and drink sensibly:** Improving your diet can protect against feelings of anxiety and depression.
- 2. Maintain friendships:** Just listening and talking to friends who are feeling down can make a huge difference. So make sure you devote time to maintaining your friendships both for their sake and your own.
- 3. Maintain close relationships:** Close relationships affect how we feel - so nurture them and if there is a problem within a relationship, try and resolve it.
- 4. Take exercise:** The effects of exercise on mood are immediate. Whether it is a workout in the gym, a simple walk or bike ride, it can be uplifting. Exercise can also be great fun socially.
- 5. Sleep:** Sleep has both physical and mental benefits. Physically it is the time when the body can renew its energy store but sleep also helps us to rebuild our mental energy.
- 6. Laugh:** A good laugh does wonders for the mind and soul.
- 7. Cry:** It is good to cry. Even though it may feel terrible at the time, a good cry can release pent up feelings, and people often feel better afterwards.
- 8. Ask for help when you need it:** The longer you leave a problem, the worse it will get. Don't be scared to ask for help from a family member, friend or professional.
- 9. Make time for you:** Do you sometimes feel like you have no time for yourself? Make time for your hobbies and interests.
- 10. Remember, work isn't everything:** Ninety one million working days a year are lost to mental ill-health in the UK so take it easy.

## Charity dinner

The dinner at Ponte Nuovo in June was a great success! As well as being a really fun evening, it **raised more than £1,400 for the charity**. A huge thank you to all who attended, donated items, bid on the auction or bought raffle tickets!



## New grants and supporters...

A special thank you to:

- > Lewisham Strategic Partnership
- > Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
- > Sainsbury's Sydenham
- > SLAM Charitable Funds
- > The Beatrice Laing Trust
- > The Henry Smith Charity
- > The Tudor Trust

...and all the funders and friends who continue to support our work.

## Contact us

**Sydenham Garden**  
c/o Sydenham Green Health Centre  
26 Holmshaw Close  
London  
SE26 4TH

**Tel: 020 8291 1650**

**[info@sydenhamgarden.org.uk](mailto:info@sydenhamgarden.org.uk)**

**[www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk](http://www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk)**