



# Sydenham Garden

*A growing community*

## Meet our New Chief Executive

I have worked in charities for nearly 10 years, with my two most recent posts as Trees for Cities' Development Manager, and Groundwork Kent and Medway's Enterprise Manager. I have always believed in the impact a connection with the outdoors and nature can bring people, so it is wonderful to be working for an organisation that has this at its heart.



During the interview process I got such a strong sense of commitment and focus from everyone I met, that I was delighted to be offered the job of Chief Executive. Since my first day on 20th of January, I haven't been disappointed. Everyone who is connected to the charity has been so welcoming and positive, and the dedication of our volunteers, trustees and staff is truly impressive. It has also been fantastic to discover the very strong level of support the charity has from local people through our Friends scheme.

I am looking forward to working with the Sydenham Garden team through the challenges and excitement ahead, and hope to meet more of our Friends and supporters at our Charity Dinner in June and later in the year when we officially open our shiny new building!

**Jennie Graham - Chief Executive**

## Dates for your Diary

The Spring Fair will not take place this year because of the building work. We hope to see you at some of these alternatives!

**Tuesday 27th April**  
**Art and Craft Volunteer Recruitment Event**

Forest Hill Methodist Church,  
2.00 - 4.00pm.

**Tuesday 11th May**  
**Sydenham Society Pub Quiz in aid of Sydenham Garden**

The Golden Lion, 7.45pm

**Every Wednesday (from May 19th to end September)**

**Market Stall at Sydenham Garden**

Holland Drive, 10.00am - 1.30pm

**Saturday 5th June**  
**Plant sale**

39 Cator Road, SE26 London,  
10.30am - 2.00pm

**Wednesday 16th June**  
**Fundraising dinner at Ponte Nuovo, SE19**

Dine in style and support Sydenham Garden. Admission by ticket only £25

**Please check our new look website for more info and dates of other events and activities.**

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

## Message from our Chair

**Dear Friends**

The life of Sydenham Garden seems to follow the seasons in more ways than one. As well as the garden itself lying fallow over our recent long winter our efforts to develop and expand seem on the surface to have been static. However, like the land itself, the charity seems to be approaching another springtime in its development - a time of growth and promise.



The building has finally begun!

One feature of this will be our **new building** which we are delighted to announce has begun on site. We hope this will be completed as we press our autumn apple harvest later this year. The Trustees are extremely grateful for the confidence shown in our work by all our funders and supporters, in particular those who have waited so patiently for us to reach our target.

Another sign of growth is that when we talk about Sydenham Garden we now have to think of it being both our current site and our new land at the old De Frene Allotments - **the new Sydenham Garden is now twice as big as the old one!**

As the charity begins this period of growth we will need all the help we can get from our supporters - including help in looking after our building when it is complete and in helping to make the new De Frene site into a place of welcome for our co-workers and the surrounding community. I look forward to seeing some of you in those roles in the next few months.

**Dr Jim Sikorski - Chair of Trustees**

## Co-worker Profile: Paul S

After 28 years working in a factory dealing with machinery in a monotonous job, Paul was made redundant. He became depressed and he was referred to Sydenham Garden as his doctor thought it would be good for him.



Paul started garden sessions in September last year. When he arrived, he had great difficulty talking to people, but he soon realised how welcoming the project and people were and began to settle in.

Now, half a year later, **Paul has grown into an active and chatty co-worker, and feels his health has improved. He enjoys the time spent outdoors, feeling less confined out in the fresh air amongst the trees, plants and wildlife.**

In addition to his Tuesday afternoon session, Paul has joined the Wednesday morning session. In contrast to how he began at Sydenham Garden, Paul really likes

to socialise and chat with people in the group and he has lots of memorable moments of time, problems and jokes shared.

**He says that the thing he enjoys most at the garden is that there is absolutely no pressure or expectations put on him.** At the moment Paul is doing the OCN course in basic horticulture skills at Sydenham Garden which he finds really interesting and he continues to happily get involved in anything else that needs doing.

When Paul isn't at Sydenham Garden he spends time in his own garden preparing hundreds of seedlings in his own greenhouse. When he isn't doing that, weather permitting, he likes to go fishing for carp.

It is Paul's plan to feel better and to be able to recover from his depression and breakdown. Paul's future plans are to find a new job, maybe even something to do with horticulture. He has realised that after all those years working as an engineer he didn't really enjoy that line of work, and much prefers the outdoors.

Paul says he is "doing alright" in terms of feeling better, but the job hunt proves difficult and Sydenham Garden is hoping to support him on this journey.

**Paul was interviewed by Daniela Fleckenstein - Outreach and Development Worker**

## Art and Craft Latest

Snow paintings and marmalade were the theme in the Art and Craft group for the first few weeks of this year!

We have also just completed a seven-week printmaking course, in which we have tried out lino prints, polystyrene prints, monoprints and also collagraphy. This is a method of printing which uses textured fabrics, papers, netting, ribbon, string - in fact anything flat and textured that can be made into a collage, inked up, and put through a printing press. Many wonderful prints have been made.

Our willow day on the 27th March was a great success. **Many beautiful willow globes, plant supports, trellis structures, hurdles, fish, and even a beautiful sheep were made with the green willow we had picked in Sussex earlier in the year.** The little bit of rain didn't spoil the fun. Many thanks to all who helped in any way.

**Sarah Sikorski - Art and Craft Leader**



Arts & Crafts Willow day

### Volunteers needed in Art and Craft Group

Would you like to help in the Art and Craft Group? We are looking for more volunteers. If you are interested, please come to a meeting on Tuesday 27th April at Forest Hill Methodist Church from 2pm until 4pm. Phone the office or ask Sarah for more information.

## Reminder

**Friends Renewals are now due** - if you are an existing friend, or would like to join us, please complete the renewal form which you can get from our website or by calling the office.  
**£6 a year for unwaged, £12 for waged or £150 for life membership (and a big boost for the charity!)**

## New Market Stall

### Roll up, roll up...

We've had a busy time these last few weeks planning our new weekly garden stall, which launches on **Wednesday 19th May 10.00am - 1.30pm.**

The market stall will be set up at the community garden (access via Holland Drive) and will offer new opportunities to our co-workers, with a particular focus on personal development and employability skills.

Running the new stall will enable our co-workers to develop their planning, budgeting and enterprise skills as well as build on their confidence and team work.

**What's more, local residents in Sydenham and Forest Hill get to benefit too! Affordable locally grown fresh produce, garden-grown plants, home-made jams & chutneys as well as hand-made crafts and cards will all be on sale on the stall.**

If you, your friends or neighbours would like to find out more, why not pop down to see us on a Wednesday. If you would like to pre-order a vegetable bag or any other items for sale to collect on the day, just get in touch.

**Monique Dall'Occo**  
**Social Enterprise Development Manager**

## Garden News

It was a long, cold winter and we enjoyed the ephemeral beauty and tranquillity of the garden when it was under a covering of snow. During the cold spells we observed our birdlife and **saw an increase in the variety of birds visiting the garden including winter migrants such as the redwing.** We busied ourselves making fat balls to put out along with seed and peanuts to sustain our feathered friends during the inclement weather.

Some of our co-workers helped prune the old gnarled apple tree to help rejuvenate it and hopefully produce a few more apples this year. Our autumn planted garlic is doing well and the cold weather should actually help it to form decent sized bulbs. We have also had a magnificent swathe of snowdrops in the garden this year.

And at last spring appears to have finally arrived and our newly installed nesting boxes are now attracting the attention of blue tits and coal tits. **Frogs have been spawning in our wildlife pond and newts have also returned. Daffodils are now in flower as is the wonderful Mimosa tree whose gorgeous scent is now attracting foraging bumblebees.**

There is excitement about the new growing year and co-workers and volunteers have set about sowing flower and vegetable seeds in earnest. Tomatoes, broad beans, lettuces, sweet peas and marigolds have already germinated in the greenhouse. We have planted out our shallots and early potatoes. Baskets and containers are looking attractive having been planted up with primulas and violas.

**Lesley Hopwood**  
**Sessional Therapeutic Garden Worker**



**During the building project, please use the Holland Drive entrance, SE23 2QJ - Holland Drive is a cul-de-sac off Queenswood Road.**

## Healthy living, healthy minds

This issue we wanted to give voice to a poem written by one of our co-workers. Alison has taken great effort to express the dark emotions that people can feel, concluding that the positive things are well worth focusing on.

This shift of focus is also very evident in Alison's personal journey of recovery. As anyone who has met her will agree, she keeps the smiles up and the focus forward with her great ability to look at the bright side of things. Thank you Alison!

*Negativity can bring you down  
In its water, you can drown.  
Worry, stress, anxiety,  
Feeling trapped, you can't be free.*

*Looking at the darkest side,  
It makes you want to run & hide.  
How can you get out of this,  
Dark & dismal, deep abyss.*

*The only way that you can cope,  
Is try to have some faith & hope.  
Be positive, as best you can.  
Don't let bad feelings bring you down.*

*Stay cheerful, laugh and brush away,  
Those awful thoughts that try to stay.  
Look at the good that's all around,  
So many riches to be found.*

**Alison Laycock**

## De Frene Allotments News

For those who don't already know, the De Frene allotments are right on our doorstep. Located between De Frene Road and Queenswood Road, this former allotment site has been disused for many years now and is in real need of some loving care and attention!

**We are delighted to announce that Sydenham Garden are now the proud owners of a 999-year lease for the De Frene allotment site.**

We are very grateful to the De Frene Road Allotment Club for giving us this golden opportunity to expand our service through the use of this valuable community resource.



Huge thanks to all those Friends and supporters who donated funds to help us purchase the lease.

We are now planning to turn our green fingers to the De Frene allotments. **Our plan is to transform the site into a sustainable food growing project that will benefit the local community and our co-workers for years to come, whilst also protecting the wonderful biodiversity of the site.**

A lot of work, time and financial resources are needed, so if there are helping hands out there, please do get in touch!

**Help needed: food growing volunteers, landscapers, market garden site structures, tool storage, fundraising...**

## Thank you to all our current funders!

- > Big Lottery Fund - Ecominds
- > Big Lottery Fund - Reaching Communities
- > Capital Growth
- > Coutts Charitable Trust
- > Garfield Weston Foundation
- > Goldsmiths Charity
- > Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation
- > Lewisham Community Sector funds
- > Natural England
- > SLaM Charitable Funds
- > The Clothworkers Association
- > The MacRobert Trust
- > The Tudor Trust
- > Wates Foundation

...and all our Friends and individual donors.

**We couldn't do this without you.**

## Contact us

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