

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SUPPORT TO GARDENERS FINAL REPORT

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Sub-Committee is asked to consider this report and its recommendations, and commend them to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

2 SUMMARY

- 2.1 At the 23rd September 2003 meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for a Clean and Green Croydon, Members agreed to conduct a Scrutiny Review focusing on support to gardeners and terms of reference were agreed on 25th November 2003.
- 2.2 The review was led by a working group, consisting of Cllr Tiedemann (Chair), Cllr Gatland and Cllr Ryan, with officer support from members of the multi-agency Natural Environment Strategy Group, Justin Carr, Emma Wiggins, and Anna Eltringham.
- 2.3 As terms of reference were drawn up, it was agreed that the review would focus on support available to care for areas of less than 0.25 ha. The aim of this focus would be to produce original research to complement, rather than duplicate, work currently being carried out on green spaces above this size as part of the new Open Space Strategy* developed by Croydon's multi-agency Natural Environmental Strategy Group. Areas covered by this Scrutiny Review include private and communal gardens.
- 2.4 While the provision of school gardens and educational work carried out in and around them have not been examined, the review must acknowledge their role in instilling an understanding of the local natural environment, good gardening and maintenance practices, and a sense of enjoyment of nature as a foundation for later life, points which arose anecdotally in many information exchanges during this review.

* Policy 3D.11 of the draft London Plan setting out planning policy and priorities for Greater London states that the London boroughs should prepare Open Space Strategies to understand the supply and demand of open spaces and identify ways of protecting, creating and enhancing them.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Gardening is an activity which can offer a wide range of rewards, both to the gardener and to the physical and human environment, e.g. a learning environment, an opportunity to increase health and fitness, an opportunity to add beauty and value to one's local environment and increase pride in one's locality, etc. These themes are also to be found in of the Council's values and priorities for service delivery. In addition, interest in this activity has grown significantly in the 1990s, as reflected by the growing media coverage of gardening issues.
- 3.2 While the Council has produced and started implementing a Parks Improvement Plan following its Recreation Best Value Review and its Parks and Open Spaces Best Value Fundamental Performance Review in 1999, it has recognised the need to gain a fuller understanding of issues relating to small gardens and green areas of less than 0.25 hectares, which comprise a significant proportion of the surface area of the borough.
- 3.3 Outcomes to emerge from this review include:
- an understanding of main issues and good practice regarding bio-diversity and environmental sustainability in small gardens
 - recommendations on how to use gardening to improve physical and mental well-being
 - recommendations on how to make this activity as accessible as possible to all sectors of the community
 - considerations on available resources to take forward recommendations and how to make them accessible to stakeholders involved

4 SOCIAL ISSUES

- 4.1 The condition of private gardens plays a significant role in raising or blighting the image of a neighbourhood, people's attitude to it and their willingness to make an effort to maintain the area in good condition.
- 4.2 Two main issues tend to affect people's ability to maintain garden areas they are responsible for: lack of mobility and strength, and lack of knowledge on how to keep a garden reasonably maintained with a minimum amount of work.

THE CHALLENGE FOR OLDER AND DISABLED RESIDENTS

- 4.3 Discussions with agencies such as Age Concern and local Neighbourhood Care Associations revealed that as people lose their health as well as the standard of living they may have had prior to retirement, gardening becomes an increasingly difficult task and the inability to keep it to previous standards can cause significant anxiety and depression.
- 4.4 To respond to the rising enquiries regarding the availability of moderately priced gardening services, these agencies and others do provide local people with lists of approved gardeners and the fees they charge for gardening work. Some Neighbourhood Care Association groups also provide volunteer work to local residents, and, in some cases, benefit from the added help of school children wishing to do voluntary work in the local community. Some additional support is provided to local residents by Community Service. The Croydon Volunteer Bureau reported, however,

that it does not tend to come across a large number of volunteers interested in gardening.

- 4.5 A new resource for support with gardening has recently become available following the establishment of a connection between unkempt gardens and an increase in break-ins and burglaries. As part of the Council's "Staying Put" programme, a gardening scheme was set up in 2003 to provide disabled or older people with a low cost, voucher based gardening service to help them with physically demanding gardening tasks, with a view to reducing the risk of burglary in nine wards (Bensham Manor, Broad Green, Norbury, Selhurst, South Norwood, Thornton Heath, Upper Norwood, Waddon, West Thornton). The initiative is run by the Cherry Orchard Gardening Project, which employs staff with learning difficulties, and funded through Neighbourhood Renewal funding until March 2005. Questions to be addressed in future are whether to offer this service borough-wide in view of its popularity, and whether to mainstream the funding of this service, and keep costs down by offering a very simple scheduled garden clearance service, available between the months of April and October.
- 4.6 At the working party meeting held on 26th May, representatives of Croydon Age Concern and the Neighbourhood Care Association expressed their firm support for the scheme, on which the council receive frequent enquiries. It was also suggested by voluntary agencies such as Age Concern and the Neighbourhood Care Association that further income for this service might be generated through payment by well advertised and easily purchased "gardening gift vouchers".
- 4.7 However, the overwhelming demand for these services and the limited current resources available to carry out this work have led staff at the Cherry Orchard Centre to consider the possibility of limiting their provision to residents on low income who would have no other resource to gardening services, as is the case of Sutton's low-cost Tenants' Gardening Scheme run by Sutton Volunteer bureau for council tenants in the borough.
- 4.6 The review findings show that there remains a considerable need for low-cost gardening support, which could not only contribute towards a reduction in burglary rates, but also put a check on the number of falls and other accidents which older people are prone to in unkempt gardens.

GARDENING AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

- 4.7 The other benefit of the service concerns training and employment opportunities for the members of Cherry Orchard centre who provide this service. As a result of Croydon's Best Value Review of Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities which found an over-reliance on traditional models of service provision and a tendency to segregate adults with learning disabilities, a Service Improvement Plan (SIP) is being implemented. The following two action points from the plan need to be highlighted:
- The establishment of Grounds Maintenance and Furniture Recycling Social Businesses in 2004, initially creating 15 jobs of up to 16 hours per week.
 - A new partnership between The Garden Centre and Horticultural Project (which already works with 20 service users from Cherry Orchard) and the British Conservation Trust for Volunteers (BTCV), who commenced a vocational training

programme for a further 20 service users from Waylands and Heavers Farm Day Centres in October 2002.

- 4.8 The Garden Centre (located on the Cherry Orchard site and supported by the Mitcham Road Nursery) is not ready for development into a Social Firm. The income from the garden centre is too unpredictable and would act as a drain on the profits earned by the Grounds Maintenance operation and would threaten its long-term future.
- 4.9 Grounds Maintenance does have the potential to be a social business as it has a record of securing good contracts. However, serious consideration will need to be given to broadening the client group to include other people who do not have a learning disability. This would help increase the productivity of the businesses and thus the income they could earn, as well as provide support to those with a learning disability working within the business.
- 4.10 Decisions need to be reached about whether the Social Business developed should remain within Social services and the Council. The reason for moving it out of the Council would be that as a stand alone Business, or part of a private and voluntary sector organisation, it would be able to:
- use its profits more effectively and flexibly
 - apply for grants and funding only open to the private and voluntary sector
- 4.11 As employees of a commercial enterprise, staff will be entitled to full wages. However, this does place a financial burden on an emerging social business where productivity is likely to be lower due to the nature of the disability of those working within it. Projections based on last financial years figures suggest that the costs of minimum wage (approximately £50,000) would have to be met from either: continued financial support from the Council, or access to additional grants monies, or an increase in productivity and thus income.
- 4.12 The development of these initiatives is taking place at a time where finances are difficult for both the council and the private and voluntary sector. Careful planning will be needed to ensure the long-term viability and success of any social business developed. However, work carried out on gardening as an employment opportunity such as Sutton Volunteer Bureau's Feasibility Study on Gardening as a Social Enterprise paints an optimistic picture of this field, in view of the growing demand arising from an aging population living in a green borough.

CHALLENGES FOR PEOPLE ON A LOW INCOME

- 4.13 Gardens are not only a challenge to people with mobility problems. It may seem a very low priority to people with heavy work loads, family commitments, etc. Where a property is rented and few resources are provided to occupants to maintain or clear a garden area, which may already be overgrown and difficult to tidy up at the beginning of a tenancy, the motivation to maintain property value or even local pride is not a consideration. Indeed, the effect of unkempt gardens on communal pride and responsibility for the neighbourhood can be as discouraging as other problems such as graffiti.

- 4.14 At a meeting of stakeholders held on 26th May 2004, officers reported that the problem was particularly acute on estates with high numbers of temporary tenancies and around houses in multiple occupation. In such areas, the problem is compounded by lack of tools, know-how, planning skills, as well as the lack of pressure to take positive action. In some cases, an additional factor is the difficulty in obtaining a private landlord's permission or assistance to remedy the situation.
- 4.15 However, the very reverse of the coin can be seen on many estates. Using a result of a variety of schemes, e.g. the recent Smarter Croydon initiative, projects undertaken with the support of British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), and the housing department's programme of Environmental Improvement Schemes, a number of local residents have successfully bid for funding and used this to create gardens or gardening clubs, sometimes inspiring neighbouring residents to renew efforts on their own gardens. Some gardening schemes have involved children in helping to maintain the area, thus giving them a stake and a role to play in their neighbourhood.
- 4.16 While the take-up of such schemes can never reach the majority of the population, encouragement and advice can be disseminated far and wide. People faced with an overgrown garden need to feel that they can have control over it. While the initial work of clearing the area can take several hours, the planting of easily maintained plants (which can provide both colour and food for the local wildlife), and the effective use of mulching, can minimise the workload on a long-term basis and be "environmentally friendly", while providing an additional living space for the occupants.
- 4.17 The Working Party suggested that the Council explore the possibility of providing information and advice to its Council tenants in the first instance to support them in maintaining their gardens effectively. Such information, which could be added to the department's existing advice to new tenants, and be used in spring and summer in housing publications such as Open House, might include:
- A reminder of their contractual responsibilities as tenants
 - Informing tenants of the risks an unkempt garden may present e.g. an increased risk of burglary
 - Simple tips on how to keep maintenance to a minimum e.g. mulching to keep weeds and watering down, and buying easy-care plants
 - Sources of advice and support
 - Information on how to dispose of bulk waste, and on opportunities to acquire low-cost composters and mulch ("Croypost") produced locally
 - Opportunities for local gardening schemes, funding opportunities and competitions e.g. Croydon in Bloom
 - A small number of examples of local success stories showing local initiatives have led to positive outcomes before
- 4.18 Appendix 1 develops the above ideas in more detail and is intended to be a resource to officers and organisations providing support to gardeners.
- 4.18 Some issues regarding maintenance would also need to be addressed, however:
- Private gardeners need to have an appropriate set of garden tools, which might have to include a lawn-mower if the garden has an area of grass. This might entail an onerous expense for low-income families. While BTCV will lend gardening tools for community gardening projects, they would not have the capacity to provide this service to private gardeners borough-wide. Simple garden forks, an essential and

versatile tool, can be acquired second-hand at a good price. The purchase of second-hand electrical equipment can present significant health and safety risks, however, and so can the use of any such equipment, as witnessed in hospital casualty statistics.

- The long-term maintenance of communal gardening projects and its sustainability needs to be explicitly considered and costed at the planning stage of such initiatives, preferably in partnership with the staff likely to provide this service. Tenant Participation Officers reported that some housing environmental improvement schemes which looked attractive in their early days deteriorated over time as no provision had been made for their upkeep.

STREET CHAMPIONS

- 4.19 In a bid to encourage local pride and help identify and resolve a range of problems affecting local residents, the Council set up the Street Champions initiative, through which volunteers with a keen interest in keeping their local area tidy and attractive can join the scheme and get involved in reporting and dealing with a wide range of problems affecting their area, including refuse and cleansing, graffiti, and horticultural maintenance.
- 4.20 The scheme includes forming a good working relationship between Street Champions and Street Scene officers responsible for their ward, and ensuring regular face to face or telephone contact between the two at least once a fortnight to ensure that problems are communicated and followed up.
- 4.21 An annual awards ceremony takes place where Street Champions are recognised publicly, and rewarded for their contribution to the community. In addition, the views expressed by Street Champions are fed back into the Council's overall environmental strategy.
- 4.22 This scheme was relaunched in June 2004, with 75 volunteers, and training is due to be provided in autumn 2004. This will include information on environmental sustainability. It is hoped that Street Champions will be provided with resources and up to date information on new gardening opportunities, competitions, etc, to be able to impart simple advice to residents experiencing difficulties in improving their gardens and point them to resources which may assist them in achieving this goal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Housing Department, the Allotments service, Street Champions, and other relevant council services, and local agencies providing support to gardeners, make use of Appendix 1 to disseminate information to a wide range of residents and organisations in Croydon, sign-post this information effectively, to help gardeners gain useful skills on how to garden effectively and protect the local wildlife.

That written advice on gardening and tenants' contractual responsibility to keep their gardens tidy be included in information packs currently given out when residents sign up for a new tenancy.

That the Housing Department consider carrying out garden clearance on all void properties with a garden shortly before the beginning of a tenancy, and offering a simple

once a year tidying up service to eligible local tenants with a garden, and identify low-cost ways of funding such work.

RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

That the Council consider how it may make the best possible use of the gardening service currently provided by service users at the Cherry Orchard Centre, so that:

- Eligible residents may receive low-cost support for keeping their gardens in good condition, thus contributing to a pleasant local environment
- Service users of the Cherry Orchard Centre and future colleagues may attain experience in providing gardening services, earn an income and take an increasingly confident part in their local environment

That this service report back to Scrutiny at a mutually agreed time to update the Members of this Scrutiny on the progress of the newly-established Social Enterprise

5 SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

The review sought to ascertain what systems are in place to process green waste in an environmentally sustainable manner, and to encourage residents to adopt environmental sustainable gardening practices.

Waste Management

- 5.1 The Council is addressing the need to minimise waste through composting, recycling and to manage residual waste through its Waste Minimisation Strategy. This will feed into the Mayor of London's Municipal Waste Management Strategy, entitled 'Rethinking Rubbish in London', which aims to provide a long term framework of policy for London until 2020, as well as into national initiatives, including the development of manufacturing industries utilising recycled waste.
- 5.2 Key strategic drivers include the EU, which have set a number of targets e.g. the following landfill Directive Biodegradable Waste Diversion targets:
- To reduce Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) disposed to landfill to 75% of 1995 baseline by 2010
 - To reduce BMW disposed to landfill to 50% of baseline by 2013
 - To reduce BMW disposed to landfill to 35% of baseline by 2020
- 5.3 Nationally, the Government have set the following Best Value Performance Indicators for Household Waste Recycling and Composting:
- Recycle or compost 28% of household waste by 2003-2004
 - Recycle or compost 36% of household waste by 2005/2006
- 5.4 123,729 tonnes of household waste were collected in Croydon in 2003/2004. Although no detailed local analysis has been carried out of the composition of Croydon's waste

streams, it is likely that Croydon's household waste will be similar to the national analysis illustrated in the table on the following page:

Household waste by type	% by weight
Garden waste	20
Paper and Board	18
Kitchen waste	17
General household sweepings	9
Glass	7
Wood	5
Scrap metal/white goods	5
Dense plastic	4
Plastic film	4
Textiles	3
Metal packaging	3
Nappies	2
Soil	3
TOTAL	100

(Extract from "Waste Not, Want Not" Report, Government Strategy Unit, 2002)

5.5 The Council's programme to move towards achieving the government's targets on waste minimisation, re-use, recycling and reductions in waste disposed of to landfill is illustrated in the table below:

P.I.	Performance 2002/2003	Target 2003/2004	Performance 2003/2004	Target 2004/2005	Target 2005/2006
% tonnes recycled	11.5%	28%	11.85%	17%	26%
% tonnes composted	1.6%	1.6%	2.2%	3%	10%
% tonnes land filled	86.9%	70.6%	85.95%	80%	64%

Recycling and Composting: Best Value Performance Indicators

5.6 Additional challenges Croydon will have to face include:

- An estimated yearly growth in household waste of 2%
- Educating households and the business sector (e.g. markets and restaurants) to segregate and dispose effectively of biodegradable material
- To respond to the Mayor's requirement that all waste authorities prepare a fully costed feasibility study for the collection of separated kitchen and vegetable waste for their areas, both from households and the business sector, which accounts for more than 50% of Croydon's municipal waste.

5.7 The Mayor's Strategy considers that about 68% of municipal waste collected by local authorities is biodegradable. In addition, as about 100,000 out of Croydon's households have a garden and all produce some amount of kitchen scraps, the effective disposal of biodegradable material will have a significant impact on Croydon's waste stream. In addition, the composting of green waste can help reduce the use of peat in horticulture, and eliminate the need to burn waste, which can create a statutory nuisance, emit dioxins and fine particulate matter (PM10), and larger particles.

5.8 The following progress is being made with regard to borough-wide composting and recycling facilities:

- Sutton (lead borough) in partnership with Croydon, Kingston, Merton and Thames Waste Management have secured funding from the London Recycling Fund (LRF) for a Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT)* plant, which is now being built in Sutton. The partnership is actively pursuing a bid for further funding for the second stage plant (an anaerobic digestion plant. If the funding can be secured, the plant, will represent a key element in the development of shared new facilities to reduce the amount of Biodegradable Municipal waste (BMW) sent to landfill. There is the potential for 26% of Croydon's waste to be treated in this way at the shared plant by the end of 2005/2006.
- Windrow-based (open air) Composting
This is carried out either in the open or in 'windrow sheds'. Waste is shredded, mixed and placed in conical heaps formed into long rows. The waste requires regular turning, which allows aeration and maintains correct temperatures. Croydon has an open air windrow-based composting plant at the central nursery site in Coombe Lane which produces approximately 2800 tonnes of compost each year. The soil conditioner produced is sold back to residents or distributed free to allotments thus completing the "recycling loop".

It is anticipated that this will soon be supplemented by the processing of 2,000 tonnes per annum of green waste at a newly opened compost site in Beddington Lane, Sutton.

- Closed system or In-vessel Composting
The raw material is either loaded into fixed compartments or into a continuously fed plant. Depending on the type of plant these can be used in dense urban areas. The resulting compost is suitable for mixing with top soil. Croydon, in partnership with Merton, Sutton and Thames Waste Management, is currently developing a Closed Vessel Composting Plant at Beddington Lane, Sutton. The development of this plant has been part funded by a bid to the London Recycling Fund (LRF). When completed, the plant will be capable of processing up to 2000 tonnes of green waste from Croydon per year. This will provide the capacity to deal with increases in green waste arising from potential new services such as kerbside green waste collection.

5.9 The Waste Minimisation Strategy includes a detailed action plan. The following action points relate more specifically to green waste:

- Consider separate kerbside collection of household organic waste
- Consider composting waste arising from street cleaning services, in particular organic waste such as leaf litter
- Review compost production to obtain a more efficient service and achieve a higher grade of compost
- Continue to monitor the effect of the provision of reduced-price home compost bins in the borough – 6,647 of which have been sold thus far, along with 1299 biotal compost accelerators - and develop a long-term plan to increase home-composting

* The principle of the MBT is to stabilise and separate the residual municipal waste stream into less harmful or more beneficial products



- Develop liaison with the pollution and parks services and other stakeholders to identify opportunities to link issues such as garden bonfires, allotment use, green space maintenance, citizenship education and health with the waste agenda
- Continue to develop publicity to local residents through channels such as Croydon Reports, newsletters, etc.

Water Conservation

5.10 Some work has also been carried out on water conservation, which is a key element of the Council's Green Commitment Policy. This has included producing Supplementary Planning Guidance on water conservation (adopted 12th July 2004), offering water conservation assemblies to schools, and offering water butts to local residents at a discounted price.

Environmental Sustainability and Gardening Equipment and Materials

5.11 Members of the working party are keen to raise awareness of materials the use of which will not cause harm to the environment, and to make information widely available regarding the following:

- environmentally sustainable fertilising and weed-control methods, such as the use of "Croypost", a mulch produced locally from garden waste
- the use of furniture and sheds made from timber from forests managed under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- using locally produced charcoal made from waste timber for barbecues

Good Practice In Environmental Sustainability In Other Boroughs

5.12 The Mayor of London's Municipal Waste Management Strategy highlights a number of schemes piloted by London Boroughs to dispose of biodegradable material effectively. Projects have included:

- Green waste collections
- Providing residents with cash incentives, council tax discounts or food vouchers in return for more effective disposal of household waste
- Providing subsidized compost bin/wormeries
- Workshops on composting

Green Roofs

5.13 An option for maximising the amount of green space, particularly in an increasingly densely populated urban or suburban environment, is the use of green roofs.

5.14 A green roof is made up of various layers which create an environment suitable for plant growth that does not damage the fabric of the building. Green roofs convert wasted roof area into viable green spaces for public benefit and for the benefit of biodiversity. Green roofs are widespread in Japan, North America and Europe – particularly in parts of Germany and Switzerland where there are planning requirements to install them. Several green roofs have been installed in the London area, with more planned. An example is the roof of the Hornimann Museum in Forest Hill.

5.15 There are two types of green roof:

- Intensive – a deep layer of soil which can support a variety of plants such as flowers and shrubs and provide a rich habitat for wildlife, but which requires regular maintenance.
- Extensive – lightweight, often with shallower growing material, requiring little maintenance. The type of growing medium chosen affects the type of habitat created, which may reflect the building’s natural surroundings.

5.16 Green roofs have a range of benefits, which may include:

- Value to bio-diversity in an urban environment
- Improving the view from nearby buildings
- Offering a high-profile design opportunity that can boost the environmental credentials of a business
- Providing extra insulation for a building, thus reducing heating and cooling bills
- Extending roof life by protecting it from weather conditions
- Helping to cleanse the air of dust and pollutants
- Lowering temperatures in and around the building in the summer
- Moderating the urban “heat island” effect, whereby towns can reach temperatures of 6 to 8 degrees more than their local region on warm summer days
- Slowing water run-off by retaining moisture and moderating the discharge to street sewers which are then better able to cope in heavy rain
- Providing extra noise insulation
- Creating potential new open spaces for relaxation

5.17 These benefits will all depend on the number, building form and details of the green roofs in question in a specific area.

5.18 The table below shows the schedules of costs for a number of buildings which have recently installed green roofs.

Project Name	Bennetts Associates Offices, Rawstone Place	A Zoo in the UK Entrance Building	A Southern England Primary School	Wessex Water - Headquarters
Location	London, EC1	Devon	Devon	Bath
Type of roof	Extensive Sedum	Intensive Sedum	Intensive Sedum	Extensive Sedum
Basic cost	£150 per sq m	£100 per sq m	£100 per sq m	£82 per sq m
Additional cost	£35 per sq m	Included in the basic cost	n/a	£18.66 per sq m
Total cost	£185 per sq m	£100 per sq m	£100 per sq m	£100.66 per sq m
Maintenance cost	Negligible	Negligible	n/a	n/a
Tangible benefit	Increased thermal mass	Provides highly insulated roof construction	n/a	Blending the building in with the surrounding area

Schedule of costs of completed projects

Source: BCO, 2003

5.19 The opportunity to consider building a green roof is most likely to present itself when an existing roof needs to be replaced, or when a new building is to be developed. An increased use of green roofs may provide a new source of amenity space for new developments, as pressure on land increases further in the south-east.

5.20 Alternatively, green roofs may constitute a practical approach to designing an extension to a residential property and “assessing the effect on a neighbouring amenity of an adjoining residence” – the cause of a significant number of objections to planning applications for extensions to residential properties.

- 5.21 Croydon Council is highlighting the use of green roofs through the revised Draft Croydon plan (para 4.3 p28 and para 8.16a p115), and by pointing to this type of design in the Sustainable Drainage Draft SPG.
- 5.22 The use of green roofs may become more widespread, and its beneficial impact more significant, if all planning officers are provided with sufficient expertise to advise applicants for planning permission on the design advantages, low costs and benefits to the local environment that green roofs represent. This might take the form of written information or training. Alternatively, the information might be encapsulated in a dedicated supplementary planning guidance document to assist developers, private residents, etc. in the application process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Planning and Transportation Department should provide guidance, information and awareness-raising events on green roofs and explore how they might be used in Croydon.

6 BIO-DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 There are over one million acres of gardens in Britain, so their potential contribution to wildlife conservation is enormous. The importance of private gardens, especially large blocks and corridors of gardens, to urban wildlife was noted in the Mayor of London's Draft Biodiversity action plan (January 2001).
- 6.2 While aerial maps show that, collectively, private gardens make a very significant habitat type in Croydon, there exists very little data on the exact surface area of private gardens in Croydon. However, appendix 2 attempts to make a very conservative estimate of the surface area covered by private back gardens, based on data relating to household types and numbers collected through the 2001 census.
- 6.3 While gardening has been growing in popularity since the 1990s, it is also facing significant challenges. Changing life-styles and demands on one's time, as well as a growing emphasis on quick returns for effort, as well as lack of information on how to create an easily maintained garden, are prompting many to resort to time-saving solutions which can represent a loss or decline of habitat and quality of garden for wildlife:
- Use of garden chemicals
 - Fewer compost heaps in the gardens
 - Front gardens concreted over for off road parking
 - A move away from traditional cottage garden species of flowering plants (which were generally more favourable to wildlife) to more cultivated species
 - A move to low maintenance gardens, which tend to have a lower diversity of plants and structures and thus fewer opportunities for wildlife
 - The shift from growing vegetables and fruit crops in gardens, which once provided wildlife with food - especially in autumn and early winter
 - A loss of hedges which were once common in front and back gardens

- 6.4 In contrast, a note of optimism may be sounded by pointing to simple practices that can support local bio-diversity. Indeed, preserving bio-diversity does not need to imply either a “messy” garden or encyclopaedic knowledge. Ground cover can be provided by various low-growing shrubs, food for wild-life can be provided by attractive low-maintenance bushes which produce berries, and disruption to the life-cycles of various species can be kept to a minimum by pruning or mowing at appropriate times of the year. Opportunities for species to reproduce and to maintain a varied gene pool are multiplied through “wildlife corridors” which offer wildlife a safe habitat and source of food: such corridors include road verges, street trees and shrubs, railway embankments, as well as private gardens. To these might be added the use of balconies or the creation of vertical habitats alongside walls of buildings, e.g. bird boxes, and the creation of green roofs, as previously discussed.
- 6.5 Discussion with managers of garden centres as part of this review suggested that many customers had relatively limited knowledge on wildlife gardening, felt confused by the breadth of this field, and acknowledged a need for simple information on how to get started in this area. This supported information from the London Borough of Bexley, which carried out extensive consultation with local residents, and found that many expressed a wish to receive simple, easily accessed information on how to garden and how to take into account the needs of local wildlife.
- 6.6 What practices and resources are currently available to help maintain local bio-diversity, and to address residents’ needs for information and simple gardening techniques?

The Policy Framework

- 6.7 The Council’s commitment to protecting bio-diversity is underpinned by a number of strategic documents e.g. the Croydon Plan, Croydon Council’s “Green Commitment” (1999), as well as Supplementary Planning Guidance, a key document being SPG No 5, Croydon’s Nature Conservation Strategy (adopted 17th December 1997).

Information and Promotion

- 6.8 Support to local residents comes in a number of forms e.g. a wealth of written information both in hard copy and on the web, training, awareness raising events and competitions. Examples of the above include:
- Information available both in hard copy and on the Council’s website, e.g. the Council’s Guide to Green Living in Croydon, which has a useful section on gardening, providing advice on making effective use of existing resources such as seeds from the previous year’s crop and composting green waste, giving useful contact details for further information, plants and seeds, and pointing readers to officers and agencies providing advice and support
 - Training opportunities through the Council’s Continuing Training and Education Service (e.g. the City and Guilds Garden Nature Reserve Module) and organisations such as the Heathfield Ecology Centre (e.g. maintenance of wildlife ponds)

- Working with local schools and promoting good practice by encouraging schools to take part in the London Schools Environment Award (3 schools entered bio-diversity projects into this competition)
 - Competitions such as the Wild Flower and Environment Trophy (part of the Croydon in Bloom initiative)
 - Awareness-raising events such as the Green Heritage Fair run by Heathfield Ecology Centre
 - Funding opportunities for nature conservation projects (e.g. the environmental grants directory for Croydon)
 - Those residents who do not have their own gardens but have an interest in bio-diversity can take part in a number of nature conservation projects around the borough: opportunities include participating in Friends' Groups e.g. Friends of Miller Pond in Shirley (listed in Appendix 1), taking part in work days in Heathfield Ecology Centre, or in conservation projects run by the Downlands Countryside Management Project.
- 6.9 An important role is also played by organisations which gather information on wildlife in private gardens. In Croydon, the Association of Croydon Conservation Societies (ACCS) carries out a wildlife survey every year. In 2002, it obtained 98 responses. These, combined with the monitoring of over 80 species four times a year by other agencies, resulted in about 35,000 numerical entries being stored on computer. The results of the 2002 survey showed Thornton Heath and Norbury to be particular areas of deficiency in wildlife. In addition, they pointed to a continued decline in the number of hedgehogs and low numbers of ladybirds, but reported a spread in the sightings of ringnecked parakeets, which seem to use woodpecker holes to breed in. In addition to carrying out annual wildlife surveys, the ACCS works with a number of agencies e.g. planners, to raise awareness of biodiversity issues and ensure these are considered as part of policy development.
- 6.10 Croydon has a lot of support to offer to local gardeners with regard to bio-diversity issues, but access to simple information can be difficult. It may be useful for the council to produce a brief introduction to bio-diversity issues with pointers to more detailed information, building on the information already available in the guide to green living, and by publicising it through the borough's many stakeholders, including officers, Street Champions, allotment sites and appropriate local agencies in order to work towards a critical mass of know-how in this field. It is hoped that Appendix 1 will assist in the process of making this information widely available to local residents.

Initiatives In Neighbouring Boroughs

- 6.11 A number of councils have recognised the significance of private gardens as part of our green spaces, and have produced a range of services to support private gardeners. In particular, good practice can be gleaned from councils which were awarded beacon status in 2002-2003 for improving urban green spaces. London Borough of Bexley in particular have produced a comprehensive body of information on private gardens and allotments, which can easily be obtained from the internet.

- 6.12 In order to provide more effective publicity and encouragement to garden in a way which will sustain the local wildlife, Kent Wildlife Trust, Kent County Council, Mid Kent Water and 10 councils including Canterbury City Council and London Borough of Bexley have joined forces to develop an Awards scheme which recognises the efforts gardeners make to render their gardens more attractive to wildlife. Information packs for this scheme, which is in its third year, provide a wide range of information to assist gardeners in their efforts to make their gardens more wildlife-friendly, and recognise the value of every individual's efforts in this respect even if they do not enter the competition. The competition is advertised very widely, through council publicity, the local press, as well as the local radio, and is attracting more and more enquiries and entries every year.
- 6.13 On a more strategic level, some councils such as Bexley have drawn up bio-diversity action plans for various habitats, including private gardens. These address both the needs of wildlife, and practical ways in which residents can be realistically helped to contribute towards maintaining the diversity of fauna and flora currently to be found in private gardens. Croydon Council too have plans to develop a bio-diversity strategy in line with guidance issued by the Mayor of London.

The Way Forward for Croydon

- 6.14 As part of initial steps in facilitating the establishment of a local bio-diversity action plan, officers plan to establish a Bio-Diversity Partnership Group in 2005, bringing together a wide range of agencies with a stake in protecting the range of local fauna and flora.
- 6.15 However, rather than put significant resources into producing a strategy which stakeholders may not have the resources to implement, it is planned that this partnership should identify a small number of key priorities for local bio-diversity, including goals which can arouse the interest and involvement of local residents and businesses. The partnerships would then follow up this process with implementation of priorities and documentation of work done. As more time and resources become available in future, it is hoped that the partnership will identify, implement and document further priorities.
- 6.16 Members support plans for a bio-diversity strategy for Croydon, and would particularly welcome the production of habitat or species action plans for private and small communal gardens, building on activity already in progress (such as the findings of the annual Croydon Garden Wildlife Surveys run by Association of Croydon Conservation Societies, the RSPB Bird Reports, etc.), and finding effective ways of engaging the interest of local residents and disseminating knowledge and advice.

RECOMMENDATION

Members welcome the information produced by the Council on bio-diversity and Supplementary Planning Guidance on Nature Conservation. They recommend that the future bio-diversity partnership group consider the possibility of drawing up Gardens Habitat and Species Action Plan as part of a gradually developing Bio-Diversity Action Plan, and that this information should be widely and effectively disseminated so that local residents, businesses and agencies can easily contribute to its/their implementation.

7 HEALTH ISSUES

- 7.1 Investigating the health benefits of gardening has revealed a range of benefits to physical as well as mental health and opportunities for improved social inclusion, as well as initiatives building on these health benefits of gardening.
- 7.2 Information on the above was collected from a number of colleagues in the Council, and local health services. This was supported by written evidence such as “Social And Therapeutic Horticulture: Evidence And Messages From Research”, a study conducted by Loughborough University on behalf of Thrive, a national horticultural charity which works to enable disadvantaged, disabled and older people to participate fully in the social and economic life of the community.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

- 7.3 A few research projects and a great deal of anecdotal evidence back up the effectiveness of gardening as a form of physical activity, e.g. research by Colson (“The Rehabilitation of the Injured, Colson 1944). In addition, a growing interest in therapeutic horticulture research is being expressed through large numbers of abstracts (68) submitted to the International Horticultural Congress in Toronto in 2002 for inclusion in the symposium ‘Expanding Roles for Horticulture in Improving Well-Being and Life Quality’. A number of these abstracts document their findings with painstaking electro-myogram (EMG) and electro-encephalogram (EEG) readings of muscular and cerebral activity, in addition to measurements of heart rate and blood pressure.
- 7.4 There has recently been a move to promote outdoor conservation activities such as tree-planting, hedge-laying and habitat restoration as forms of exercise to improve physical and mental well-being. These programmes have been set up in conjunction with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and have been called “Green Gyms”. At present, five such Green Gyms operate in the UK. Recent research has shown significant improvement in measures of cardio-vascular fitness and mental health.
- 7.5 The Council’s Cultural Services Allotments Business Plan 2002-2005 includes work to explore the potential for setting up Green Gyms in Croydon on spare allotment plots. A request for the loan of tools might be made from BTCV. To add interest to such work, seeds might perhaps be obtained from the Henry Doubleday Research Association Heritage Seed Library which provides these free of charge in order to conserve and make available vegetable varieties which are not widely available.

RECOMMENDATION

That officers from Healthy Life-styles, BTCV, and Council allotments explore how “Green Gyms” might be implemented in Croydon using existing resources, to offer local residents with an interest in gardening an alternative to physical exercise as a means of improving

their health.

- 7.6 As part of the Council's Food Strategy, work is also being carried out to encourage the eating of fresh fruit and vegetable. To keep costs low and make such food widely available, the Council is promoting the production of fruit and vegetable either in allotments, private gardens or community projects, and regularly promoting this through channels such as Croydon Reports.

MENTAL HEALTH

- 7.7 The benefits of therapeutic horticulture for mental health have led to particularly extensive amounts of research and initiatives, as shown in the above-mentioned Loughborough University study, and in the many projects runs by such national voluntary organisations as Thrive and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens.
- 7.8 Extensive research evidence points to a unique combination of factors which actually provide individuals suffering from mental health problems with opportunities to access some of the most positive mental health experiences that any individual, healthy or not, could wish for:
- An agreeable, tranquil, stress-free physical environment
 - The opportunity to learn a skill which can be gained at a simple level, then developed as far as the individual is capable, and offers employment opportunities and therefore improved social inclusion
 - Attractive positive reinforcement from the fruit of one's own labour
 - Being rewarded for patience
 - A type of work which can be done individually or in groups, where participants can socialise as much or as little as they like. A number of gardening projects for people with mental health have led to participants spontaneously beginning to communicate with each other and share experiences in contrast with their withdrawn behaviour in other environments – This may be due to the fact that they genuinely have an activity and purpose in common, and that there is no pressure on them to "perform" a social role
- 7.9 To quote an example of research conducted, Sellers, Fieldhouse and Phelan (1999) reported a pilot study of an allotment-based group called "*Fertile Imaginations*" for people with mental health problems. The patients were assessed by questionnaire. When asked how the group had helped them in their lives, the service users reported four main areas:
- Communication with others
 - Learning practical skills, team work, planning
 - Self-confidence
 - Improved concentration
- 7.10 These benefits have also been made accessible to people with learning difficulties, who have also developed personally and acquired gardening skills and social confidence

enabling them to contemplate employment in this field. Cowden (1969) describes a work programme set up for 19 patients with learning disabilities to work on a local tomato harvest. Patients worked more slowly than the other workers, but were better at selecting usable fruit and all the fruit picked by the patients passed selection. The activity led an improvement in skills such as co-ordination, and the act of earning money created a feeling of accomplishment and increased self-esteem.

- 7.11 Croydon's Social Services Department, local health trusts and voluntary organisations have both made use of the benefits which this activity can confer:
- The Royal Bethlehem Hospital in Eden Park (near Beckenham) has a hospital garden cared for by staff and patients
 - The Council's Social Services have long provided gardening activities to service users at the Cherry Orchard Centre, as mentioned earlier in this review
 - Organisations such as the Heathfield Ecology Centre provide Horticultural learning opportunities for people with learning difficulties which will assist in providing them with NVQ qualifications and opportunities for employment in this field

Interaction Between Physical And Mental Health

- 7.12 There exists a wide range of evidence on the various ways physical and mental health interact with each other. A particular case may be highlighted here, namely the particular needs of older people to whom the garden has long represented a significant contributor to quality of life. As they become older and more frail, the garden becomes increasingly difficult for them to maintain, and may be neglected, particularly in times of serious illness or bereavement.
- 7.13 Voluntary agencies such as Age Concern and the Neighbourhood Care Association have long acknowledged that loss of control over the maintenance of their gardens is a significant trigger for depression, and are actively working and lobbying to find solutions to this growing problem. This has included exploring new channels for promoting volunteer work and seeking new funding streams to finance volunteering schemes.
- 7.14 The link between physical activity and health in older people has been extensively researched, and there is a mass of evidence which suggests that physical activity is associated with good health and reduced risk factors for heart disease and other illnesses (e.g. Seeman and Chen, 2002, Burke et al, 2001, etc).
- 7.15 In a major study of physical activity and risk factors for coronary heart disease in a large group of elderly Dutch men (the Zutphen study), Caspersen et al (1991) found a statistically significant reduction in risk factors in those men that still gardened compared with those that were less active.
- 7.16 The association of gardening with cognitive well-being has also been suggested. Fabrigoule's study of over 2,000 older people in France (Fabrigoule et al, 1995) showed that those who gardened, travelled or carried out odd jobs were significantly less likely to develop dementia than those who did not.
- 7.17 In view of the documented effects of such work, and of the consequences of not longer being able to care for one's garden, it would be highly beneficial to promote access to

advice on easy, low-maintenance gardening for older people.

- 7.18 This could be done particularly effectively through websites - which the older population is fast learning to use, as can be seen through contributions to Age Concern web pages and chat rooms. Examples of useful web-sites include "Carry on Gardening" which offers gardeners well illustrated, chatty and practical advice on how to plan the garden and the work load to minimise effort, strain and physical risk. Age Concern also offers web pages on gardening and a gardening chat room which participants use to share good advice, successes as well as a joke or two.
- 7.19 Appendix 1 of this review contains advice which will hopefully help readers adapt their gardens so that these are easier to manage, but still provide beauty, opportunities for gentle exercise, and a haven for local wildlife.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 A number of organisations have recognised the significance of gardens to the community at large, as well as to the local wildlife, and the need to raise awareness of these. They have produced information, some of which is easily available at the click of a mouse, and a good range of competitions, training opportunities, and talks, to support and encourage private gardeners in maintaining this nationally significant environment.
- 8.2 In addition, while private gardens are not the responsibility of statutory agencies, the Council has been given the power to promote and encourage the well-being and sustainability of its community, and needs to have information concerning the health of a substantial part of its surface area, and sustainable ways of encouraging good practice, which, in the light of limited resources, may be restricted to effective partnership work with other agencies and voluntary sector, and sign-posting of information and opportunities.
- 8.3 However, this information is not reaching a "critical mass" of residents. Discussions with garden centres in connection with this review has shown that while gardening is popular, there is still relatively little understanding regarding sustainability and bio-diversity issues. The number of individuals attending courses, entering competitions, buying composters, etc, is very small compared to the number of gardens in the borough.
- 8.4 With regard to people's responses to publicity, there exists evidence which shows that the more extensive guidance or a list of options is, the less a response it will trigger from the population at large, already bombarded with information from a variety of sources. In line with information obtained by boroughs such as Bexley, a more useful approach to encouraging environmentally sustainable gardening may be for local councils and regional agencies to identify, adopt and publicise together a very small number of major priorities which have public appeal and might have a significant effect on the wildlife of the area. This may entail producing a simple collection of "starter information" and resources such as Appendix 1, with pointers to more complex resources, to be used by as many local organisations as possible, in as many media as possible.

9 LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 INFORMATION SHEET

That the Housing Department, the Allotments service, Street Champions, and other relevant council services, and local agencies providing support to gardeners, make use of Appendix 1 to disseminate information to a wide range of residents and organisations in Croydon, sign-post this information effectively, to help gardeners gain useful skills on how to garden effectively and protect the local wildlife.

9.2 SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TENANTS

That written advice on gardening and tenants' contractual responsibility to keep their gardens tidy be included in information packs currently given out when residents sign up for a new tenancy.

9.3 GARDEN CLEARANCE

That the Housing Department consider carrying out garden clearance on all void properties with a garden shortly before the beginning of a tenancy, and offering a simple low-cost once a year tidying up service to eligible local tenants with a garden.

9.4 GARDENING SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE CHERRY ORCHARD CENTRE

That the Council consider how it may make the best possible use of the gardening service currently provided by service users at the Cherry Orchard Centre, so that:

- Eligible residents may receive low-cost support for keeping their gardens in good condition, thus contributing to a pleasant local environment
- Service users of the Cherry Orchard Centre and future colleagues may attain experience in providing gardening services, earn an income and take an increasingly confident part in their local environment

9.5 PROGRESS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE DUE TO TAKE OVER THE WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE CHERRY ORCHARD CENTRE

That this service report back to Scrutiny at a mutually agreed time to update the Members of this Scrutiny on the progress of this

9.6 GREEN ROOFS

That the Planning and Transportation Department should provide guidance, information and awareness-raising events on green roofs and explore how they might be used in Croydon.

9.7 GUIDANCE AND ACTION PLANS

Members welcome the information produced by the Council on bio-diversity and Supplementary Planning Guidance on Nature Conservation. They recommend that a Gardens Habitat Action Plan be produced, to be included in a future Bio-Diversity

Action Plan, and that this Habitat Action Plan should be used to update the above-mentioned Supplementary Planning Guidance to highlight the importance of private gardens as a habitat for a wide range of flora and fauna.

9.8 GREEN GYMS

That officers from Healthy Life-styles, BTCV, and Council allotments explore how “Green Gyms” might be implemented in Croydon using existing resources, to offer local residents with an interest in gardening an alternative to physical exercise as a means of improving their health.

How to keep the workload down in your garden

1 Mulch!"

This means keeping the soil covered

This will reduce weeding, watering and work considerably, and the soil will love you for it!

You can mulch with:

- Plastic sheets, large or small depending on your need.
If you are planting bushes or plants like tomatoes, you can cut holes into the plastic big enough for the plants and for watering, and cover the areas in between with soil, bark, or nothing!
- Old woollen or hessian carpet
- Garden waste, and veg and fruit peel, tea bags, grass clippings but **NOT cabbage, brussel sprouts, or weeds like dandelion or bindweed**, to a depth of 10 cm -half of the width of this page (all free of charge and very good for your soil!)
- More pricey: bark, or coconut shell, available from garden centres – but avoid using peat. Peat bogs are a a very valuable wildlife habitat, but becoming rare due to demand from gardeners!

2 Select easy-care plants

- Planting seeds is by far the cheapest (or even free of charge if you are a member of the Henry Doubleday Heritage Seed Library!), but also the fiddliest, especially if the instructions tell you to plant indoors, thin out, plant out, etc. . Growing spinach from seed, straight into the ground, is possibly one of the simplest crops from seed.
- However, you might like a wildflower area (and get your neighbours to do that too to get more butterflies, etc). In September/October or March/April, weed an area well, scatter seeds of poppy, daisy, corn flower, and other species (you can find packets at local garden centres), cover thinly with very fine soil, water well, or let the rain do this for you, and wait for flowers to grow!
- Alternatively, plant easy care shrubs and other plants. You could try herbs, such as different colours of sage, or thyme, lavender or rosemary - they smell lovely in summer. Alternatively, try shrubs with flowers for bumble bees and berries for birds, such as hebe, skimia japonica, or buddleia for butterflies. Also select plants which provide good ground cover, thus inhibiting weeds and giving shelter to small animals, such as **low-growing** conifers
- If you want to grow fruit, why not try growing raspberries, blackberries, gooseberries, or redcurrants? They largely take care of themselves, but you need to make sure that they are well watered when first planted in autumn, and that they are trimmed in autumn/winter.
- If you have very little space (or want to keep a plant like mint under control), why not plant into pots? You can use all sorts of containers, as long as water can drain out of them, and you don't have to bend down so far! You can also grow tomatoes, carrots and other crops in pots.

3 Compost!

Why throw out your garden rubbish when it can make you fantastic compost?

If you don't already throw it in thick layers onto the soil, why not throw your garden waste and veg and fruit scraps into a composter (ring 0845 130 6090 to buy one at a discounted price and 020 8760 5640 for information on how to use it)?

TAKE IT A BIT AT A TIME.

CLEAR ONE AREA THE SIZE OF A BIG TABLE, COVER IT WELL AND/OR PLANT IT, THEN MOVE ONTO TO ANOTHER AREA AND DO THE SAME.

ENJOY YOUR GARDENING AND THE FRUIT OF YOUR LABOUR!

5 SIMPLE TIPS ON HOW TO CARE FOR THE LOCAL WILDLIFE

- Design your garden to provide “corridors” of ground cover which will give wildlife shelter and hiding places and keep weeds down (e.g. low growing conifers). This can include stones, logs, etc.
- Leave some long grass and grow flowers such as primrose, marigold, wallflowers or nasturtiums, which attract frogs, toads, birds and small mammals like hedgehogs all of which eat insects and slugs. Cut and rake long grass in October.
- Don't use weedkillers or other strong chemicals - weed a patch of ground, then cover it so you keep the weeds down, but protect wildlife
- Trim your hedges between early December and late February so habitats are not disturbed or destroyed at a key point in life cycles
- Grow plants which provide food such as berries for local wildlife
- Provide an area with water (a bowl, a shallow pond, etc), which will attract all sorts of interesting wildlife

RECOVERING FROM SERIOUS ILLNESS? FIND IT HARD TO CARE FOR YOUR GARDEN?

The following organisations may be able to help. Contact them to find out if you are eligible!

Staying Put 020 8760 5505

Age Concern 020 8680 5450

WHO TO CONTACT FOR FURTHER ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

Your Tenant Participation Officer (if you are a council tenant) ☎ 020 86864433 ext 62954

Meike Weiser (Community Partnership Officer) ☎ 020 86864433 ext 64952

David Johnson (BTCV) - Nature conservation advice ☎ 020 8760 5405 Croydon@btcv.org.uk

FURTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND INFORMATION RE GARDENING

WEBSITES

Croydon Council's website: information on how to get bargain compost bins, “Croypost”, the locally produced soil-improver, or on how to make your very own compost!

www.croydon.gov.uk and search for “compost”

Henry Doubleday Research Association: an interesting website with organic gardening advice, fact sheets and good search facilities (try looking up words like “mulch”, “weeds”, etc). Here you can also find out about the Heritage Seed Library which provides unusual seeds free of charge if you are a member.

www.hdra.org.uk

Gardening advice and information for people with disabilities

www.carryongardening.org.uk

Great web pages with advice from enthusiastic gardeners!

www.ageconcern.org.uk/discuss

London Wildlife Trust:

- Free Wildlife gardening pack, downloadable from the home page

- Wildlife survey. downloadable from the home page

www.wildlondon.org.uk

You can also try the websites for the Surrey and Kent Wildlife Trusts, www.surreywildlifetrust.co.uk and www.kentwildlife.org.uk

TEACHING, TRAINING, TALKS

Croydon's Continuous Education and Training Service (CETS) - TEL 0870 556 1630

- City and Guilds Gardening (minimum one term, maximum five terms)
- Royal Horticultural Society General Certificate (minimum one term, maximum six terms)

Spa Hill Organic Gardening Group (www.spahill.org.uk)

Talks and one day organic gardening training courses

Kent Wildlife Trust, Tyland Barn, Sandling, Maidstone, Kent ME14 3BD

Tel: 01622 662012 Fax: 01622 671390 www.kentwildlife.org.uk

- Wildlife walks *and* talks
- Study days and evening courses

COMPETITIONS

Croydon in Bloom trophies (e.g. Wildlife and Environment Trophy, Best Front Garden Trophy, Best Container Garden Trophy, etc). Ring Croydon Council on 020 86864433 ext 5756

SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECTS

This section lists only a few possible sources of funding. However, in order to find out whether these are still available, what other sources of funding may meet a specific need, and how to make a successful application, it will be useful to seek the advice of officers listed below:

- Meike Weiser (Environment, Culture and Sports Services) –
Nature Conservation Grants for constituted community groups
☎ 020 86864433 ext 64952
- Diana Battaglia (Planning and Transportation Department)
Grants for food projects
☎ 020 86864433 ext 65640
- Clarissa Todd and Kris Witherington (Policy Unit)
Advice on external funding including Lottery grants
☎ 020 86047055
- David Freeman and Amanda Guest-Collins (Policy Unit)
Advice on funding for community groups and voluntary organisations
☎ 020 86047010
- Tenant Participation Officers or Tenancy Officers
Council Tenants' Environmental Improvement Schemes
☎ 020 86864433 ext 2954

BOOKS TO BORROW OR BUY

How to be a Gardener Book 1 "Back to Basics" by Alan Titchmarsh

How to be a Gardener Book 2 "Secrets of Success" by Alan Titchmarsh

Scrutiny Review of Support to Gardeners Final Report (Appendix 1)

NETWORKS AND GROUPS OPERATING IN CROYDON WITH AN INTEREST IN GARDENING

Association of Croydon Conservation Societies
Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society
Surrey Badger Protection Society
Mayfield Recreation Areas Rejuvenation Project
Croydon Society
Joseph Firbank Society
South Norwood Residents' Association
Friends of Lloyd Park
North Croydon Landwatch
18 Allotment Societies
Greenlinks / Green Drinks
London Wildlife Trust
Surrey Wildlife Trust
Kent Wildlife Trust
Neighbourhood Care Association
Age Concern

GROUPS INVOLVED IN CONSERVATION WORK

Addington Conservation Team (New Addington)
Association of Croydon Conservation Societies
Brickfields Meadow Action Group
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV)
Coulsdon Common Coppice
Croydon Conservation Volunteers
Downlands Countryside Management Project
Friends of Croham Hurst
Friends of Foxley
Friends of Hawkhurst
Friends of Kings Wood
Friends of Littleheath
Friends of Millers Pond
Friends of South Norwood Country Park
Friends of Spring Park Wood
Grangewood and Whitehorse Resident Association
Heathfield Ecology Centre
Hutchinsons Bank Conservation Volunteers
Monks Orchard Resident Association
North Croydon Landwatch
North Downs Resident Group
Riddlesdown Volunteers
Sanderstead Plantation Partners
Selsdon Wood Appreciation Group
South Norwood Wildlife Watch
Surrey Wildlife Trust –Dollypers Hill Group
West Wickham and Coulsdon Commons Volunteers

List of locations where gardening information and news might be advertised

- Council office receptions and their staff
- Allotment sites
- Libraries
- Community groups
- Residents' associations
- Leisure centres and swimming pools
- Gardening clubs
- Gardening shows
- Local fetes and festivals
- Community noticeboards
- Plant nurseries
- Garden centres
- DIY shops
- Farmers' Markets
- WI groups
- Religious groups and communities
- Healthy living centres
- Doctors' surgeries

ESTIMATING THE MINIMUM SURFACE AREA COVERED BY PRIVATE BACK GARDENS IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

- 1 In order to estimate the significance of private gardens as urban green spaces, some form of estimate as to the total surface area covered by these needs to be made.
- 2 While a full scale calculation would have to take into account a wide range of complex factors, an attempt has been made to estimate a minimum figure based on the following factors:
 - Only the surface area of backgardens has been calculated, as a fast growing number of front gardens are being paved or concreted over either for convenience or for parking purposes.
 - It is very difficult to obtain information regarding the full width of a garden. Therefore, the “average size” of gardens has been estimated using 2001 census data regarding household types, as well as the following principles:
 - The width of a terraced or semi-detached house will in most cases consist of the width of a front room and of a corridor
 - The width of a garden belonging to a detached house will usually consist of the width of two or three rooms, plus some garden space on each side of the house
 - The width of gardens in wards with large numbers of small houses, some wards near the centre of Croydon, and in wards with large council estates has been estimated as *smaller* than the width of gardens in properties in the north and south of the borough, and wards with properties showing a large average number of rooms.
 - The size of gardens belonging to detached houses in the south of the borough has been estimated to be larger than that of gardens in the far south of the borough
 - Average sizes have been estimated on the basis of a wide range of properties available through the Internet.
- 3 “Average sizes” of properties have been estimated as follows:

TYPE OF PROPERTY	LAY-OUT	AVERAGE SIZE OF GARDEN
SMALL TERRACED	One 3.80 m wide front room One 1.20 m wide corridor	4 m x 8 m= 32 sq.m.
LARGE TERRACED	One 5 m wide front room One 2 m wide corridor	7m x 10 m= 70 sq. m.
SEMI-DETACHED	One 5 m wide front room One 2 m wide corridor One 1.5 m passage into backgarden	8.5 m x 12 m = 102 sq m.
DETACHED	Two 5m wide front rooms Two 2 m passages into backgarden	14 m x 20 m = 280 sq.m.
LARGE DETACHED	Three 5m front rooms Two 4 m passages into backgarden	23 m x 30 m= 690 sq. m.

- 4 The total surface area covered by terraced, semi-detached, and detached properties is calculated on page 2.

- 4 Areas not included in the estimate of the total surface area covered by gardens due to the unavailability of suitable information are:
- The *exact area* of very large gardens in wards such as Purley (e.g. on the Webb estate), Coulsdon East and West, Selsdon and Ballards, and Sanderstead, the number of which is not known but the area of which would change the total surface area of gardens significantly
 - *Front* gardens, which are extremely varied in size and character, many of which are paved over
 - Small greens on housing estates, communal gardens attached to blocks of flats and properties in multiple occupation
- 5 In conclusion, while the total surface area of the borough is 86.46 sq. km. (or 33.38 square miles), this review's estimate of the *minimum* total surface area of private gardens is 15.67 sq. km. (or 5.79 square miles), which represents a significant amount of land (about one sixth of the total surface area of the borough), and can have an important impact on the health or decline of local fauna and flora.