



Cobham Community Garden

Portfolio prepared for Britain in Bloom 2018

This document

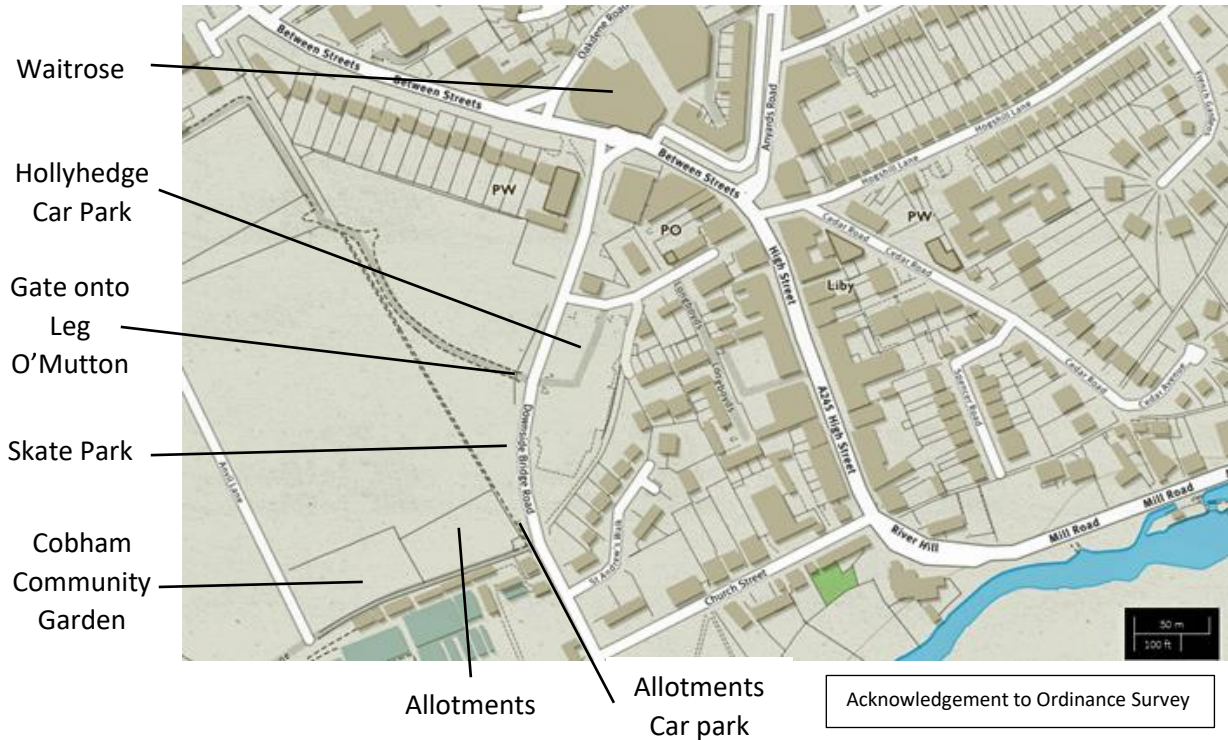
This document has been prepared for the 2018 South & South East in Bloom competition. It summarises the purpose and activities of the Cobham Community Garden and has been an extremely useful exercise to document our journey, our ethos, and our wide ranging activities.

Contents

This document	2
Contents.....	2
Introduction	3
Timeline.....	5
Community.....	6
Publicity.....	9
Money matters	10
Environmental responsibility	11
Gardening achievement.....	13
Planting list.....	14

Introduction

The Garden is situated on the Leg O’Mutton field just behind the centre of Cobham in Surrey, just off Downside Bridge Rd.



The site is mostly open, sometimes windy, and the alluvial soil very light and quick to dry out. We are enclosed by a chain link fence for basic security and cover an area roughly 50m x 30m. The general layout is shown below and a plan of the site follows.





The Garden was created to achieve the following:

- Bring the community together to grow fruit, flowers & vegetables.
- Manage the garden in a sustainable way.
- Be a welcoming place to encourage visitors & volunteers to come.
- A peaceful place to relax and meet others.
- Improve local resilience by growing our own food.

We aim to be self-funded; our model is to raise money through the sale of produce, which is discounted to our members depending on how much time they have spent working in the Garden. We also sell produce directly to non-members either from the site or at the local Farmers Market.

Cobham Community Garden is a Community Interest Company - a type of company designed for social enterprises that want to use their profits and assets for the public good. Everyone is a volunteer and all monies received are spent entirely on the Garden.

The Garden is open two days a week with four 2 hour sessions. Other opening can be made by arrangement.

The garden provides a relaxed social environment and particularly appeals to those on their own who want to meet new people, or those who have moved into flats and miss their garden.

We hold an annual Open Meeting where 20 or so friends and supporters of the garden have lunch and are consulted on key decisions for the future.

June 2018

Timeline

2011 - Concept for Garden initiated through Transition Cobham.

2014 – Agreement from Elmbridge Borough Council to lease the site on the Leg O’Mutton field.

2015 – Initial funding raised via Crowdfunding, Community Infrastructure Levy, Community Foundation for Surrey and private donations.

2015 - Garden fence built.



17 Oct 2015 Turf removed from beds by Cobham Cubs & families.




2016 – First full growing season.


Summer 2017 – Traveller incursion damages Garden, but Community rallies to support us.



Summer 2018 – Enter Britain in Bloom!

Community

The whole purpose of the Garden is to involve the community, and the table below outlines where this has been achieved.

Category	Description
Garden management	5 Directors, 1 Head Gardener, Book keeper & Marketing person.
Working members	About 7 Members who regularly come to work in the Garden - at least one 2 hour session most weeks (including management.) Plus some 5 or so who are not so regular and various people who pop in occasionally.
Supporting members	We have some 60 signed up members and there are currently some 35 on our mailing list (130 pre GPDR!), who receive our newsletters, etc.
Buying members	People who have joined the Garden to support it by buying produce (say 20 people).
Farmers markets	Cobham hosts a popular Farmers Market each month, and we attend as many as possible selling produce from the Garden including vegetables, flowers, fruit, plants and preserves. Local residents now seek out our stall to buy local produce. This enables us to publicise the Garden on the High street and is a significant money earner – some £550 last year. The Garden touches a lot of people in this way.
Plant swap	We hold a regular plant swap where we encourage people to bring their excess plants and swap them for others. We raise money for seeds & equipment. 

Young people	
Cobham Cubs	With their family removed the turf when the growing areas were initially defined, and later took our giant pumpkins for carving.
American Cubs	Planted the hedge, which comprises British Native trees supplied free by The Woodland Trust.
American Scouts	Assembled our big shed as the 'community' part of one Scouts Eagle Scout award (similar to Queens Scout in the UK). 
Oasis	A group of vulnerable children who came to the garden to "Let the children feel grass under their feet". They ran about a lot and made mud pies.
Children's Centre	A 'Sure Start' Children's centre who have their own area to garden as they wish. This is strongly supported by Elmbridge Borough Council.
Cobham Free School	The whole school came in 2017 for a bug hunt & sowed runner beans & sweetcorn to take home (described by one pupil as 'the best day at school ever'); we supplied Pumpkins for their carving competition, and in 2018 they are planning to build us a 'bug hotel'.
Duke of Edinburgh award	A couple of youngsters have chosen to do their volunteering in the community with us for DofE.
Cobham & District Rangers	Are planning an evening at the Garden to help prepare it for 'In Bloom'.

Business involvement	
Tozer seeds	<p>An independent British vegetable breeding company whose head office & farm is located directly next door to the Garden. They generously give us any seeds from their catalogue, and any technical support we need. Rather amusing though is that their minimum quantity of seeds is usually at least 1,000!</p> 
Brontes Café	<p>An independent Café in Cobham who regularly take our produce to 'showcase' on their menu. Currently an ad-hoc relationship.</p>
Greenfingers shop & Cobham Garden Club	<p>Cobham Garden Club manage a nearby allotment site with its allotment shop and organise talks on general gardening subjects. They provide enormous moral support and let us take car-loads of stable manure from their site, as well as monetary support after the Travellers incursion (below).</p> <p>We buy as much of our gardening supplies as possible from the Greenfingers shop – keeping our cash close to the community as well as excellent value for money.</p>
Travellers incursion	<p>During the summer of 2017 the Leg O'Mutton field was encamped by about 60 caravans of members of the travelling community, who did much damage to the Community Garden and surrounding areas on their departure.</p> <p>Whilst this was heart-breaking at the time it did result in a newspaper article and some spontaneous support from the Community – so many people told us they were horrified at what happened, and several businesses and many of the local community groups donated (in some cases significant) cash.</p> <p>This strong support showed the popularity of the Garden, and the generosity of our community. We marked this by using some of these funds to complete our orchard, inviting sponsors and supporters to help plant the trees.</p> 

Elmbridge Borough Council	<p>Our Council is enormously supportive – although they do charge us rent!</p> <p>A small team from the Leisure & Countryside Group maintain their own bed ('Ian's patch') of vegetables that are used as part of the summer holiday play days they organise in the Garden.</p> <p>This team are holding their summer barbecue in the Garden this year.</p> <p>We receive one-off 'year-end' donations from the Council – which more than offsets the rent!</p>
Heritage Day	<p>Cobham holds its annual fete during Heritage Weekend in September and the Garden has become an integral part of the occasion; open all day to welcome visitors, having a produce stall and a non-competitive exhibition of our produce in the flower show marquee.</p>
Food Bank	<p>We've tried to give produce to the local food bank, but the organisation can't store it and despite everyone's best efforts we can't encourage the clients to come and collect – free – directly from the Garden.</p>
Local residents association	<p>We have a display table at the local residents' association meetings where we tell people about the Garden and sell produce. Last year they let us run the raffle for additional fund raising (following the traveller incursion).</p>
The London Orchard Project	<p>Gave us a Fiesta Apple tree.</p>
Transition Kingston	<p>Gave us an apple tree and a Quince rootstock.</p>

Publicity

We use a variety of media to publicise the Garden, both to attract volunteers and to advertise events. These include:

Our website www.CobhamCommunityGarden.org.uk

E-mail hello@CobhamCommunityGarden.org.uk

We share a Facebook account with Transition Cobham, use NextDoor and less frequently Twitter. Our new Marketing person has lots of fresh ideas for the near future too.

We use posters locally and distribute flyers/handouts at the Farmers Market & Heritage Day. Local Church newsheets for events. On the menu of Bronte's Café when they use our produce.

Adverts in the LookLocal magazine – a 'freebie' magazine delivered throughout Cobham – and a share of an editorial advert with transition Cobham. .

Banner & noticeboard at the Garden with A frames when we are open.

Money matters

Initial funding to set up the Garden came mainly from:

- A crowdfunding campaign which raised £2,700. Supporters pledged money for items we offered such as fruit trees, hand-made hats, shed/greenhouse sponsorship & experiences.
- The Community Foundation for Surrey granted us £2,500. This is a philanthropic charity established to inspire local giving for local needs and funds groups who want to give something back to their local communities.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy granted £3000. The CIL is a planning charge, introduced as a tool for local authorities to offer funds to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area.

Our biggest initial set-up expenditure was the fence, costing some £5000.

Our regular income currently arises from sales of produce with (last year) £500 from the Farmers market, £300 from direct sales and £150 from Heritage Day. This neatly matches with our basic costs – rent, insurance, water – which come to around £600 and we also spend about £450 on essentials such as compost, seeds, etc.

We often receive gifts and donations, regularly seeing up to £500 from Elmbridge Borough Council, and in 2017 received some £1500 from various community groups as a result of Travellers damaging the Garden. We used this money to fund ad-hoc projects such as completing our orchard and installing a timed automatic watering system.



Stall at the Cobham Farmers Market

Environmental responsibility

A prime purpose of the Garden is to demonstrate growing food in an environmentally responsible way. Our principal means of doing this is through our management of the soil and not exporting waste from the site (closed loop).

Our soil comprises light alluvial material and had been laid to park grass for many years. The grass and topsoil were removed from the areas destined for growing crops leaving a rather poor and fast draining mid soil. Each year we have added as much organic matter as we can, applying waste stable manure on top of cardboard each autumn to suppress weeds and digging in before planting. In 2018 we are leaving this material on some surfaces during the growing season to help continue weed suppression and retain moisture. We now see worms active in the soil.

The stable manure originates from the Metropolitan Police stables at nearby Imber Court. The waste disposal contractors deliver this by the lorry load to our friends at the Cobham Garden Club (they can't do this directly to us, unfortunately) so we load bags of it into cars for transport to our site.

We leave some areas of the garden to let nature thrive, which we hope encourages beneficial insects, create some 'bug piles' of waste material, and a large 'bug hotel' is planned in 2018 with the help of the Cobham Free School. Bee hives at Tozers next door help too.

We compost all organic matter generated by the Garden, and use this buried as deeply in the soil as possible to help minimise weeds. We use several donated plastic compost bins, plus some much larger pallet enclosures.



Wild flowers in the front bed

We re-use unwanted products where possible, and have stocked the Garden with 3 greenhouses, 2 sheds, wheelbarrows, water butts, composters and a lot of garden tools by letting our wants be known locally. We have only had to buy small hand tools such as trowels and secateurs, some pest control netting and our watering system.

For our produce sales we aim to start using purchased paper bags this year but in the meantime rely on re-used plastic bags, along with some residual first use bags donated by local supermarkets.

We use peat friendly compost for seed & seedlings – selected by the Greenfingers Garden Club shop who are our first port of call for all our purchases.

We avoid the use of the word 'Organic' because we believe there are so many issues behind its authentic usage. We do grow as organically as possible but recognise that some of our practices may fall outside of the strict envelope of its meaning. So, the odd slug pellet gets put down with the cabbage seedlings, for example, and we may resort to weed killer – but only around parts of the site that aren't used for food. We don't spray food crops with anything other than water and perhaps soap, though if we had some severe infestation of something then we would look for an appropriate 'organic' response.

In 2017 we installed an automatic watering system comprising seep hoses connected to a water timer for each major bed. This is both labour saving and also an efficient way to deliver irrigation. We also capture as much water as we can from our limited shed roof area and encourage everyone to use it before turning the tap!

Gardening achievement

Our basic philosophy is to grow food as naturally as possible whilst recognising that – as we are a Garden - we need to make the site as attractive as possible. The main ways we achieve this are:

- Keep the grass mown and bed edges clipped.
- Plant flowers along the front of the Garden.
- Keep the produce areas as clear of weeds as possible.
- Keep everything as tidy as possible.

Given our somewhat limited labour resources then priority has to be given to the crops rather than the weeds. That said, quite a lot of effort has also been put into building the infrastructure, such as acquiring, transporting & rebuilding the sheds and greenhouses, and installing water systems.

We don't have enough active gardening members yet to run the garden as we would like, and some shortcuts are the inevitable result. We've recorded about 1000 hours worked in the garden each year, and some 600 of those are from just four people. We think we have a lot of local competition, with Painshill Park just a few hundred metres away, and RHS Wisley just a few miles down the A3. Both are appealing places for volunteer gardeners.

Our choice of what we grow is a combination of the things we are given (for example the raspberries & strawberries), the seed varieties available from Tozer Seeds (hardly a restriction!), varieties that members have found to be successful, or AGM varieties. Our planting plan for this year follows with a list of the permanent planting.

We've learned how to manage the work activity in the Garden. Our first year was chaos, but now we have a master plan containing detailed 'maps' of the planting beds, lists of when and where to plant each crop, and guidance notes on how to sow & plant. Also a list of jobs is provided so that we work together as team with clear goals. We've all learned a lot about gardening generally and particularly on this grand scale.



Planting list

Here is the really boring bit – our list of permanent planting and the crops for this year. The permanent planting appears first, followed by the annuals. No-one will be tested on this.

Fruit tree Variety

Apples

Bramley
Braeburn
Tydeman Late
Ribston Pippin
Fiesta (x2)
Discovery
Charles Ross
Laxton's Superb
Sunset
Egremont Russet
Cox
Bramley's Seedling

Pear

Conference (in hedge)
Concorde
Conference
Beth
Pear 'Beurre Hardy'
Onward
Quince

Plum

Victoria
Opal
Oullins Golden Gage
Blue Tit

Damson

Prune Damson
Merryweather

Cherry

Stella
Stardust

Soft Fruit

Jostaberry
Loganberry
Buckingham Tayberry
Blackberry Loch Ness
Blackcurrant Ben Hope
Blackcurrant Ben Sarek
Raspberry Glen Ample, Joan J
Strawberry assorted
Redcurrant Rovada,
Laxtons No 1
Rhubarb

Herbs

Thyme
Oregano
Mint
Sage
Chives

Hedge

Dog Rose
Elder
Hawthorn
Holly (infill to come)
Beech
Blackthorn
Hazel

Perennials

Dahlia (various)
Daffodil (various)
Bluebell
Evening primrose
Foxglove
Hollyhock
Campion
Rudbeckia
Hyacinth

Vegetable	Variety
Beans (Broad)	Aquadulce Claudia,
Beans (French)	Venice
Beans (Runner)	Celebration, St George
Beetroot	Boston, Mixed
Broccoli	Red Admiral, Summer Purple
Brussel Sprouts	Churchill, Flower sprouts,
Cabbage (summer/autumn)	Savoy - Providence (early). Heart/Greens - Advantage, Candissa
Cabbage (spring)	Wheeler's Imperial, Jersey Wakefield
Carrot	Resistafly, Autumn king, Early Nantes, Chantenay Royal
Cavalo Nero	Niro de Toscana
Chinese cabbage	Pak Choi - Glacier,
Courgette	Sunstripe (Yellow), Firenze (green)
Cucumber	Mini Munch, Burpless tasty green
Garlic	Various
Kale	Rossignol
Leek	Lancaster
Lettuce	Winter Density, Mixed leaves, lollo rossa & others
Onion	Various
Parsnip	Javelin
Pea	Sugar snap - Zuccola. Ambassador, Kelvedon Wonder
Potatoes (Early)	Charlotte
Potatoes (main)	Maris piper, Desiree
Shallot	Various
Spinach	Trombone,
Squash (Summer)	Butternut - Hunter.
Sweetcorn	Lark
Pumpkin	Hundredweight
Tomato	Sungold, Alicante, Golden sunrise, Santonio, Craigella
Aubergine	Jackpot, Ophelia
Rocket	Wild Voyager
Chilli peppers	Cyklon & Hungarian Black
Coriander	Calypso
Basil	British
Chard	Bright lights
Red cabbage	Red drumhead
Parsley	
Radish	French breakfast, Poloneza

Flower	Variety
Antirrhinum	Sonnet mixed
Aster	Duchess mixed
Cosmos	Fizzy mixed
Gazania	Red Stripe
Gourd	Ornamental mixture
Helichrisum	Eternity mixed
Marigold	Durango mixed
Nasturtium	Empress of India
Sunflower	Giant single
Sweet pea	Fragrant collection
Sweet William	Agricola eyed mixed
Wallflower	Simplicity mixed
Wildflowers (no grass)	Mix
Green Manures	Phacelia, Clover, Winter Mix (Grazing Rye & Winter Tares)

-----o|o-----



Cobham Community Garden

Bringing the community together to grow




Join us and enjoy

- Exercise
- Membership benefits
- Fresh food
- Good company

Come and grow with us on the Leg O' Mutton to get ready for Britain in Bloom!

Thursday & Saturdays: 10 -12 & 2-4pm

hello@cobhamcommunitygarden.org.uk
www.cobhamcommunitygarden.org.uk

