



Foraging, Food Growing and Cookery Lewisham Local Small Grants Programme 2022

Final impact report, December 2022



Introduction

Since April 2022, Lewisham Local has hosted [Good Food Lewisham](#), a network of passionate people working together to change the world of food in the London Borough of Lewisham. Our vision is to see our home become a diverse and lively community that connects people to healthy, sustainable and affordable food that is grown, produced and prepared locally to promote a vibrant food culture and prospering local economy.

As part of building a good food movement in Lewisham, Good Food Lewisham is working on strengthening the Lewisham Food Growing Network, a network formed in 2021, supported by GCDA to connect and support food growers and community gardens in the borough. The network aims are to encourage more local people to grow their own food, learn how to forage and to cook with these edibles, as well as showcasing local gardens so people are more aware of what's already happening and what they can get involved in, learning from others as they go.

Lewisham Local started to distribute small grants in 2020 as part of our local giving programme. An initial food growing small grants programme was delivered in October 2021 to encourage more people to engage in food growing activities in the borough. Due to the programme's success a second programme was established in spring 2022, '[Food Growing and Community Meals Spring Small Grants Programme](#)'. Lewisham Local was really pleased to secure future funds to develop this work and be able to give small grants to projects that could not have put on these activities otherwise.

Lewisham Local secured funding from Lewisham Council's Creative Change Fund to deliver a mass foraging event as part of [We Are Lewisham](#). Foraging is one solution to the climate emergency,

which has been a theme of the Lewisham Borough of Culture throughout 2022, and the programme team were keen to engage as many residents as possible in foraging activities. We also received funding from 4in10 Charity to deliver foraging/growing activities as part of the London Challenge Poverty Week 17th – 23rd October which aims to shine a light on community and voluntary sector organisations across the city who are working hard to uphold people's dignity by combatting the worst effects of poverty and helping people to challenge and overcome its causes.

Programme aims and what we wanted to achieve

Given the time of year, and in line with the BoC programme, the programme focussed on foraging activities, as well as cooking with foraged ingredients and food growing. We wanted to showcase local gardens and growing spaces with geographical spread throughout the borough.

The **aims** of this funding were:

1. Increase foraging, food growing and cooking skills and increase the number of people engaging in these activities
2. Showcase local growing projects, increase awareness of opportunities to get involved with food growing, increase volunteering in this area and enable new connections within communities
3. Increase awareness of local wild foods and growing spaces in Lewisham and enhance understanding of where food comes from

Programme Overview

Thanks to the funding provided, a programme of local food events was delivered in October 2022 to mark Lewisham Borough of Culture, World Food Day on 16th October and London Challenge Poverty Week 17th – 23rd October. Nine projects were awarded £250 grants, eleven funded activities took place and additional non-funded activities as part of the programme. Activities included foraging walks in parks and around community gardens to identify edible and medicinal plants, cooking and preparing cold foods, as well as drinks, with foraged ingredients, making toiletries with foraged ingredients, mindfulness, growing activities, garden tours and meeting local people.

Approximately 200 directly engaged in the programme from attending a workshop or walk, and around a further 200 people looking at our list of gardens and foraging map. Activities took place with a good geographical spread north to south of the borough from Evelyn in the far north to Downham in the far south. Lewisham Local staff and volunteers were able to attend most of the events. It was great to visit gardens we hadn't been to before, meet volunteers and learn about edible plants.

Projects and activities

Wild Food Adventure with Queen's Walking group took place on Saturday 15th October in Manor House Gardens with local expert forager Theresa Webb (Kitchen Buddy).

The group identified 15 species of plants, trees and insects. This area is full of delightful habitats, to discover, especially along the river Quaggy, in Lee.

“The session opened up the minds of participants to understand there is an abundance of food all around us!”

“The amount of people who stopped us, impactful – seeing us looking at plants, walking, there’s so much food around us – we’re now using an app too: - take a picture put on app, moved us on and deepened interest” Joane Bailey, Queens Walking Group



Participants taking photos of foraged foods in Manor House Gardens

On World Food Day, 16th October, the majority of activities took place. Two foraging walks took place in Hilly Fields, organised by Friends of Hilly Fields and Rastafari Movement UK, with Rachel Mooney (a local resident, geographer and landscape architect interested in public parks) leading the walks. Both sessions were fully booked and shared widely on local Facebook groups. Participants ranged from babies, children to adults. Each participant left with a posy of lavender to make tea, knowledge of over a dozen new wild plants identified in the park that are safe to consume, and the history and development of Hilly Fields Park.



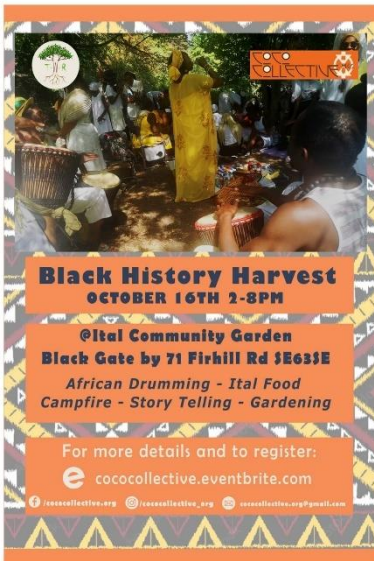
Participants in Hilly Fields Park



In the north of the borough, a foraging walk around Bridgehouse Meadows/Gardens and meal with the picked ingredients was organised by [Jupiter Woods/Grow Lewisham](#), with local chef and forager [Danny Jack](#). Bridgehouse is a new community growing space in the making. The walk took over an hour, including picking sloe berries and salad leaves. People learned about different plants and enjoyed the opportunity to meet other local people and find out about other projects and activities taking place. The event was well attended by around 20 people. Preparing the foraged ingredients afterwards using [Grow Lewisham's Growmobile](#) as a long table was a highlight. People washed and sorted the salad leaves and sloe berries and some started to make sloe gin ready for Christmas. The weather was warm enough to sit out and eat and chat for a while.



Participants at Bridgehouse Meadows sorting picked edibles on Grow Lewisham's Grow Mobile



In the South of the borough, there was a Black History Harvest Celebration at the Coco Collective Ital Community Garden (an afro diaspora garden growing culturally diverse foods and healing herbs) with gardening, cooking, food, storytelling, campfire and drumming. There was a community harvest where participants gardened and were shown how to harvest crops correctly. The harvest was given to the chef to be made into an Ital soup on site. The group were able to reach a wide inter generational and inter cultural audience and of multi abilities with 53 people attending the popular event. People were elated by the event - being outdoors, getting active and participating in alternative activities.

Two other events took place on World Food Day that were not funded by this programme, but that we promoted alongside to showcase the geographical spread of food growing in the borough. There were tours of Grove Park Nature Reserve throughout the day and foraging walks/making nature art in Forster Memorial Park as part of Catford Arts Trail, both in the South of the borough.



Foraging tour around Breakspears Mews garden

Moving into London Challenge Poverty Week, six events took place. On Wednesday 19th, Foraging Fun for All happened at Breakspears Mews Community Garden. Participants were welcomed with freshly foraged Lemon Balm tea introduced to common edible foraging plants, and their properties, and were guided through the garden to identify the plants. A salad was prepared with the collected plants for the participants to take home. People attended who didn't know about the garden previously. On Thursday 20th, a second workshop was held at Breakspears Mews: making a healing salve with 'weeds'. Participants were talked through the process and ingredients for making a healing salve, helped to make it and discussed other plants that can be used to make similar products. Participants left with two jars each of healing Marigold salve. Those who had not been to

the garden before also had a mini tour, including black tomato plants. It was a bit rainy that day, so a few less participants, but still very informative.



The process of the salve being made with foraged marigold and other natural ingredients

On the Friday, Two Mindful Bees (a local group focusing on food and mindfulness) organised a foraging, growing and tasting workshop at Evelyn Community Centre in Deptford. Participants were shown foraged ingredients and told how to cook them, with some unusual ones like acorns. They were given a range of foraged and pre-cooked foods to try. This generated interest amongst a diverse group. TWB aimed to demonstrate how to use locally growing ingredients, as well as teach about what people can grow inside, such as herbs for everyday cooking. They shared ideas about how to make use of left over vegetables and fruits, bringing people together from the local area who had not all met before. TWB gained a better insight into community issues and needs. The taster session generated interest beyond the direct participants and they are looking to get funding to do a weekly wellbeing, growing and cooking workshop tailored to local communities. In future, they hope to do an in-depth workshop over six sessions.



***Freshly foraged ingredients and food made with foraged ingredients, participants trying the foods
(Two Mindful Bees workshop in Deptford)***

On the Saturday, there was a Downham Wild Food Adventure. A guided foraging tour around the woodland, lawns and hedgerows in Downham fields and the woodland walk. With Theresa Webb (Kitchen Buddy) and local gardener Iffat. Following the walk, participants asked for more information

about local community gardens, asked when the next events would be and were surprised and pleased that you can pick and eat things from your local park. *"I learnt so much and am very grateful...really inspirational"*.



Foraging wild food adventure in Downham



On the final day of activities, Sunday 23rd, there were two events. A garden open day and growing activities at [PNK garden](#) in the far north of the borough took place. They hosted a garden party for local residents to get them to know that the gardens are open to all and there are free available spaces to grow vegetables. They created a [short video of the event](#). The event was very well attended with around 25 people, with many new people. People helped to harvest a lot of edibles. They are keen to host more events as they now feel more confident about hosting public facing events and have additional equipment, such as the hot water thermo, that will allow them to do so.

A [Wild Food Forage and Feast](#) also took place in Mountsfield Park, organised by the [Friends of Mountsfield Park](#) and Kitchen Buddy. A local independent food business [Lee Greens](#) provided some vegetables for the feast. A guided 1.5 hour walk took place. Participants collected many edible herbs and veg in the community garden and avoided poisonous berries on the asparagus and the yew. They all helped to make a meal with the picked ingredients, including; lemon verbena herbal infusion; wild pesto; aubergine, lentil, yellow tomato salad and squash, date and apple dessert. One child enjoyed eating it so much, that another parent enquired to their parents how they managed to

get their child to eat lots of green, living foods! A friendly discussion on children's eating behaviour, family eating time together and setting an example with the foods on the table, ensued.

"We have shown a mixed age group how it's possible to create gourmet salads using produce collected not very far from the venue. Everyone took home a container with left overs!"

Outcomes and learning from the activities

Initially due to the time of year and the unusual weather conditions there were concerns by groups in terms of how much would be available to forage. Luckily, the weather held out for most of the sessions and there was plenty to pick.

CocoCollective were really pleased that this programme took place in Black History Month and are keen to do something next October should funding be available. Other groups commented that they would prefer to be able to offer workshops earlier in the year when there is more choice of plants, with spring being a favourable time for many. Some groups said they were too ambitious and would focus on just a walk or a meal next time unless there was more funding to deliver both.

The majority of groups reported that participants were really happy with the activities and many asked when the next ones will be or reported that the activities had inspired them to organise more events in the future. Groups were able to reach new people with the activities, as many had not put on these types of activities before, so it was new and exciting to locals. Some groups came up with interesting ideas for events and projects going forward, such as a Front Garden Cooperative for community education for neighbours to not feel isolated but to learn to grow micro greens and share their cultivated and wildly grown garden food. The events engaged local parks and their community gardens, with people already in growing circles meeting new people, as well as people totally new to growing discovering their local project.

Overall, the activities succeeded in reaching a significant number of diverse people who were new to foraging and didn't know about their local gardens and are now keen to get more involved as a result of the activities as well as creating more links between existing projects and growers/foragers. The programme therefore achieved the intended aims and outcomes.

New Resources and Next Steps

As part of the programme, to help publicise the events and generate more interest in growing and foraging in Lewisham, Good Food Lewisham published a '[list of growing spaces](#) in the borough which identified at least 51 gardens and orchards identified across Lewisham Borough. [This resource can be found of Good Food Lewisham's website.](#)

Good Food Lewisham and the Food Growing Network will continue to add and update this list as well as a [map of growing spaces](#), and a [local foraging map over the coming months](#). There are also plans to publish a local foraging guide and get more groups on the [Capital Growth map of gardens in London](#) and to encourage groups to access Capital Growth's useful training and resources. A Good Food Lewisham Network meeting is planned for January 2023 on community and local food production to continue to build the Food Growing Network.

Many participating groups and individuals have asked when future activities will take place. Lewisham Local is keen to secure more funding to deliver a similar small grants programme in the

spring to maintain the programme's momentum. We would invite funders to get in touch to work with us to deliver future food related small grants programmes.

Lewisham Local would like to thank the programme's funders, Lewisham Council and 4in10 and all who organised and participated in the activities.

