

## RCG Chair's Report for 28/01/2022 AGM

It's been a year of continued progress at the Railside Community Garden, despite an ever changing landscape of Covid and other challenges! Here's a summary of the 2021 highlights that show some of our achievements and developments.

We began 2021 under a second lockdown that hampered our initial hopes of getting as many members as we would have liked involved in the crucial winter and early spring clearing and planting activities. However with help of as many volunteers as was permitted at the time, we continued to build planters, flower beds, and produce a wide of variety of flowers and edible produce throughout the year; chard, spinach, tomatoes, marrows, kale, cavolo nero, squashes, apples etc etc! We are delighted to have been able to continue supplying a lot of this produce where it is much needed and gratefully received at West Norwood& Brixton Foodbank. These donations are also recorded and logged by our umbrella organisation Capital Growth and indicate that we have supplied over 32kg worth £184 of local, organic fruit and veg, all to a great cause.

We have tried to give all our members an opportunity to access the garden and help out wherever possible and we're really grateful for all those that were able to. But it has been difficult due to the pandemic to open completely, so we took the decision that all RCG memberships for 2020 would be extended *gratis* by a few months until mid 2021. We revamped the membership structure so that it is now possible to join by Paypal, as well as pay pro rata for anyone that joins part way through the membership year. Thanks to all members that renewed, it is much appreciated and provides a valuable revenue stream to us.

We've been continuing to use as much of the grant money that we have to carry out some structural work around the garden, and are gradually making the site more accessible and health and safety compliant. During 2021 we installed chainlink and boards to the fence above the largest drop, installed a smart handrail next to the steepest part of the path, passed a fire safety inspection, and installed some obligatory h&s signs. You'll have also noticed our smart new signboards on each gate! And many of you came to help clear the overgrown and rubbish strewn 'Wild Garden' area, which filled at least four skips during 2021! We've planted some fruit trees in that area, and look forward to using that space a bit more going forward, beginning with the installation of some beehives in conjunction with some local beekeepers - look out for our own RCG honey in due course!

The highlights for me however have been the occasions where we've been able to welcome you, the members, back into the garden. In August, a break in the Covid clouds meant we finally had an opportunity to safely host an event in the garden; it was great to see so many people at the September Open Day where we enjoyed tea, cake, garden produce and a stunning array of carved vegetables! We raised over £400 at this event - much needed funds, thanks for your support. In November we used the Arch for the first time for a public event, and enjoyed a Halloween themed mulled cider whilst being spooked by haunted tales and pumpkins!

Another key milestone during this year was support from our local MP and councilors, with whom we coordinated a visit to the garden from [New Vision for Women](#), a UK community interest company proactively empowering women from different cultures, backgrounds and life stages. It was great to meet the group and see children from a range of diverse backgrounds enjoying the garden.

So all in all a good year given the circumstances, but still some small regret that we haven't been able to welcome more of you into the garden. Thank you for reading this; please attend our AGM on Wednesday 26th January, 20:00 - [Zoom link here](#). And thanks for your continued interest and support for RCG. We hope to see you at the Garden soon.

Three ways you can get more involved in the Garden:

- i) On ad-hoc basis: Come along to one of our **Volunteer Sessions**; we will be running them on most Saturdays, provisionally restarting on 05/02/2022. There will be planting, pruning, seeding, weeding, tidying, building etc....
- ii) If you would like to be more involved in the running or management of the Garden, please consider joining the **Management Committee**. It would be great to get more people involved in order to help take forward our Strategy for the next couple of years ahead. If you have any specific skills or experience eg Comms, Finance, Project Management, we'd love to hear from you; equally there are several general positions with a non-specific role, so come and join anyway!
- iii) Become a **Trustee**; carrying out an oversight role to ensure compliance with the Constitution and the terms of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation operating as Railside Community Garden.