



Greener Growth

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INTRODUCTION TO GREENER GROWTH

Founded in 2013 by Joannah Metcalfe, Greener Growth is a Community Interest Company based in Bury St Edmunds in East Anglia. A CIC is a special type of Limited Company which exists to benefit the community rather than private shareholders.

Having been a natural therapy practitioner for over 25 years, Joannah began working with Her Majesty's Prison service with the aim of providing therapy through gardening for inmates. They responded with a high level of positive engagement. The work began to expand, making connections with schools and local communities, particularly those facing challenges of deprivation and social isolation. Greener Growth is now developing horticultural therapy programmes focused on growing food, protecting and enhancing the natural environment. These activities are centred on a permaculture approach creating social and economic sustainability whilst improving biodiversity.

The social and environmental impacts of this work have become much broader since 2013 and Greener Growth now works in four areas: prisons, schools, community projects and the business sector.

Working with many kinds of people in these areas, Greener Growth has planted over 1800 heritage orchard trees, installed 45 wildlife ponds, 160 hedgehog boxes, 350 insect hotels, solitary bee & bumblebee boxes, 450 bird boxes and 290 bat boxes. In addition we have built and erected over 400 raised beds and allotment bays for food growing and sensory planting and planted over 5000 "Bulbs for the Bees", which included alliums, blue-bells, snowdrops, aconites and crocuses.

It also provides practical advice and delivery of cost-effective, alternative ways of managing sites such as roadside verges, recreational greenspace, business parks and building sites, which benefit a wide variety of human interests and are good for nature too.

The Aims of the CIC are to:

- *Engage communities through developing horticultural therapy, nature conservation and food production.*
- *Teach people skills in food growing, nutrition and practical permaculture*
- *Champion the effectiveness of permaculture*
- *Conserve biodiversity and create opportunities for wildlife enhancement*





WORKING IN SCHOOLS

Through delivery in 39 schools to the end of 2018, it is estimated that this has impacted in the region of 12,000 children, with a focus on those with special educational needs.

Greener Growth works with schools to help them protect and enhance green spaces and wild places and draw the school community to the 'outdoor classroom'. These activities bring children back to nature because, as they get involved, children learn more about the importance of the natural world, the role of insects and other wildlife, and protecting our environment's future.

Children who grow their own food are more likely to eat fresh fruit and vegetables. Physical activity and healthy eating can help reduce childhood obesity. In such financially constrained times, more and more people believe they are unable to afford fresh seasonal produce. It is therefore invaluable to help children get access to fresh air, exercise and fresh food and an understanding of its value to their health and environment.

Greener Growth has been working with East Point Academy over the last 3 years. They have helped the students to transform certain areas of our school grounds whilst learning to grow food and help the natural environment. They have inspired real enthusiasm in a cohort of children who have never gardened before. They have particularly enjoyed the outdoor cooking of their fresh grown seasonal produce, and they have taken huge pride in taking produce home. We are really looking forward to the next phase of their work here.

Elizabeth Tozer, Deputy Head, East Point Academy, Lowestoft





WORKING IN COMMUNITIES

Greener Growth's community projects create intergenerational connections as a main objective and have community cohesion and nature conservation at their heart. Every town, city and village has a green place or wild space that can offer a perfect opportunity for a community kitchen and wildlife garden project.

In today's society it is well known that social isolation is a significant issue. We also know that young people spend more time with various forms of technology resulting in much less physical activity that is healthy for them. Today's family units are also composed in a very different way with more geographical separation, more fragmentation and family breakdowns. Many older people do not have any regular contact with young people and many youngsters have little or no contact with grandparents and wider family networks. Many residents in specialist social housing facilities have mental health challenges and are more likely to suffer loneliness and isolation. Greener Growth's activities help break down these barriers to social cohesion and get people back in touch with each other and the environment around them.

“Our resident's association "HEART" and over 60s Club are delighted to be involved with this wonderful organisation which is inspiring our community to conserve nature and grow more fresh food together. Greener Growth have generated several projects with our schools and residents all of which have created a lot of excitement and support. We now have a 60 tree Howards Memorial Orchard which was funded by our local funeral directors Fulchers. We have Heritage Orchards and Community Kitchen and Wildlife Projects at Howard Primary School, Tollgate and Westley Schools respectively, and a Conservation and Education based initiative at our local "St Olaves Woodland".

Ernie Broom, HEART Chairperson





WORKING IN PRISONS

In the recent past, many prisons used to be virtually self-sufficient in food production, making them cheaper to run and resulting in lower re-offending rates. Greener Growth believes there are lessons to be learned from this and that the increase in criminal re-offending and the amount of time many prisoners spend confined to their cells are strongly linked.

Specialising in working with the therapeutic unit within each prison, Greener Growth runs annual therapeutic horticulture programmes teaching inmates and staff how to grow food, conserve and enhance nature and learn how to use the produce from their efforts. The programme also includes a variety of creative courses which are designed to increase and enhance employability of inmates with a particular focus on self-employment. The 're-greening' and re-design of the space available incorporates specific ecological content to create, enhance and protect the natural environment and to enhance biodiversity.



“ I am relatively new to the therapeutic community, but I feel that therapy has very much started for me already and that the gardens have become a key part of my experience here. I want to take part in therapy in order to better understand the series of events in my life that have led me to commit such a crime. I want the community to rigorously challenge me, my patterns of behaviour and the core beliefs that I have created in order to protect myself. Only then will I be able to fully take responsibility for what I have done. It is hard to truly look at and see ourselves, it is a very painful process. The gardens offer me a little peace, as I work away with my hands in the dirt for an hour or two. It is almost possible to escape from the guilt, grief and shame even if it is just for a moment. It is these moments I believe when I absorb what I have learnt about myself.

TC Resident, Warren Hill Prison

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WORKING WITH BUSINESS

From successful small 'garden makeover' projects with private clients, Greener Growth is now working at scale with business park managers and property developers, bringing unique perspective and skill set to the private sector advising on how these areas can be designed and managed sustainably using permaculture principles.

This also provides opportunities for commercial entities of whatever size to directly support local projects and engage with their local community, satisfying some of their corporate social responsibility criteria. For example, Gusto Pronto has two local projects which help support a school project in their area.

It has always been important to us in the creation of the business park development, that we would be able to find ways of preserving the nature that exists on this site, and that we could continue to provide the kind of spaces where residents in our offices would want to spend a quiet few moments, or take their lunch break.

Teaming up with Greener Growth is a great fit. We like that as a CIC they have a wider objective around educating people in specific groups and schools through horticultural therapy, but also that they are very understanding of our desire to have a collaboration which can evolve as the site changes.

Initially, much of the work will revolve around maintenance and preparation, but in the coming months we're really looking forward to developing some more exciting ideas and encouraging our office residents to get involved in making or sponsoring their own bird or bat boxes.

Katie Emerson, Project Manager, Riduna Park



WHY THIS WORK IS SO IMPORTANT

These projects are not just 'nice to haves' but are the beginnings of the transformational change that is required from societies across the world to sustain human development. As the climate changes, biodiversity decreases and our planetary 'life-support' ecosystems continue to degrade as a result of human over-consumption, development and pollution. We must do all that we can, wherever we can, to re-balance our relationship with the natural world and our connection to it.

Greener Growth provides genuine opportunities to 'Think Globally – Act Locally' and help to make the difference needed for future generations.



AND HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you are a commercial company, do consider what Greener Growth could do for you, your staff and your place of operations.

If you are a local authority, Greener Growth is here to help you find solutions to managing your greenspace and engaging with your local communities.

If you are a potential donor or benefactor and would like to support our work, we would love to hear from you.

If you are from a school, and have an idea for a project in your school grounds, why not tell us about it and perhaps we can help.

If you are from a community group or resident's association and you are interested in setting up a kitchen food and wildlife project in your area, do get in touch.

If you are an individual who wants to offset your carbon footprint or just wants to join in some practical conservation work we'd like to hear from you.

If you are from the press or other media and would like to feature the Greener Growth story, please contact the details below:

Email: info@greenergrowth.co.uk



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