



ANNUAL REPORT: OxGrow is one year old.

Since spring 2011, we've turned two grass tennis courts into a vegetable garden for the community; grown at least 60 different varieties of edible plant; rolled two giant water butts down Marlborough Road; hosted film screenings; been visited by 400 people during the Hogacre Harvest Festival; been interviewed by our gardening hero Alys Fowler for the Edible Garden Magazine; scythed grass; threshed wheat; eaten many fine fresh meals together; rigged up an innovative watering system; had a stall at a music festival; winnowed quinoa; learnt a lot; supplied foraged nettles for a local restaurant's nettle gnocchi; formed a football team; mapped the local wild food landscape; hosted bushcraft workshops and summer schools; and brought together hundreds of people around growing incredible edible things.

www.oxgrow.org

OxGrow's aims

Education

OxGrow exists to increase knowledge and skills of food-growing and the natural environment in our community.

Demonstration

OxGrow provides a space where people can come to see different ways of growing food that they can replicate elsewhere.

Experimentation

OxGrow is a space where a whole range of different cultivation techniques and a wide variety of crops will be put to the test.

Community Building

OxGrow is a space that the community can call its own, where adults and children can meet, socialise and play.

What we've grown

root parsley; iranian coriander; jerusalem artichoke; globe artichoke; amaranth; quinoa; mooli; mizuna; mispoona; mibuna; tsoi sim; wheat; bloody butcher corn; tomatoes; heritage tomatoes; beetroot; yellow beetroot; radish; black radish; scorzonera; potatoes; courgette; squash; pineapple mint; shark fin melon; strawberry; alpine strawberry; cat

mint; leek; onions; garlic (purple glazer, irkutsk, music, persian star, burgundy); brassicas; mustard leaf; vietnamese mustard; lettuce; lamb's lettuce; sunflowers; currants; grapefruit mint; landcress; miner's lettuce; mint; chicory; chickpeas; peas; purple carrots; runner beans; broad beans; parsley; dill; rosemary; nasturtiums; radicchio; raspberry; cranberry...

OxGrow's best bits

Quotes from our volunteers:

DinnerTime: "One high point was simply being able to harvest huge armfuls of beautiful Jerusalem artichokes and seeing them later on that evening being made into delicious things at the DinnerTime event."

Squashes: "My highlight was the eventual sight of the first shark fin melon, having slaved long and hard over the squash bed, nurturing and tending to the little blighters whilst they produced more leaves than is recommended, at long last there was a melon... that's right a melon in England! And what's more it tasted pretty good!"

RockCorps: "My highlight of the year was the Rock Corps coming to town and helping build the herb spiral."

Scavenging: "Rolling the water-butts through the streets of south Oxford, and generally scavenging materials from all over town and having adventures and meeting people carting the stuff around!"

Dinner and film night: "The dinner and film screening in the pavilion after the festival. Let's do more!"

Lushness: "Even though I joined after the harvest festival it was astonishing how much was still thriving in the garden and how healthy and lush all the crops were looking!"

Expert Workshops: "Having Alys Fowler come to teach us about garlic and slugs, among other things; it was inspiring and great to be shown by an expert how to make a no-dig bed. Seeing the cold frame come together was a proud moment, too!"

Quinoa: "My single greatest highlight has to be the quinoa, which was just by far and away the most stunning looking plant in the garden, has an amazing backstory and botanical history, is South American, is wonderfully labour intensive and tastes great!"

What are your highlights?

Tell us: mail@oxgrow.org

From the treasurer

Income

As you can see from the table (above/below) we have come to the end of our first year with a healthy surplus of £318.28 starting from a zero balance in March 2011. About 45% of our income was derived from individual donations, an equivalent amount from the annual Community Action Group (GAG) Maintenance Grant and the remainder from collections at fundraising events such as Oxford Hub's Party in the Park.

Expenditure

As one might expect in the first year of our group's operation the majority (51%) of our expenditure was on capital equipment such as spades, forks, rakes, gloves, wheelbarrows and the like. Just over 15% was spent on revenue items required for the essential ongoing activities of a community garden such as seeds, plants and compost. A further 20% went on publicity expenditure including activities like setting up our website, the production of posters and flyers for events and the printing of photos for stands at student fairs. The remaining expenditure was accounted for by small miscellaneous items of equipment and transport.

Looking Ahead

Given that we now have all the essential equipment required for running a community garden, and taking into account our success in sourcing major items such as water butts for free, we can expect that in the coming year our ongoing operational requirements will be minimal, perhaps in the region of only £100. This can be comfortably accommodated by our annual CAG maintenance grant of £250 while still leaving us significant funds for further promotional work to attract greater numbers to the site, as well as organising our major events like the harvest festival. However, to help us achieve some of our more ambitious goals; hosting regular expert-led workshops, or designing and constructing a sheltered outdoor teaching space, for example, we hope this year to make better use of untapped sources of revenue such as grant funding and perhaps also the sale of surplus

produce. This being subject to finding enthusiasm for such things amongst our membership!

OxGrow Accounts To 31/03/12	
OPENING BALANCE	£0.00
INCOME	
Source	Amonunt
Donations	£250.00
Fundraising Events	£65.00
Grants	£250.00
GRAND TOTAL:	£565.00
EXPENDITURE	
Expenditure type	Amount
Gardening Equipment/Tools	£127.66
Other Equipment	£9.74
Seeds & Gardening Materials	£40.90
Transport	£20.00
Website & Publicity	£48.42
GRAND TOTAL:	£246.72
CLOSING BALANCE	£318.28

Making it happen

Summary

At its heart, OxGrow is the collaborative effort of everyone who comes to the Sunday sessions every week - their passions, their project ideas, their collective knowledge and friendships. OxGrow's limited organisational structures are designed to facilitate this collective ownership and to make participation in the project accessible to everyone.

Important decisions are made by the **committee**, which is open to all. Weekly sessions are run collaboratively by everyone present but a bank of **facilitators** ensures that everything runs smoothly. In accordance with our **constitution**, three elected **officers** with a year-long tenure make sure OxGrow's central functions are ticking over. Other OxGrow members are responsible for overseeing different aspects of the garden and specific projects as agreed by the committee.

How do we get better at doing what we're doing?

OxGrow's founding ethos was one of openness and participation. Our culture is one that values the controlled chaos of a non-hierarchical system in which people are free to come and go and to engage with and create projects that inspire them in the open space of the Sunday afternoon sessions. But we have also learned in our first year that a little bit of

organisation can go a long way. The challenge in our evolution now is to introduce a little more structure that will allow OxGrow to function more effectively, at the same time as entrenching our spirit.

The text below is extracted from the draft we have been putting together in an attempt to write down and make explicit some of the organisational culture that has developed over the past year. **It is a document in progress, so we welcome comments and suggestions from anyone:**

Facilitators: Facilitating the weekly sessions is the bread and butter job of OxGrow. No special skills or horticultural knowledge are required – the facilitator just needs to know what the main tasks are for the week, and there will normally be enough collective expertise on site to carry them out.

The facilitator is the point of contact for the afternoon, keeping an eye on all of the things going on, answering questions, welcoming people to the site and making sure there is tea! Often the facilitator will end up doing a lot more talking than gardening.

It is the committee's job to approve new additions to the list of facilitators and ensure that they have the support and training they need, and the chairperson's job to keep the facilitation rota and ensure that information is passed on from one week to the next.

Constitution: As a Community Action Group and part of the CAGs Oxfordshire network, we have a constitution that is being presented at OxGrow's first AGM on May 13 2012 for ratification by members. This document is the bottom line, but it is flexible, and may be changed by OxGrow's members.

Committee: The Committee is how OxGrow makes decisions, where possible by consensus but with provision for majority voting where necessary. Committee meetings are held every month and are open for everyone to attend. Formal membership of the committee simply entails being included in and taking part in committee email discussions. The role of meeting chair and secretary rotates each month amongst those present.

Officers: The three roles of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are elected every year at the AGM. The roles do not represent any formal hierarchy, they designed to carry out some of the core responsibilities of the organisation as well as ensuring the full participation of members in all activities and decision-making. The officers are, however, the authorised signatories on the OxGrow bank account during their tenure, and the Treasurer has overall responsibility for overseeing finances.

In order to share the responsibilities and pleasures of these roles and to encourage wide participation, the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer may not stand for two consecutive terms. All change! In OxGrow's first year Julian Cottee took the role of Secretary, Doireann Lalor acted as Chair, and Andy Williamson as Treasurer. For Year 2, Rachel Hammond is nominated for Secretary, Sam Hollick as Chair, and Peter Scott as Treasurer.

The Secretary ensures that OxGrow's communications run smoothly and regularly, both internally and externally, ensuring that monthly committee meetings occur and that the weekly email out to members is sent by a varied host of writers.

The Treasurer is the main point of contact for matters financial, keeping records, maintaining the bank account, overseeing expenditure, reporting back to the committee at each month's meeting and reporting yearly at the AGM.

The chairperson is tasked with keeping a weather eye on all that goes on, although not necessarily all the detail, and to facilitate the smooth functioning of OxGrow. The chair's main day to day job is to ensure that there is a facilitator for each week's session and that facilitation opportunities are shared amongst enthusiastic members.

Get involved

- Come to our Sunday Sessions every week of the year, come rain or come shine 1-4pm at Hogacre Common.
- There will always be work to do, but if you've got ideas for a project or workshop that would be great, we can help you make it happen.
- Join the committee. We're always looking for people of all ages to help run OxGrow.
- Contact us: mail@oxgrow.org

OxGrow, Oxford's Edible Community Garden
Education | Demonstration | Experimentation | Community
www.oxgrow.org

Friends and partners

Oxgrow would like to thank all of the following for their support in our first year:

