

Food Plymouth Growing Community Abundance Project Report

May 2020

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Introduction

Growing Community Abundance (GCA) was a [Food Plymouth](#) project, funded principally by the Big Lottery Community Fund Awards for All scheme. Delivery activities took place between January 2019 and February 2020. *GCA* has created a living legacy, as this report illustrates.

The intention of *Growing Community Abundance* was to enable Plymouth people in and around community growing projects to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to support the established, emerging and latent community growing initiatives across the city. Co-design, co-delivery, collaboration and skills-sharing were fundamental aspects of the *GCA* project. This aligned strongly with Plymouth's journey towards Sustainable Food Places silver status www.sustainablefoodplaces.org.

Growing Community Abundance involved *Food Plymouth* working closely with the *Thrive Plymouth* team from Plymouth City Council. *Thrive Plymouth* is the city's 10-year health inequalities improvement plan, delivered through a public health partnership approach. *Thrive Plymouth Year 5 'People connecting through food'* included the *Places and Spaces for Food* initiative which overlapped helpfully with the delivery of *GCA*. The *Thrive Plymouth Year 5* closing celebration took place in October 2019 at *Food Plymouth's All Ways Apples Festival* which featured the *GCA* project.

Co-designing Abundance

Growing Community Abundance (GCA) was designed and developed by community growers. Lily Urbanska, Gia Daprano and Tom Buckley, along with Food Plymouth project manager Tess Wilmot, started designing together in January and February 2019.

Throughout the year, more growers got involved with planning the different events and helping with delivery activities. This brought a wide range of skills and enthusiasm to keep the events fresh and interactive.



February 2019 - Designing together - Tess, Tom, Lily and Gia



Helen, Laura and Rachael helping to design the Efford outreach event. Efford Valley Community Orchard was our meeting space!

We designed the event to include mapping and identifying the apples from the trees in the orchard.



APPLE HUNT

(PLUM & PEAR)

HOW MANY VARIETIES CAN YOU FIND?

<p>25 x Apples Trees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 x Devonshire Quarrenden 3 x Farmer's Glory 3 x Sunset 3 x Star of Devon 3 x Tom Putt 3 x Suntan 2 x Woolbrook Russet 3 x Beauty of Bath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 x Court of Wick 3 x Kirton Fair 3 x Exeter Cross 3 x Plum Vite 3 x Sops in Wine 3 x Limberland 2 x Catshead 2 x Upton Pyne 3 x Lucombe's Pine 3 x Peter Lock
<p>25 x Pears & Plums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 x Conference Pear 3 x Williams Pear 4 x Victoria Plum 3 x Majorie seedling 4 x Merryweather Damson 3 x Oullins Golden Gage 3 x Opal Plum 1 x Dennistons Superb Gage 	

18 x types of apple
6 x varieties of plum
2 x different types of pears

Find as many of the different varieties as you can and mark on the map where these are!

Resources designed by Laura and Rachael

FRUIT PICKING GUIDANCE

Careful as you go hunting, watch out for bugs in the grass and slippery apples!
Apple hunting checklist:

- 1 **Sturdy shoes**
- 2 **Re-useable bag**
- 3 **Fruit picking know-how**

Guess the incorrect fact?

- Ripe apples are red
- Crispy crows are red
- Many apples are ripe they tend to fall into your hand or onto your head

TASTING RECOMMENDED

Some of our Community Growers



Inclusion

The *Growing Community Abundance (GCA)* project has worked all across the city with community growers, community groups and friends' groups. We were aware of a previous tendency to focus mainly on disadvantaged areas in the south and west of Plymouth. The GCA project was therefore designed to help us to include the northern and eastern parts of the city for the events. This gave a more holistic balance, especially for the GCA stall's visits to gatherings and community events across the city. We chose events where Food Plymouth had not been before, like the Hope Festival and the Ernesettle events. Our planned attendance of the Plymouth Pride Festival was not possible as the event was unfortunately cancelled due to very bad weather. We worked with the Time Bank in Efford with the garden at the Library and the community orchard in Efford Valley. We also nurtured our existing links with the North Prospect, Devonport and Stonehouse Timebanks. This meant we could meet different groups and individuals who might not have known about the project or their local community growing spaces.

Two of the community gardening groups we linked with – *Devonport Park Activity Centre* and *Horticultural Therapy Trust* - work with people with special needs. It was really useful for us to have people experienced in this work to share what they knew and help us design the events to be welcoming and interactive.

It was particularly lovely to get feedback from Rose Taylor from Routeways, about the ***Growing Together*** group (please see page 18). You can see the young people helping at our *Autumn Abundance* gathering at Beckly Centre in our [GCA film](#) and joining in with all the other activities. It was wonderful to have the young people taking an active role in the events, working with the community growers, making the apple juice and enjoying themselves in situations which might otherwise have been difficult for them.



Planned Activities

Four gatherings

1. March 2019 – Launch Event: Celebrating Edible Landscapes across Plymouth at Routeways' [Devonport Park Activity Centre](#) .

This included a walking tour of Devonport and visit to the Mountwise Towers community gardens.

2. April 2019 – Plant and Seed Swap: Including bee keeping demonstrations and a GCA workshop at [Central Park Allotments](#)



Thanks to Tess Wilmot & Lily Constance Urbanska for putting together this event. An amazing collection of people coming together to acknowledge each others efforts for growing in the city. Looking forward to seeing what happens from this group. 🐝🌻🌸🌼🌻🌻



3. May 2019 – Permaculture: We received some additional funding from the [Permaculture Association](#) to run a one-day **Permaculture Gathering** in May 2019 with the [Permaculture Plymouth Group](#) . This included talks and demonstrations from Huxhams Cross Biodynamic Farm and Plants for a Future.

4. September 2019 – Autumn Abundance event: Held at Routeways' [Beckly Centre](#) . The GCA [film](#) was made there, showing the networking, apple pressing and the foraging walk around the park and a visit to Radford Woods Community Orchard.



The Permaculture Gathering in May 2019: One of the outcomes from the GCA events has been that we raised £220 to support people on low incomes to take part in the 12-day Permaculture Design Course in Plymouth in 2020. Two people benefited, both enjoying a £110 discount on the price of the course.

Co-delivery - Abundance on Tour

Throughout the summer of 2019 *Growing Community Abundance (GCA)* toured 12 different community events across Plymouth with the *Food Plymouth* stand.

At each event we had a local food Bring and Buy table with fresh produce from community gardens. In addition, we facilitated creative fun activities. We also shared the co-created map showing all the community gardens and orchards in Plymouth known to us, mapping any additional ones discovered through the interactions. These outings were fantastic opportunities to visit different parts of Plymouth and meet local people in their neighbourhoods and support their community events. The skills sharing activities were designed for all ages. *GCA* community growers supported the events, helping to staff the stand, providing produce and facilitating activities.



Guided tour of the community garden at Freedom Fields Park

These events included:

- [Freedom Fields Festival](#) - Bernard and Pat gave us a tour of the community garden and the wild flower area
- [Poole Farm Open Day](#)
- [Hope Festival](#)
- Ernesettle's Cider and Pasty Walk which explored their community growing areas
- [Devonport Park](#) with their new Pop Up Allotments
- [St Levan Summer Fair](#)
- Stoke Village and Block House Summer Fair
- Food Plymouth takes over the [Clipper](#)
- Efford Valley Summer Event by the orchard
- Ernesettle End of Summer Fair
- Stonehouse Creek Community Picnic
- [Stonehouse Street Party](#)



Hope Festival



Locally grown food

We were due to take in part in Plymouth PRIDE, but unfortunately this event was cancelled due to bad weather.



JULY 2019



OPEN COMMUNITY GARDENS AND GROWING SPACES

Open Community Gardens

During July 2019, twelve Plymouth Community Gardens opened their gates to the public:

- [Horticultural Therapy Trust](#)
- [Plymouth Permaculture Allotment](#)
- [Stonehall Flats](#)
- [Cattedown Community Waste Ground Gardens](#)
- [Keyham Green Places](#)
- Mountwise Towers
- [Collings Park Trust](#)
- [Thorn Park Medicinal Garden](#)
- Efford Library Garden
- Permaculture at Pete's Garden with [Adelaide Street Angels](#)
- The Beacon
- [North Prospect History House](#)



Keyham Green Places had two open afternoons for visitors. GCA grower, Sam (in blue) from Cattedown Community Waste Ground Garden, immediately signed up for an allotment here and has been helping in the community garden.

Skills Sharing Workshops

We ran skills sharing workshops to build the skills of the community growers, these included:

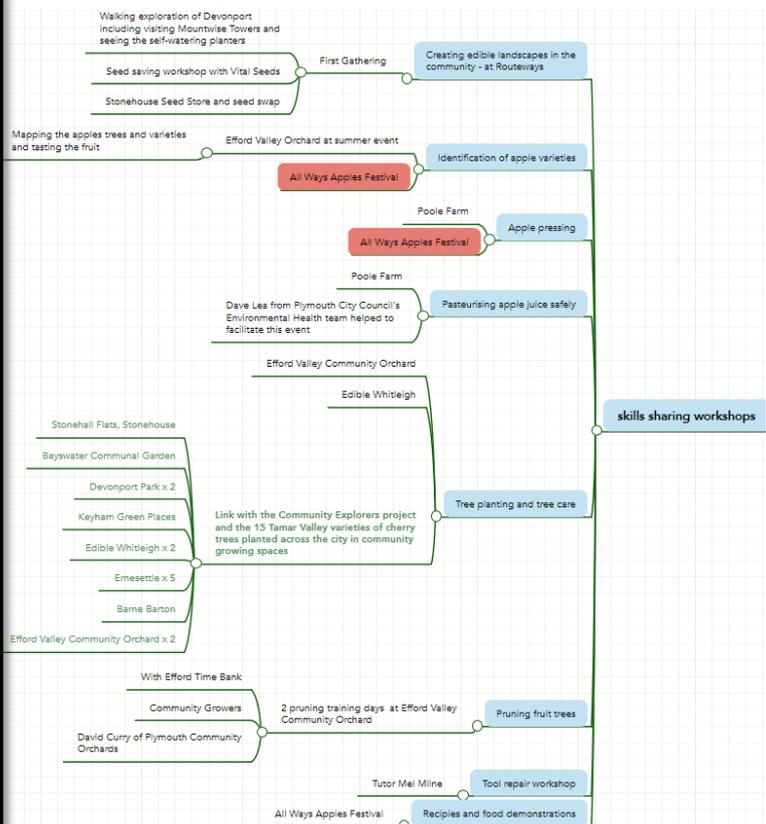
- **Growers Question Time** with Central Park Allotment Association
- Seed, seedling and plant swaps
- A **volunteer day** at the Beacon for gardeners
- **Seed saving** event
- A training day around **apple pressing and pasteurising** the juice at Poole Farm
- A **tool repair workshop** at Keyham Green Places
- **Apple identification** at Efford Valley Community Orchard and All Ways Apples Festival
- **Tree planting and tree care workshops**, plus additional pruning events in Efford Valley Community Orchard



Timebank South West added 15 new photos to the album: Efford Valley Orchard Pruning — at Efford. December 3 at 1:58 PM

Efford Timebankers enjoyed a bracing morning yesterday at the Efford Valley Orchard. We helped Tess Growing Community Abundance with some emergency pruning of the apple and pear tree's and also helped plant two new cherry trees! It was wonderful to find out about the upkeep of the trees and what we, as the general public, can do to ensure they are kept well and productive! We had a great time with members of Growing Community Abundance as well as Ryan and Helen from @PlymouthCommunityHomes

Efford Valley Orchard Pruning
15 Photos



North Prospect

Additional funding was secured from North Prospect Cllrs Evans, Tuohy and Derek, to support the *Growing Community Abundance (GCA)* project with special activities in their ward (Ham). The extra £1,050 came from their Locality Funds. We designed a series of special community gardening events during the summer of 2019 in North Prospect with additional support from *Plymouth Community Homes* Housing Association. This included monthly community garden events at the Beacon Hub and the History House.



Both of these growing spaces took part in GCA's Open Community Gardens scheme on 30th July, with a guided walk between the two sites. This coincided with the anniversary of 100 years of Social Housing, with additional activities linked to this.



 **Tina Tuohy** ▸ North Prospect history ... house
July 6, 2019 · 🌐

Hello! July 30th is the anniversary of 100 years of Social Housing. North Prospect covers all of that time as the land was bought by the Council in 1919. So the History House is joining up with PCH to celebrate the event. The House will be open all day on the 30th from 10am to 6pm. Currently we are smartening up the House and clearing and planting the garden . If you would like to help with the garden or just look at the House we will be having planting sessions on Tuesday 9th July 3.30 to 5.30 and on 17th July 1.30 to 5.30.

👍❤️ 17 1 Comment
16 Shares
Seen by 27

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

 **Tess Wilmot** Looks hot for this afternoon!
Think I will bring my sun broolly!

Write a comment... 

All Ways Apples Festival

A team of *Growing Community Abundance (GCA)* growers shared their knowledge and experience at *Food Plymouth's* annual *All Ways Apples Festival* in October 2019. They staffed the stand, engaged with the public and facilitated activities.

This festival brought people from all over the city to celebrate the culmination of *Thrive Plymouth Year 5* and its *People connecting through food* initiative. This included many other community growers involved in the *GCA* project, including: *Grow Stonehouse; Snapdragons; Mountwise Towers; Friends of Ham Woods; and Friends of Radford Woods*. Please see the *All Ways Apples Festival 2019* report (provided) for further information.



Growing Community Abundance team at All Ways Apples



Thrive Plymouth

Snapdragons





Grow Stonehouse

Alister and Leroy from Mountwise Towers



Apples were collected from across the city and made into apple juice with the Poole Farm apple pressing equipment

Growing Community Abundance Stall



Creative activities with Jenny from Friends of Radford Woods



Community gardens and orchards

Mentoring

Throughout the year, **mentoring and support** was offered as an additional opportunity for community growers. This was provided by *Food Plymouth* project manager Tess Wilmot through the *Growing Community Abundance (GCA)* project.

Those who took advantage of this offer included:

- Lily Urbanska and Tif Dickinson from Grow Stonehouse (Tif took over from Lily in August 2019 when Lily went on maternity leave)
- Tom Buckley from [Edible Whiteleigh](#)
- Michele Jackson – Delamere Road community orchard and wildflower meadow
- Helen Moore – Adelaide Street Angels
- Laura Clapp – Stonehouse Creek Community Garden
- Gem Gould – Poole Farm Community Garden
- Gin Farrow-Jones – Seeds n Feeds
- Rachael Gomery – Devonport Park Activity Centre

In addition, friendship and moral support was gained from peers, along with the sharing of resources and exchanging seeds and plants.

Some outcomes:

Rachael attended the first gathering at *Routeways Devonport Park Activity Centre*. From this she became a volunteer there. This led to part-time paid employment, working with the young people with special needs. Rachael and Rose supported the young people from the Activity Centre to create a group called ***Growing Together***. They became young *GCA* growers and took part in our autumn events.

Some of the growers facilitated activities and events and were paid for their time. Others preferred to do this voluntarily.

Sam from ***Cattedown Community Waste Ground Gardens*** shared her experience of involving her neighbours by composting their food waste. Jade and Rachael at *Devonport Park Activity Centre* loved this idea and set up their own composting system (see poster). Sam also visited *Keyham Green Places* on their open day in July and has taken on an allotment there and is supporting their lovely community garden.

“I've learned so much from Growing Community Abundance and taken the knowledge and applied it at nature reserves and Delamere Road (pruning the fruit trees) and my own wildlife back garden with its fruit trees.”
Michele Jackson



Partner Voice: Claire Turbutt from *Thrive Plymouth*
<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/publichealth/thriveplymouth>



“During Year 5 of *Thrive Plymouth* (Plymouth’s health inequalities plan for the city) we supported the *Community Abundance Project*. We set ourselves the goal of encouraging more community growing in the city through the *Spaces and Places for Food* project. Tess and the *Growing Community Abundance* project members were instrumental in moving the Council’s views on community groups using apparently abandoned pieces of land for growing activities.

I attended the first *Growing Community Abundance* meeting [in March 2019] and met such an incredible group of community development workers, volunteers who were doing something so important for the city. Throughout the year Tess continued to pass her many years of experience to this group and as you will see in the video she created, this group no longer feel like they are the only ones trying to make a difference. There is strength in numbers and Tess through her project has given them this strength. They now all share the ability to reach out to another person who may be struggling in the same way, to share resources and to bring a permaculture mind set to the development of community spirit.

At the end of the year Tess organised the *All Ways Apples Festival* and at that event I was able to bring along one of the senior leaders of the Council – the Director of Public Health, Ruth Harrell – who upon speaking to the members of the group who had stalls decided to make it easier for community groups to take on small pieces of land. This has already resulted in Adelaide Street Angels being given responsibility for some small pieces of land in North Stonehouse.

The impact of the *Growing Community Abundance* project is difficult to quantify, a shift has occurred over the past twelve months where people who previously would have struggled alone to overcome the obstacles to community volunteering in a significant way are now supported and feel part of a cohort in the city. The strategic importance of these people has been recognised by those with power in the city and the change in policy that has resulted is going to have implications which are not seen for many years.

Tess and the team have made a massive difference and I am hopeful they will continue to impact on health inequity in the city by spreading skills to those least likely to have them and joining up with the wider food system in Plymouth.”



Justine (*LiveWest* Housing Association), Laura and Claire (Thrive Plymouth), Tess (*GCA* project manager) and Helen (*Adelaide Street Angels*) dressing the hall ready for the *All Ways Apples Festival*

Participant Voice: Tif Dickinson

“I came to my role as 6 months maternity leave cover for **Grow Stonehouse** with bags of enthusiasm and years of borrowed and collected gardening knowledge, but with absolutely no gardening friends in the community. I discovered *Growing Community Abundance [GCA]* through Tess and found an entirely knowledgeable and supportive community of growers and supporters all doing the same thing as me. Tess's supportive involvement in my community project really made what could have been a totally daunting and occasionally lonely job a very fulfilling and connected experience. *GCA* was there both virtually and physically whenever you had a question or an event or an extra pair of hands. Often just knowing it was there is enough to keep you sane!

Although the project I was on has ended and life has taken me down a slightly different less green pathway for the time being I really hope to stay connected to this wonderful community and to help it grow where I can and encourage others to discover how important community gardening is to Plymouth and the wider world.”

Growing Community Abundance supported skills sharing events with *Grow Stonehouse*, including apple pressing and pasteurising and wassails.



Tif (right) supporting families at Green Ark Children's Centre



Apple pressing at Stonehall Flats with *Grow Stonehouse*

Here is a link to a [Short film about Grow Stonehouse](#)

Participant Voice: Gin Farrow-Jones

– *Seeds n Feeds*

For you, what have been the benefits of being part of the *Growing Community Abundance (GCA)* project?

“There can never be too many confidence-growing opportunities because there is much more to be thinking about than plants in the ground - a simplistic idea I had when starting out several years ago. The *GCA* opportunity has been a safe haven where I can be

more public and brave about sharing ideas, approaches and confess what don't know (quite a lot), as well as celebrate the win-wins, as very little comes about in isolation. Thank you for the enormous time and effort Tess with supporters like Jenny and Jade have put in to enable everyone to learn.”



Do you feel that you have been mentored / supported?

“Community, networks and teams (however loosely bonded they appear) synergise ideas and make stuff happen for each other and it is invaluable. Having had venues to go to, to be with people who listen, who've acted as my sounding board and given feedback, meant I could rehearse ideas I have for engaging residents in my community, and volunteers who pitch up, often spontaneously interested in growing and /or community engagement. It has been a process of refining why and how am I going to do this? Tweaking and learning from my and others' lessons along the way.”

Has *GCA* helped develop the plans for North Stonehouse?

“The small food growing project *Seeds n Feeds* has bubbled away for five years, and it's not gone un-noticed by leaders in the field like Tess. I wasn't certain what the project was achieving for much of the time. Dogged, tenacious, unwillingness to give up is one thing but to push through and go forward is another. I needed to have several cycles of mentoring over the last 15 months to feel I could expand *Seeds n Feeds* in a new direction and *GCA* has really help me by providing consistent presence. I've seen I am not alone, stubbornly not giving up, just like *Grow Stonehouse* and *Keyham Green Spaces*.

Much more recently, direction has emerged and been influenced by a strong community development in the form of a CCBS (Charitable Community Benefit Society) called Cliik, that I am a director of which is fostering food growing to address food insecurity in our immediate North Stonehouse community. I couldn't have envisaged playing a key role with food growing had I not had *GCA* nurturing me in the background, whispering 'you can do it!'”.

We are particularly looking for any legacy that has been supported and encouraged by this project ...

“A collaboration between partners *Seeds n Feeds*, Plymouth City Council, Food Plymouth and Sovereign Housing Association has been set in motion in recent weeks. Our new local

community space 'The Talk Shop' became Seeds n Feeds' greenhouse and seedling plants now fill the shop windows and floor [as not in use due to the lockdown].

Semi-grown, indoor edible plants are to be delivered to people who've been shielding in a Sheltered Housing scheme (*Sovereign Housing Association*) in North Stonehouse since early March. Being aware of the impact CV-19 was likely to have on residents' socio-economic circumstances and wellbeing as well as their limited space for growing (a windowsill) determined the design brief.

This is a CV-19 response, that hadn't been planned for when we applied for funding by Cliik. In effect different projects have been born out of our original proposal for funding from the *POP+* collaboration fund. We'd proposed creating a veg garden with the same residents over Spring and Summer 2020, however this had to be revised into indoor edibles, until the time comes when it is safer to be able to create a vegetable garden in the Sheltered Housing scheme grounds with residents.

Whether we can include other aspects of our proposal like the 'Street Eats' events, following on from our successful 'Street Meets' in 2019, is again uncertain because of CV-19. However, we may find online solutions for 'Street Eats' for *Sovereign Housing Association* residents in keeping with responsible, socially distanced measures. Permaculture principles of growing, and education about redefining waste (energy, food, weeds) with the concept of 'loops' as well as reciprocity between humans and nature are smuggled into the growing edibles kits."



Inclusive Voice – Rose Taylor from *Routeways*

“Last year *Routeways’ Growing Together* group were so excited to be part of the *Growing Community Abundance* scheme,” says Rose, speaking in 2020. “The young people, all with a learning or other disability, and / or Autistic, meet socially and have formed a working group, raising funds through growing and making items to sell at local markets. They also received nutrition and food and hygiene training as part of preparing to run pop up cafes.



When they were invited to be a part of the Autumn *Growing Community Abundance* event operating out of *Routeways’ Beckly Centre*, they were initially a bit worried as their previous cafes had been mostly aimed at friends and families. However, this event proved to be a real turning point for the group. They were so warmly welcomed and integrated into every part of the event, with other members showing them how to press apples, asking them about the things they’d made and ordering teas, coffees and cakes from them. The young people thrived on this, weaving confidently through a hall full of strangers, taking and delivering orders. They still talk about this event. It has had a lasting impact with other [GCA] members requesting to buy bird boxes from them [which the young people make as part of their project]. They saw a dehydrator being used there [to dry apple rings], and now the group have brought their own so that they can add healthy dehydrated edible flowers and fruit to their stock.

When the opportunity came to host a stall at the *All Ways Apples* festival they were delighted. Having made links with Tess and her team at the previous events, they were not daunted at the thought of being in a stranger, much larger space with additional unknown people. They discussed which items were likely to sell well there, sorted out pricing and manned the stall effectively. They also interacted well with other stall holders, choosing and making purchases independently.

We intend for this collaboration to continue, our fruit trees from which the young people make apple butter and plum jam, were provided and planted by Tess through *Dig for Devonport* [in 2012.] The young people were recently delighted to receive spare artichoke plants from Tess which they have planted. They are now keeping an eye on how the plants

are doing via social media, but as soon as [COVID-19] restrictions are lifted we know they will be back in the garden, weeding , sowing, growing and then harvesting and cooking their produce, ready for the next community event.”



Growing Together team helping at the GCA Autumn Abundance event

Celebration and Transition

In February 2020 more than 60 people came to the *Growing Community Abundance (GCA) celebration event*, marking the project's transition into its legacy phase. We celebrated our collaborations and co-working. We shared our year of abundant activities and learning with friends, families and stakeholders. Stories, seeds and plants were swapped, more connections were made and additional knowledge exchanged.

We had a *GCA* slide show to illustrate all the events, activities and fun we had enjoyed this year. We also showed the [Growing Community Abundance film](#) by FotoNow, which we had commissioned to help share our activities and attract more people to get involved. This was followed by a lively discussion about community growing across the city. We showed the film about [Community Explorers](#), another *Food Plymouth* project running in parallel with *GCA*, which was linked to many of the community growing spaces with the planting of 15 Tamar Valley varieties of cherry trees. The highlight of the day was a performance of *Soil Creatures* following the creative workshop by [Light Bulb Fantastic](#). Children and adults made shadow puppets and took part in the show, showing off their creations. After the workshop we enjoyed a delightful shared supper together.



Progression Opportunities

The *Growing Community Abundance (GCA)* growers have developed skills and grown as a group during this project. Many of the participants have grown in confidence and have a vibrant peer group to keep the support going. *Food Plymouth* is looking to develop new opportunities and projects as a living legacy from *GCA* to make the city even more fruitful and flavoursome. We know there will be a need for more community growers and the *GCA* year has started the process of creating a bank of people who might step up and facilitate activities and collaborate to help design new projects.

Plymouth is one of eight places in the UK to win a place on the National Trust and Heritage Fund [Future Parks Accelerator](#). Within this, the Plymouth *Green Estates Management Solutions (GEMS)* project is exploring how Plymouth can bring a new way of thinking to supporting and protecting the future of its parks and green spaces. One strand of the *GEMS* project is *Enrich*, focusing on how social enterprise and community business approaches can be used to find positive solutions to sustaining the city's green infrastructure. Plymouth's ability to innovate when it comes to doing things differently is nationally recognised. Being the UK's first Social Enterprise City is part of this. Often described as 'businesses for good', social enterprises – including Food Plymouth CIC - trade whilst at the same time helping to create solutions for issues such as health, well-being and the environment.

Phase 1 of the *Enrich* programme in the Autumn of 2019 brought together 40 'experts' over the course of six days to learn, discuss, do and decide together about enterprising approaches to Plymouth's green spaces and how they are managed. The 'experts' included specialists in social enterprise, park users, residents and communities, as well as council staff. The programme comprised a fun and inspiring set of ideas workshops, expert seminars, site visits, live project development and social events.

Many of the *GCA* growers participants engaged in the *Enrich* programme. *GCA* project manager Tess Wilmot and Claire Turbutt of *Thrive Plymouth*, participated in the programme too. Growers' inputs into the programme showing how this new way of working can work included Gia and Laura, sharing their experience of setting up [Snapdragons](#) on council land. Everyone was really encouraged by this story of adaptation and being more creative in the use of the green spaces. Helen took part too and during the autumn of 2019 *Adelaide Street Angels* managed to get permission to use small areas of council land to garden together and make a positive impact on their own street.

An *Enrich* programme visit to a community growing project in Cornwall called [Newquay Community Orchard](#) was very useful to see how this inspiring initiative had become so much more than just an orchard. We can all now see the potential for new exciting opportunities on land belonging to the City council to create win-win solutions to the challenges of caring for these green spaces. We look forward to being part of what develops from this exciting start ...

Summary

Growing Community Abundance (GCA) in numbers:

- Eight planning meetings with community growers to design delivery activities
- 27 community events – Gatherings, Abundance on Tour and skills sharing workshops
- 12 community gardens encouraged and supported to open to the public in July 2019
- Nine growers mentored and supported
- Numerous GCA growers undertaking new voluntary activities
- Five GCA growers obtaining some paid work from the project
- Approximately 40 GCA growers actively involved with events and activities
- Many more growers dipping in and out of the events and activities, thereby finding out how to engage more effectively in their local community growing spaces
- 20+ organizations involved, including: *Plymouth City Council - Thrive Plymouth, Poole Farm and Efford Library; Plymouth Community Homes Housing Association; Routeways; Plymouth Time Banks; Huxhams Cross Biodynamic Farm; Plants for a Future; Vital Seeds; Pollenize CIC; Light Bulb Fantastic; Edible Churchyards; Plymouth Community Orchards*; allotments associations and ‘friends of’ groups.
- The [Growing Community Abundance film](#) was produced and shared

GCA has been an amazing collaborative project which lives on in a resource-bank of friendships, shared knowledge, improved skills and increased confidence. Connectivity between the growers and the community growing groups has been strengthened. The *Growing Community Abundance* Facebook group is a useful focus for maintaining and expanding this sharing and connectedness in the context of Food Plymouth’s Sustainable Food Places journey. GCA therefore continues to live and breathe.

One of GCA’s outcomes was that we raised £220 at the seasonal gatherings and community events. This supported two people on low incomes to take part in the 12-day permaculture course in Stonehouse in early 2020 at the subsidised price of £165 each rather than the normal £275 - £395 per person. This capacity building is therefore part of GCA’s legacy. There are plans to run more permaculture courses in the future to help empower more people with the design skills and people care knowledge to enable resilient growing projects in and around the city.

As we write this report – during the 2020 Covid-19 virus lockdown – we know that these community gardens and growing spaces have become special focal points for people to explore and appreciate during their allotted exercise times in their local area. We have also found far more people starting to grow their own food, often for the first time. Many of our growers are being asked by friends and community members for gardening advice. The growers are sharing their knowledge generously. For example, Helen has started a new venture as [Gardener in Residence](#) and has made some charming films to share her enthusiasm and skills with people on low incomes just starting to grow their own food in urban areas.

Impacts and Legacy

City-Wide and Strategic Partnerships

The Food Plymouth *Growing Community Abundance* (GCA) project brought together a cohort of community growers. We encouraged these people to join the 40 volunteers on the **GEMS / Enrich** programme which is proactively involving community groups in caring for council-owned land (see page 19).

The GCA cohort also actively engaged in **Thrive Plymouth's** *Connecting People through Food* initiative, notably the *Spaces and Places for Food* project (please see feedback from Claire Tubutt page 14).

Growing Community Abundance participants are now engaging with - and in some cases leading - emerging collaborative initiatives around food and growing in the city. *Food Plymouth* is a key player in the design and implementation of several of these projects. This feeds into *Food Plymouth's* drive towards the [Sustainable Food Places](#) silver award

Neighbourhood and Project Assets

As mentioned earlier in this report, the *Food Plymouth Growing Community Abundance* (GCA) project has created a resource by mapping the community gardens, orchards and growing spaces across the city. This co-created map is a wonderful asset, showing people their nearest community growing spaces – community gardens, orchards, green spaces with fruit and nuts and other spaces to forage for wild food.

GCA has also built up a bank of people with skills in gardening, people care and facilitation, thereby meeting identified needs in the city. For example, it is fantastic that our smallest community growing space, [Cattedown Community Waste Ground Gardens](#) has been really influential by sharing how Sam and Andy have involved local residents on the street by setting up a composting system for kitchen waste to provide compost for the garden. Rose, Jade and Rachel, from [Devonport Park Activity Centre](#), adopted and adapted this into their own composting initiative, informed by the shared learning. One of the most dynamic projects emerging from GCA growers is a new initiative in **North Stonehouse** where individuals and groups have collaborated to transform their area. GCA grower Gin from *Seeds n Feeds* is leading on this with other active residents. The work includes a growing scheme partnering with residents in *Sovereign Housing Association* run sheltered accommodation. This initiative enjoys funding from *Plymouth Octopus Project (POP+)*. The recently opened *Talk Shop*, providing a meeting space and focus for the community, has had to close due to the Covid-19 lockdown. However, the space has large sunny west facing windows, so it has been transformed into a greenhouse to raise plants for the new project. (Please see Gin's feedback on page 15.)

Another new community gardening group set up during 2019 is **Adelaide Street Angels** in Stonehouse with *Growing Community Abundance* (GCA) grower Helen and a group of local residents. The connectivity and support of GCA and *Thrive Plymouth* has helped this inspiring small project to flourish, along with a modest amount of funding from the *Plymouth*

Octopus Project (POP+) Street to Scale experimental small grants scheme. Through GCA and *Thrive Plymouth* the City council has become more open to working with community gardening groups. This has made it easier for *Adelaide Street Angels* to adopt various planters in the street and planted up neglected areas. Litter picks have taken place regularly, along with gardening sessions and community events with local residents.

Personal Growth

On a personal level, *Growing Community Abundance (GCA)* has created numerous connections between community growers from across the city. Friendships have been made, resources have been shared and skills learned. Co-designing and co-delivering the project was vital to the successes, with community growers being involved in planning the events and leading activities. GCA growers have also progressed into voluntary and paid work roles through the project.

An example of such progression is Rachael, who came to the inaugural GCA gathering in March 2019 at *Routeways Devonport Park Activity Centre*. This was the first time we had met Rachael. Through this she met Jade, one of our GCA growers, who helped to organize the event at *Routeways* where she works. Through this connection, Rachael started volunteering at *Routeways*. This went well and led to Rachael being offered part-time paid work at the Activity Centre later in the year. Rachael worked with Jade and Rose at the Centre and helped the young people there to form a new group called ***Growing Together***. They grew fruit and vegetables, cooked food for sale and made birdboxes to sell. Their stall at the *GCA Autumn Abundance* Gathering and *All Ways Apples Festival* was a wonderful addition to both events and they enjoyed themselves too.

Another positive outcome is Sam from *Cattedown Community Waste Ground Gardens* who we also met for the first time at the GCA launch event in March. During the Open Community Gardens month in July, Sam and her husband Andy opened their own garden and organised a tour of the nearby community garden. She then attended some of the other open community gardens, including *Keyham Green Places*. This led to her getting involved in the *Keyham Green Places* project, notably having her own allotment area and helping in the community garden too.

A key element of the GCA project was encouraging and supporting the growers to move into facilitation and leadership roles. This required the GCA project manager to step back and also to share paid work opportunities. By way of illustration, Shareen helped to facilitate the community outreach stands at Poole Farm, Freedom Park and Hope Festival; Rachael and Laura designed and organized the whole of the Efford Valley summer event in the community orchard; and Helen, Tom and Gin organized the GCA stand at the *All Ways Apples Festival*. In addition, Jenny designed and delivered creative learning activities for all ages for the *GCA Autumn Abundance* event, *All Ways Apples Festival* and the *GCA Celebration*. The growers were paid for performing these roles where applicable.

Another example of sharing paid work opportunities was a Christmas wreath making workshop in Efford which was offered to the growers. Michelle, a permaculture grower who

had been to the permaculture gathering and joined the GCA Facebook group, ran this workshop very successfully and was paid for her work.

Covid-19 Resilience

Some community gardens have remained open to the public during the Covid-19 lockdown, even if they cannot hold events. These green spaces have been a haven for people to visit during their daily exercise walks.

The *Growing Community Abundance* (GCA) growers are demonstrating energy and creativity, finding new ways of managing social distancing and planning for future events where these are possible. Happily, the *Horticultural Therapy Trust* remains active, working safely within the social distancing rules and providing lots of fresh produce while continuing to be a safe and healing place for those who need such sanctuary.

The GCA community growers are also becoming more skilled with digital technology, engaging in online communication and learning how to facilitate online learning. For example, the last five days of a 12 day permaculture course in Plymouth were conducted via Zoom, along with some 'virtual' foraging sessions. Some of the growing groups are using WhatsApp to communicate and GCA grower as Helen has been making films and sharing them online. Through this medium, Helen as ['Gardener in Residence'](#) is enabling people in challenging circumstances to grow food for themselves and others. The beneficiaries of this initiative are often people who are new to gardening, trying to grow produce in cramped urban settings and who may be short of resources, notably disposable income.

North Stonehouse residents been very creative, adapting the *Talk Shop*, a new community space, into a nursery for plants, some of which have been given to people who are having to 'shield' in local sheltered housing accommodation.



Shaping future health and fruitfulness - pruning an apple tree in Efford Valley

Conclusion

The year of *Growing Community Abundance (GCA)* was one of growth – growing friendships, connections, knowledge and skills.

Co-design, co-delivery, collaboration and mentoring have been hallmarks of the project, shaping it and making it relevant to the needs of the growers, *Food Plymouth*, partner organisations and the wider stakeholder group.

The *GCA* network continues to expand with new collaborations flourishing and with much cross-pollination between the growing projects. The *GCA* Facebook group has become a focus and a way to share and communicate with its 65 members, thereby adding to *GCA*'s living legacy.

Plymouth is certainly in a much stronger position than it was at the beginning of the project: *GCA* has increased the knowledge, confidence and capacity of the community growers who took part. They have shared their skills and learned new ways of relating to others, collaborating and achieving positive impacts. *GCA* has become a network in itself, connecting community growers with each other, progression routes and opportunities for voluntary and paid work.

The *GCA* community of growers are giving Plymouth some of the capacity and collective wisdom needed to adapt to many emerging opportunities, including the challenge of redesigning how we think, feel and work after the Covid-19 pandemic. The creativity and relationships emerging from this year of abundance have created fertile ground for community growing projects and future collaborations.

Looking forward, Food Plymouth will continue seek ways to support abundance, mentoring and growing the growers, enabling them to be a resource with the skills and capacity to continue to collaborate and achieve positive outcomes. As we write this report in May 2020, we are already exploring new initiatives and collaborations, including an extended strategic alliance between *Food Plymouth*, *Plymouth City Council* and other key partners, which will help to sustain the *Growing Community Abundance* movement.

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This report was authored by project manager Tess Wilmot and Food Plymouth CIC director Ian Smith, with contributions from the GCA community growers and representatives of partner organisations. www.foodplymouth.org

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