

## Vegetables at Olden Garden - update from Lynne - Spring 2021

### **Lockdown gardening**

During the first lockdown, when schools were closed, Lynne and a couple of other members involved in the Olden Garden Vegetable Patch, organised seed kits, compost and pots for children, with a special focus on those who do not have their own garden. Simple instructions were provided, ongoing communication took place via 'flowerpot notes' or by email. The project was a big success! One of the children involved created such an impressive balcony vegetable garden that he won Silver in the Children's section at Islington In Bloom.

### **A new partnership**

Since then, the kids lockdown gardening project has gone from strength to strength. Although schools are open again, some children are having to self isolate; others have definitely got the gardening bug! We're delighted to have a new partnership with Victoria at Growing Urban <https://growingurban.com/> – who kindly provide a selection of free seeds for the kits. Olden Garden continues to offer pots (we have masses to spare) and compost (for those who need this). Charming, child friendly seed packs were specially designed for us by Victoria and include windowsill food seeds e.g. cress, coriander, pea shoots and salad, together with inspiring ideas e.g. growing edible cress animals in egg boxes. As well as making the seed kits available to Olden Garden members, they were also available at the Mayton Street planter, to reach kids in N7 .



### **Seed kits for the food hub**

We also made seed kits especially for families using the Elizabeth House food bank, in response to a request from Octopus <https://www.octopuscommunities.org.uk/news-and-updates-page/> . Kits went to families with primary school age children, none of whom have a garden. In total, during the year of lockdowns, we distributed 38 seed kits to local families via Olden Garden and at the Mayton Street planter, plus 20 for pre-schoolers at Bennett Court nursery (N7) and 25 for the Elizabeth House food hub (N4)



### **Raised bed renovations**

Thanks to the hard work of volunteers Vinny, Cam, Anita, Helena and Miranda, plus children, we were able to replace four of the existing raised vegetable beds with new ones. Made of reconditioned railway sleepers, they are wonderfully strong and look set to last a hundred years or more. We also repaired some of the smaller wooden planters and have plans to do more repairs/replacements over the coming months.

### **Planting and soil improvement**

Over the winter, we continued to improve the soil by burying vegetable food scraps; worm density in the raised beds has improved noticeably. Salad and winter greens have done well in the greenhouse and spring seed sowing is well underway. Already coming up are garlic, leeks, peas, rainbow chard, chicory, lettuce, rocket. As is traditional, we plant potatoes at Easter. We also grow snapdragons, cornflowers, sweet peas, poppies and lemon bergamot - all from seed - to attract pollinators to the vegetable beds. In a new initiative to support local families yearning to grow, some of the edible plants grown at Olden Garden will be given to children walking home from school at the end of each term: using the Mayton Street planters as a hub for distribution and advice.

Lynne, March 2021