



# OrganicLea

Community · Food · Growing

OrganicLea grows and sells food in north-east London, and helps others do the same.

Based at Hawkwood Plant Nursery, our 12-acre organic market garden and wildlife haven in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, we help people take part in a better food system and reconnect with the land, food and each other.



OrganicLea began in 2001, with the idea that more food can and should be grown locally, in London – and that it's better to work with others than alone. We are a not-for-profit workers' co-operative, managing our work ourselves and feeding any surplus back into our projects.

We aim to:

- Improve the local food economy: increase access to sustainably-grown, local food
- Build community resilience: enable people to connect, learn and build their skills and confidence for work and life
- Work co-operatively: in our relationships with others and internally, creating meaningful livelihoods together
- Inspire wider change: through the connection between local food and global justice.

We do this by:

**Growing Food:** we grow vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers, involving volunteers, trainees, apprentices and course students in the work. We sell produce and some processed goods to our own outlets and to around 20 restaurants, cafés and shops. We also sell plants to help other growers and community groups. We operate a weekly box scheme and two market stalls, selling our own produce and produce supplied by other local growers, farmers in East Anglia, plus some UK-wide and European produce.

**Growing People:** three days per week at our market garden, people come to volunteer on a wide range of horticultural and other tasks, to learn skills and improve wellbeing. We are open to all and take referrals from a number of agencies and partners.

We run a variety of training courses (including accredited level 1 and level 2 gardening courses, an apprenticeship, traineeships and programmes for young people with special educational needs or in alternative education provision.

**Growing Community:** we support community gardens on a range of sites around north-east London, including garden design, volunteering programmes and training courses. We offer family activities and community engagement through workshops, activities and tours at our site and at other local community events.



## Working for change

We are proud to be members of the Landworkers' Alliance, a grassroots union representing farmers, growers, and land-based workers. We joined with them to call for post-Brexit agricultural policy that is better for small-scale farmers and the environment. We featured in the film *In our Hands*, made by the Landworkers' Alliance to highlight the way we and other UK small-scale producers are working to create a more just and sustainable food system.

Find out about the *In our Hands* film and how to watch it:  
<https://inourhands.film/>



Landworkers' Alliance post-Brexit policy launch event at DEFRA, 'A place at the table', April 2017. Photo: Rohan Ayinde

## Out of the classroom, into the garden

This was our second year working with Waltham Forest College's special educational needs (SEN) provision, supporting students with disabilities to learn, enjoy and explore nature and food growing.

Each week the class and staff at WFC bring their wonderful sense of community to Hawkwood, where together we grow food, cook, make apple juice and enjoy being outside throughout the year. This year's eight students were all delighted to complete 'Growing Produce from Seed' AQA certificates.



## Significant successes/areas of development include:

- We completed a major refurbishment programme at Hawkwood Nursery, funded by Power to Change and Lush. As well as full glasshouse renovation we now have an improved classroom, better office, storage and bathroom facilities, and a kitchen that allows us to do cooking activities with our participants.
- We developed a new wellbeing measurement tool in partnership with the University of Essex, using funding from the City Bridge Trust. It enables us to show more clearly the wellbeing benefits of community gardening.
- City Bridge Trust funded our eco-audit, which found we were one of the most environmentally responsible organisations they had ever audited. In many areas we make a net positive impact on the environment, rather than damaging it.
- We undertook a review of our training and work experience provision to plan strategically for growth in future years.
- We completed our three-year Farmstart programme (funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation) and continued to support the development of Wolves Lane (Haringey), Pasteur Gardens (Enfield) and other sites as commercial growing spaces.
- We used funding from Power to Change's Bright Ideas programme to develop the idea of care gardening – supporting people unable to look after their

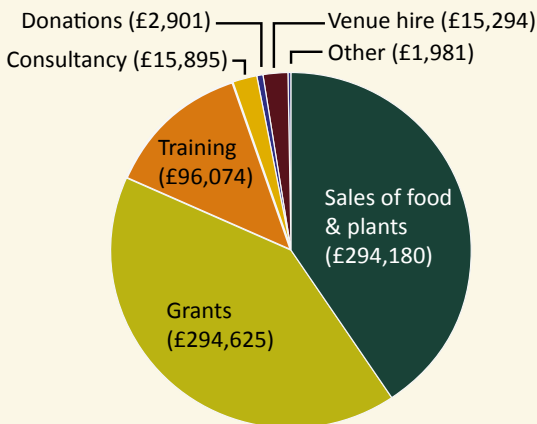
own gardens, or involving residents in gardening activity in care home gardens.

- We continued to receive support from G W Cadbury Trust for our volunteering and training programme, creating tailored work-based placements. We employed an Apprentice Grower with funds from the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust.

## Financial Report

OrganicLea's total income for 2017-18 was £720,950. Total expenditure was £753,670, ending the year with a net loss (after interest and tax) of £32,720. The loss was expected as we made investments in our infrastructure, and total funds carried forward were £160,442, of which £11,658 is tangible fixed assets. Income increased substantially on the previous year, with self-generated income increasing by 26% and making up close to 60% of our turnover, as well as an increase in grant funding for refurbishment work.

## 2017/18 income streams



## 2017-18 review

Over the course of the year:

- We produced over 21 tonnes of organic produce with a value of just over £60,000, distributing it alongside about £130,000 worth of produce from small-scale organic growers and wholesalers. Our box scheme grew by 29%.
- Tomatoes were 'top of the crops', both our heaviest yielders and our highest value plant, a record-breaking £56.25/m<sup>2</sup>.
- We worked with over 170 volunteers, who contributed an estimated total of 12,000 volunteer hours over the year.
- We trained 156 adult learners, 68 young people with Special Educational Needs or in alternative provision, and 70 primary school pupils. 90 students gained City and Guilds accreditation and 76 gained AQA accreditation.
- We welcomed over 1,500 visitors to our Hawkwood site, with an average visitor attendance of 138 on our 11 monthly open days.
- We worked across Waltham Forest and beyond, setting up and looking after community gardens and running food growing sessions in housing estates, community centres and public spaces.
- We continued to be active members of the Community Food Growers Network and the Landworkers' Alliance, working in solidarity with our fellow land workers in London, around the UK and across the globe.
- We featured in the Museum of London's *The City is Ours* exhibition, appeared on BBC London's *Inside Out* programme and wrote a piece about allotments for *The Guardian*, as well as receiving local news coverage.

**12,000**

estimated total of  
volunteer hours  
worked

**21**

tonnes of  
organic produce  
we grew

**8**

number of  
schools we  
partnered  
with

**1,500**

visitors to  
our Hawkwood site

**1**

**million**

litres of rainwater  
we harvested

*'Coming to  
Hawkwood is very  
healing. It occupies your  
mind. You're focused on  
something and connecting  
with people you can  
relate to.'*

*Leroy, volunteer*

## Find out more

### Box Scheme and Market Stalls

Fresh, sustainably-grown fruit and veg every week in your neighbourhood. Find out more on our website, email [box@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:box@organiclea.org.uk) or call 020 8524 4994.

### Produce Distribution

We sell to a range of restaurants, cafés and shops in London. Contact [tsouni@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:tsouni@organiclea.org.uk) or call 020 8524 4994 for more information.

### Training

We offer a range of structured placements and formal training courses, including accredited horticulture courses offered in partnership with Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service. Email [courses@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:courses@organiclea.org.uk) for more information.

### Volunteering

We have a vibrant and diverse volunteer community. Email [volunteering@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@organiclea.org.uk) if you would like to volunteer. Email [info@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:info@organiclea.org.uk) to refer someone or organise a programme specific to your group.

### Community Food Growing

OrganicLea supports food growing and gardening projects in the community. Contact [info@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:info@organiclea.org.uk) to find out more.

### Schools and young people

We can offer schools visits, activities within schools, teacher training and programmes for young people. We also offer tailored programmes for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and in alternative provision at our site and within schools. Email [schools@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:schools@organiclea.org.uk) for more information.

### Plants

Our main plant season is from April to June, with winter plants for sale in August and September. Contact [plants@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:plants@organiclea.org.uk) or go to our website for more details.

### Donations

If you'd like to support our work financially, please get in touch. Contact [info@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:info@organiclea.org.uk) for more information.

## OrganicLea

Founded in February 2001  
as a workers' co-operative  
Not-for-profit Company Limited by  
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