



# ORGANICLEA

**Community · Food · Growing**

**Annual Review 2020-2021**

OrganicLea grows and sells food in north-east London, and helps others to 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 Londoners to connect, learn and build skills and confidence for work and life. We're a not-for-profit workers' co-operative, managing our work ourselves and feeding any surplus back into our projects. We work for change in the food system locally and globally, in solidarity with peasant farmers and campaigners, taking action for ecological and just farming systems.



### **We do this by:**

**Growing Food:** we grow vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers on our market garden site, Hawkwood Plant Nursery, involving volunteers, trainees, apprentices and course students in the work. We sell produce and some processed goods to our own outlets and to restaurants, cafes and shops in north-east London. We sell plants through our own outlets and to individuals and community groups. We're an accredited Better Food Trader, operating a weekly box scheme and farm stall, selling our own produce and produce supplied by farmers in East Anglia, Kent and Sussex, plus some from further afield in the UK and Europe.

**Growing People:** we run a volunteer programme at our market garden, open to all including referrals from a number of partners who work with people facing disadvantage, and supported volunteering for people with higher support needs. We offer a variety of training opportunities, including accredited Level 1 and Level 2 gardening courses, an apprenticeship, traineeships and programmes for young people with special educational needs or excluded from mainstream education.

**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 and activities and tours at our site and at other local community events.



## Impact of Covid-19

As an essential food business we have stayed open throughout the pandemic, but had to swiftly make changes to our work, ensuring safety whilst also responding to hugely increased demand for local plants and produce. It was essential to maintain our volunteering programme as an integral part of our operations but we completely rearranged it to keep interactions safe. We supported many people whose work had disappeared to stay active and connected in uncertain times by volunteering with us. We were also very conscious of regular volunteers including vulnerable people who were unable to attend site, and we stayed in touch with them while they were absent. We adapted our adult learning courses to distance learning, and adapted our box scheme to manage its rapid growth, including delivery support for those shielding or isolating and produce donations to community food hubs.

*"During the pandemic, to be able to work with the land has been invaluable and it shifted my perspective on how important it is to be aware of our environment and take care of it"*

*Organiclea volunteer*



## Plants to the people

In response to huge demand for food growing, and with our usual open day plant sales closed, we quickly set up a home delivery system for food and pollinator-friendly plant boxes and compost delivered to local residents. Thanks to generous funders we were also able to deliver free plants to sheltered housing schemes, residents in supported independent living, a council run care home, a dementia centre, local estates and a women's refuge.

Alongside the plants we ran various online sessions to offer growing advice and the opportunity to meet virtually with other growers. Supporting connection to people and nature has felt vital in our response to the pandemic.

*"I have been very down during lockdown but my new gardening hobby has helped me cope. These gardening sessions made me feel that I wasn't alone or isolated."*

*"I liked learning new things about gardening in a friendly and supportive group. I felt that everyone's contribution was welcomed as well as valued."*



## Thank you to all who take part in and support our work

We are forever thankful for all the people who flow in and out of Organiclea's life bringing their energy to showing up, volunteering, learning, sharing skills, buying produce, plants and support from us, and so much more.

We are also grateful to the grant funders who supported the following activities during the year:

- Enabling us to help people impacted by Covid with accredited learning opportunities, monthly outdoor celebration meals and opportunities to connect for those most isolated, thanks to support from the Building Connections Fund and our Ready Health Eat project.
- Adapting our work in response to the Covid-19 pandemic thanks to London Funders Emergency Response funding.
- Providing employment and enterprise set-up training through an ESFA Community Training grant
- Preparing planning application for new buildings at Hawkwood Nursery and at Wolves Lane Nursery, as part of our Market Garden City project funded by the Greater London Authority.
- Completing our BeeWild project funded by Heritage Lottery, with our Hawkwood growing site reaching its full potential as a wildlife haven and community resource.
- Partnering with Ubele Initiative and Land in our Names on the Rootz into Food Growing project, exploring the barriers Black and Minoritised growers face to gaining livelihoods in horticultural enterprise.
- Broadening and deepening our training offer to support those with ill mental health, recently unemployed and those isolating or shielding, with support from the UnLtd Social Enterprise Support Fund.
- Exploring how we can have better representation within our cooperative of the diverse communities we live and work in, and actively challenge structural racism and other forms of oppression.



# Financial Review

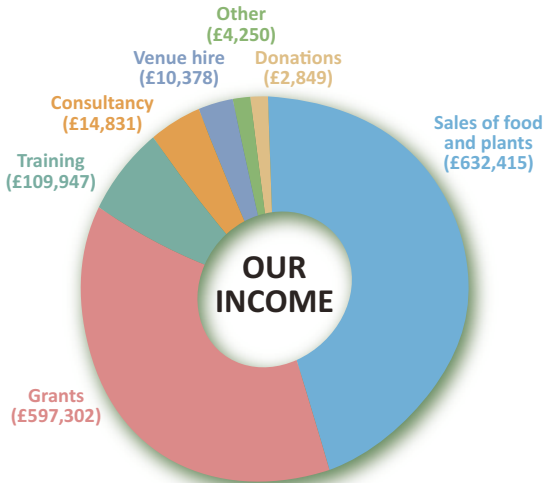
**Income:** £1,371,972

**Expenditure:** £1,336,859

**Net surplus:** £35,113 (£30,189 relates to restricted funds)

**Total funds carried forward:** £204,646 including £18,178 fixed assets

Our income was 50% higher than the previous year, with self-generated income making up 56% of our turnover.



## 2020-21 in numbers

**9,833kg** of organic produce grown with a value of **£63,078**

Box scheme grew by **40%**, average of **1,057 bags** delivered each week by March 2021

We worked with over **300 volunteers** during the year

We enrolled **101 learners** onto our City and Guilds and **18** onto our NOCN accredited courses, and delivered AQAs to **131 learners**

Whilst some of our outreach work was suspended, we were able to continue working with **seven schools** to engage students with a range of activities including food growing, composting, biodiversity improvement, nature connection and enterprise skills

**970,000 litres** of rainwater harvested

Nearly **1,000 plants** distributed free to community settings

**11 tonnes** of CO<sub>2</sub> stored through our soil cultivation

## Find out more

### Box Scheme and Farm Stall

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 our mixed salad leaves to restaurants, cafes and shops in Hackney and Waltham Forest. We also offer a Kitchen Garden scheme for restaurants wanting to grow with us. For more information contact [dan@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:dan@organiclea.org.uk) or call **020 8524 4994**.

### Training

We offer a range of formal training courses, including accredited horticulture courses. 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 or do a structure placement with us; or if you would like to refer someone.

### 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 school 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 [laura@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:laura@organiclea.org.uk) for more information.

## Organiclea CIC

Founded in February 2001 as a workers' co-operative. Not-for-profit Company Limited by Guarantee (Community Interest Company), Number 05135926, VAT Reg 161 391029

**Registered office:** Hornbeam Centre, 458 Hoe Street, Walthamstow, London E17 9AH

**Growing site:** Hawkwood Plant Nursery, 115 Hawkwood Crescent, Chingford, London E4 7UH



[@organiclea](https://twitter.com/organiclea)



[facebook.com/Organiclea](https://facebook.com/Organiclea)



[organicleacommunitygrowers](https://www.instagram.com/organicleacommunitygrowers)

[www.organiclea.org.uk](http://www.organiclea.org.uk)