

# 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 sell plants too 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**

On 3 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 in partnership with Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service), 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.



## Leaf it Out

OrganicLea has developed a strong partnership with Inspire alternative provision school in Hackney to work with young people who are disengaged from mainstream education. Over the year students come to Hawkwood Nursery to grow produce which they sell from their own enterprise *Leaf it Out*. As well as gaining AQA accreditations and generating an income of £480, this year's group all agreed that they wanted to be further involved in planning and growing in the garden.

*"I learnt lots and the project was cool, it is good for my CV too"*

William, *Leaf it Out* participant



## Walthamgrow

Alok and Mathilde are the first graduates of our Salad Start traineeship, specialising in grow-to-sell salad production. They set up their enterprise *Walthamgrow*, taking on a neglected garden and developing a direct relationship to grow salad and veg for local restaurant Marmelo Kitchen.





## Review of 2016-17

Over the course of the year:

- We produced over 8 tonnes of organic produce with a value of just over £45,000, distributing it alongside nearly £70,000 worth of produce from small-scale organic growers and wholesalers. Our box scheme grew by 30%.
- We worked with over 160 volunteers, with 80 making a regular commitment. Volunteers contributed an estimated total of 11,400 volunteer hours over the year.
- We trained 225 students (124 from schools and 101 adult learners). Of these, 70 participants attended City and Guilds programmes, with a 95% success rate, and 96 achieved AQA accreditation.
- We played an active part in the Community Food Growers' Network and the Landworkers' Alliance.
- We saw an increase in the popularity of our monthly Open Days, welcoming an average of 120 visitors each time.
- We partnered with 8 schools to deliver structured programmes to over 120 pupils, and hosted 14 school visits to the site.
- We facilitated 6 community projects, supporting garden installation and training at 3 housing estates.
- Of our 48 key crops, 21 showed their best ever yields. Tomatoes, an iconic Lea Valley crop, were both our heaviest yielders and our highest value plant, at 8kg/m<sup>2</sup> and £33.71/m<sup>2</sup> respectively.
- We harvested an estimated 1.3 million litres of rainwater, just one of our efforts to minimise our environmental impact.

**8** Number of tonnes of organic produce we grew

**50** Number of structured volunteer learning placements

**107** Number of varieties of leaf in our salad mix

**11,400**  
An estimated total of volunteer hours worked

**8** Number of schools we partnered with

**55** Number of cultivars in our World of Chillies collection



*"It's the people you work with. We are all different, but we all accept each other as we are... we all work as one, like one big family."*

Sandra, volunteer at Hawkwood

## Significant areas of development in 2016-17:

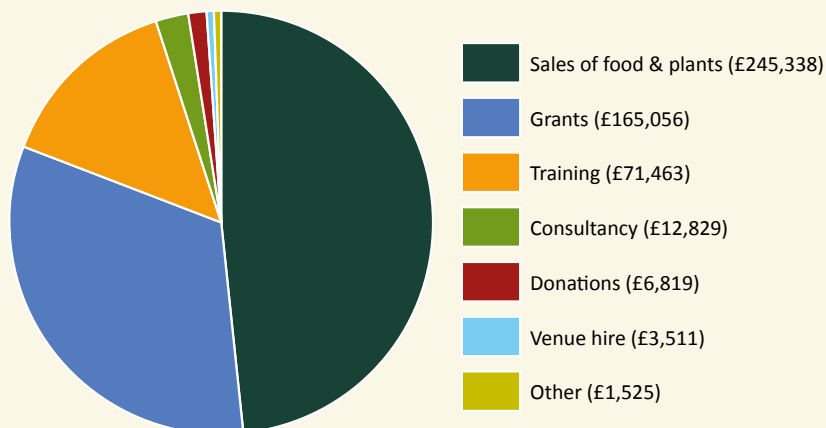
- Increased numbers of participants received recognition of skills and personal development achievements through volunteering. This work was supported by the Barrow Cadbury Trust.
- We developed new partnerships with alternative education providers.
- We began to expand our health and wellbeing work, using funds from the City Bridge Trust to monitor its impact. The first pilot was a gardening club for people with dementia.
- Our Farmstart programme, funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, supported new workers' co-operative *London Grown* to get started and establish a growing site. Then we created a consortium with them and others to take on the lease of Wolves Lane nursery in Tottenham.
- We began a major refurbishment programme at our site, funded by Power to Change. Our first priority was renovating the glasshouse, our prime growing space.
- With funding from the Big Potential programme we were able to improve our governance, financial management and measuring our impact.

## Financial Report

OrganicLea's income for 2016-17 was £506,541. Expenditure was £517,077, with a net operating deficit (after interest and tax) of £9,283. This was expected as we made investments in our infrastructure. Total funds carried forward were £193,162, of which £19,404 is fixed assets.

Income increased by 5% on the previous year, with self-generated income making up 65% of our turnover. We continue to strengthen our income generation so as to rely less on revenue grant funding.

## Our income sources 2016-17



## 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. For more information contact [danny@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:danny@organiclea.org.uk) or call 020 8524 4994

### 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. For more information email [courses@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:courses@organiclea.org.uk)

### Community Food Growing

OrganicLea supports food growing projects in the community. To find out more contact [info@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:info@organiclea.org.uk)

### Volunteering

We have a vibrant and diverse volunteer community. If you would like to volunteer, please email [volunteering@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@organiclea.org.uk)

To refer someone, or to organise a programme specific to your group, please email [info@organiclea.org.uk](mailto:info@organiclea.org.uk)

### 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)

### Plants

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

### Donations

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

## OrganicLea

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