

CRANBROOK COMMUNITY FOOD GARDEN

Berry Lane and Project Raindrop

2021-2024



CONTENTS

ABOUT CRANBROOK	01
BERRY LANE	03
PROJECT RAINDROP	14
IMPACT	21
LEARNINGS	24



ABOUT CCFG

Cranbrook Community Food Garden (CCFG) was established in 2009 by local residents, transforming a disused children's play area into a communal growing site for fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers. 17 fabulous years later, the site now contains 18 raised beds, a mini food forest, a shed, greenhouse, compost bays, wormeries, a pergola with a green roof, a frog pond, bird spa and bee mound.

CCFG's various awards - including a Level 5 - Outstanding rating at the London in Bloom Awards eight times between 2016-2024, category winners in 2024 for their special Environmental Challenge, and Best Garden for Wildlife - exemplify the garden's commitment to community engagement and sustainability so the Just Fact project offered an appealing opportunity to further enhance these aspects of the garden's activity.

The author of this report is Liam Williams, a member of CCFG since early 2020 and a voluntary campaigner and activist on a range of issues including social justice and sustainability.



WHAT WE DID

PROJECT RAINDROP

Key aims

- Increase rainwater harvesting in the garden
- Decrease tap-water usage
- Raise awareness about sustainability-related water issues

BERRY LANE

Key aims

- Plant fruit bushes outside the garden fence
- Provide free fruit to estate residents
- Beautify the area outside the garden
- Increase awareness of the garden (and community food growing in general) within the estate and wider community



THE STORY OF BERRY LANE

BEFORE



AFTER





BERRY

LANE

BERRY LANE

BERRY LANE

Common Nettle (Urtica dioica)

CRANBROOK COMMUNITY GARDEN

BERRY LANE E2 ORB

CRANBROOK COMMUNITY GARDEN
E2 ORB
BERRY LANE
2023



OUTREACH DAY IN ACTION



OUTREACH DAY

GETTING READY



OUTREACH DAY

PICK UP A PICK AXE



BUILDING THE PLANTERS



FILLING WITH SOIL



PLANTING DAY



THE FIRST SEASONS BERRIES



03
03



AUTUMN ON BERRY LANE



THE STORY OF PROJECT RAINDROP



Survey: Structures



Analysis: Element/Functions



Functions to consider:

- Irrigation (obvs)
- Reduce Waste
- Save Money
- Educate
- Integrate Community
- Practicalities / Space
- Aesthetics

Why is water capture important.

- Because of climate irregularities shown above
- Water scarcity is an issue even in UK, most of the public are unaware
- <https://www.edie.net/news/4f-Great-British-Rain-Paradox—Public-unaware-of-UK-s-water-scarcity/>

Design: Water Capture

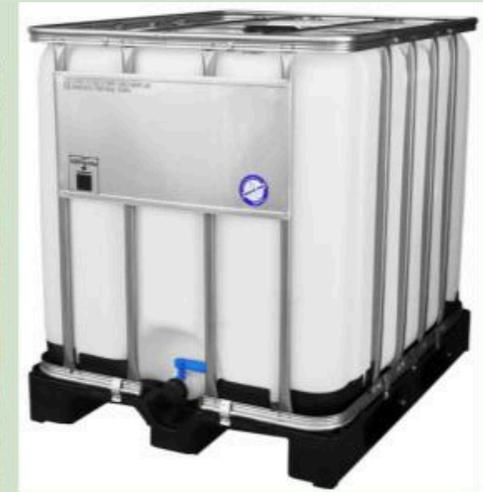
- **Suggestion: Add water capture to community centre building.**
- Roof surface area is approx 250m.
- No apparent slope so assuming 1/3 of rainwater runs off to drain pipes - potential annual capture of 50,000 litres per year.
- The challenge then is storage. Potentially large tanks of below spec could be stored at each side of community centre (use edges and margins - essentially a kind of zone 4 / 5.) Try for one winter and monitor inflow - potentially add more tanks as required.
- Tank costs £70 each. Labour/parts to adapt drain pipes approx £200. Would require council permission.
- Potential water yield 4000-8000 litres per year (40-80% of goal: £7-£14 per year)



Width - mm	1000
Height - mm	1163
Length - mm	1200
Capacity - Litres	1000



Preliminary ideas to improve CCFG's water system to make it more sustainable and increase rainwater harvest were provided in a permaculture design presentation created by project co-ordinator, Liam (slides from which are seen here).



The initial project aim was to install a large (1000-2000l) water tank by the community centre to harvest rainwater off the roof. This would provide a vast increase in rainwater harvest with minimal work required. The project co-ordinator managed to secure approval from the council's asset management team, however negotiations between CCFG and the community centre stalled in the early stages and the proposal had to be abandoned.



A new design was devised, centring upon upgrading the existing water butts and drainpipes on structures within the garden such as the shed and the greenhouse (see above) and building new roof structures within the garden including over the wormery area (see right).



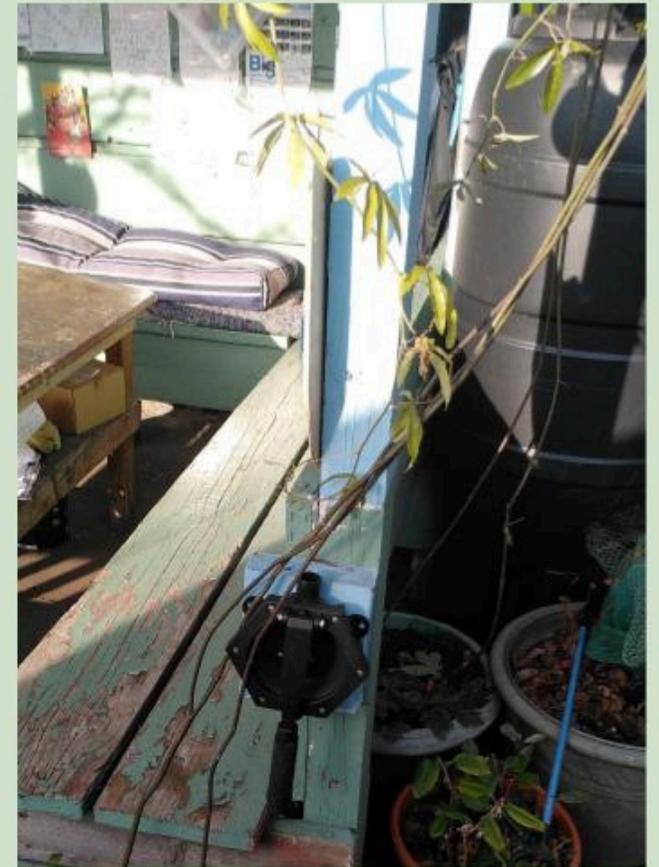
The old ~90l dustbin water butts on the shed and greenhouse were replaced by new 227 litre tanks.





The tank on the pergola was upgraded and a new 378 litre tank was installed (see left)

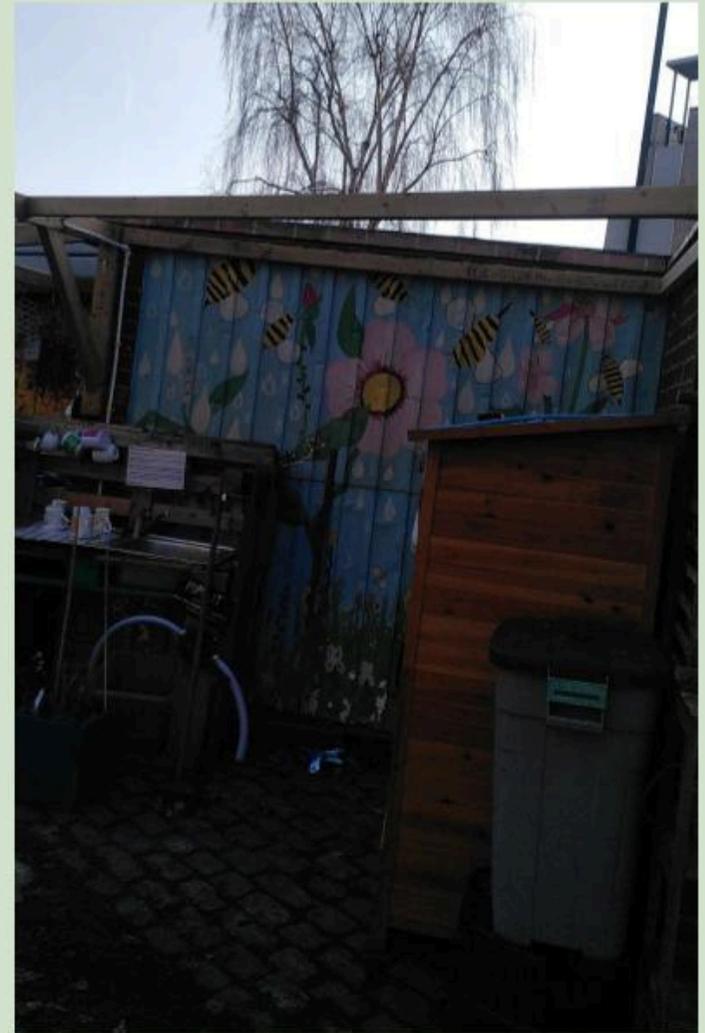
A hand pump will be attached to the new tank to allow gardeners to access harvested rainwater (see right)





A new roof structure and tank were installed over the wormery area, significantly increasing rainwater harvest capacity. (see left)

A second roof structure is under construction next to the first one. (see right)



IMPACT

INCREASED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Berry lane drew in more visitors and engagement; people are spending more time in the avenue and looking in on the garden. 84% of people surveyed agreed the garden seems more inviting following the work.

'Create engagement, involvement, and hopefully get people then coming in or just simply enjoying the fruits of our labour [...] There were a few events and occasions, as we were building Berry Lane or some of our events, like the birthday party where we were able to fully engage with the community.' Nicola, Berry Lane Project Co-Leader

'Every time I look out of my kitchen window, like people are looking at what's happening in the planters, or they're taking books from the library. It's definitely engaged people, more like people, are slowing down and stopping by the garden more' Lizzy, Chair & Treasurer

IMPACT ON VOLUNTEERS

People reflected that volunteering on the project led to personal growth, more commitment to the garden and deeper community engagement.

"When I volunteered to help with, the running the The Berry Lane project it kind of cemented my intentions of being more and more present within the running of Cranbrook rather than being a member that uses Cranbrook [...] it made me realize that I enjoy much more making sure that this place allows other people to come here and garden rather than do the gardening myself."

Nicola, Berry Lane Project Co-Leader



***'I think a lot of people have joined in on a more casual basis because we've been working outside in the Avenue'
- Laura, Head Gardener***

IMPACT CONT.

INCREASED ACCESS AND AWARENESS AROUND FRUITS GROWN

Fruit yield and community consumption have been too low to measure so far. But nonetheless there have been many valuable secondary outcomes, as well as the fact 73% of those surveyed are looking forward to picking fruit when it does appear, suggests a community can respond positively to an intention as much as an outcome.

Residents like to know what's growing in the boxes outside. And I think as the years go on and the fruits of our planting start to start to show, and people can actually pick the fruits off the trees 'they're like, oh, can you eat that? Oh, I've never heard of white currants.' So just little conversations like that.' - interview with Laura

Increased visibility led to more opportunities to educate the community about fruit and vegetable diversity and organic.

You can educate people by giving them a food they haven't tried before just on coming through the gate. It gives us an opportunity to mention organic. You know, that's an expensive commodity to a lot of people.' interview with Laura

IMPROVED AESTHETIC & NATURE CONNECTION

80% of people surveyed agreed the avenue is more attractive and 88% agreed that the changes to the avenue helped them feel more connected to nature.



“I like how colourful, playful that strip is, and how it's vibrant and tree-lined’ - Carmen, Garden Member”

IMPACT CONT...

INCREASED FOOD WASTE DONATIONS

Adding a bigger, more durable compost bin to Berry lane increased the volume of food waste donated to the garden. The garden has also added new Hot Bins to the garden, increasing their composting capacity from 300l to 2000l - increasing speed and effectiveness, and creating capacity for more food waste donations. The garden no longer needs to pause food waste collection in winter when the composting processes slow down, instead they keep taking food waste donations year round.

'For people that live in the area, the council is not providing a service for food waste [on the estate]. And they are very happy that we do and because of that. We are now forced to get bigger bins.'
Nicola, 'Berry Lane' Project Co-Leader

INCREASED BIODIVERSITY ON THE ESTATE

The planting of fruit bushes and the stumperies will support biodiversity on the estate

INCREASED RAINWATER HARVESTING

Project raindrop added 3.6 metres squared of roof area for rainwater harvesting. This has increased the garden's rainwater storage capacity from 767 litres to 2284 litres.

The full potential of the work to reduce mains water reliance will depend upon a behaviour change initiative to educate and encourage garden members to use butts and watering cans rather than the hosepipe - reflection from Liam

"We found other ways to use the avenue to provide services to the estate, such as the mini library and increasing the capacity for food waste collection"
- reflection from Project Coordinator



LEARNINGS

REFLECTIONS: VOLUNTEER-LED VS PAID COORDINATOR ROLE

The project was initially volunteer run, but volunteers lacked time for extensive community engagement activities & the organisation of projects - which drew time and energy away from the actual gardening that is the garden's primary purpose. CCFG decided to pay someone to co-ordinate the project which helped, but the project still required input/ support from volunteers.

"it seemed to involve a massive amount of administration [...] And so it was kind of like extra to [...] make sure that everything that you need is available for the time drawing in people and members and people and non-members to help us fulfill those extra tasks [...] People who donate the money shouldn't require anything more than some photographs, as evidence that the project you requested the money for has been made. Beyond that, door knocking, standing in the street, asking people questions, getting them to fill in a survey... don't really like it [...] it's work. It's administration. It's for another purpose [...] it shouldn't be filtering all the way down to people who have volunteered to come and garden to become administrators."

Laura, Head Gardener



LEARNINGS CONT.

CCFG MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

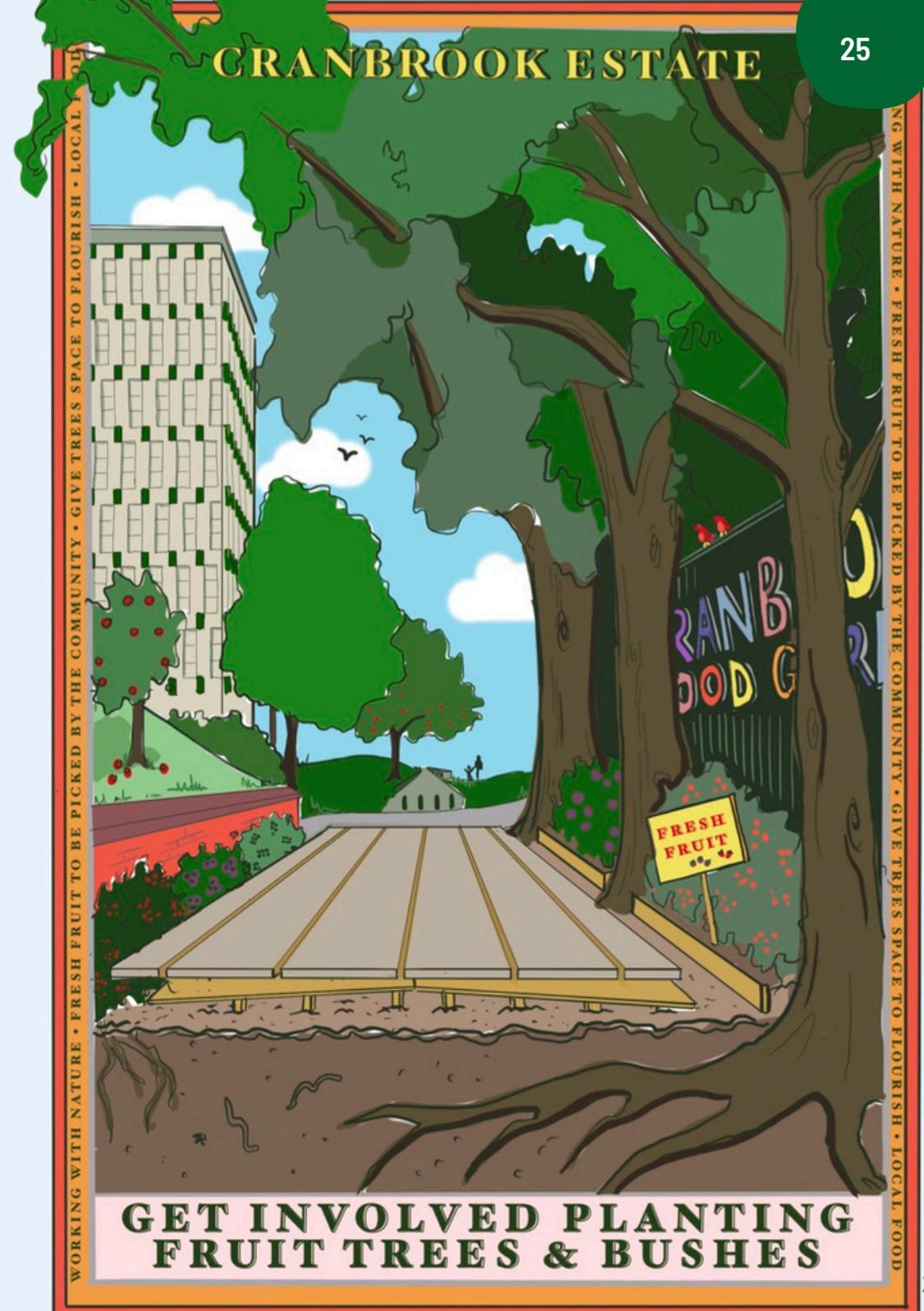
Of CCFG members there was much more interest in activities that were more hands on and social. The irrigation project was quite technical, and got far less interest than their fruit growing project.

'There was no uptake for participation in Project Raindrop from Garden Membership. Perhaps a feeling it was just technical work for an outside contractor to complete. Reflection from Liam

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Being more visible and having a regular presence helps with building community connections and opportunities for engagement, but hasn't yet led to more people on the estate volunteering in the garden. However lots of people are using the bin for food waste.

"Maybe they just aren't that many people interested in gardening. Maybe that's if we were able to do a survey and just ask that question, you know, are you interested in gardening? [...] Maybe it's about like finding out what [other] service could we offer [to increase engagement]." - Lizzy, Chair & Treasurer



LEARNINGS CONT.

OBTAINING PERMISSIONS

Obtaining permissions can add delays to a project, and needs to be thought about in the project timeline. It was a lengthy and ultimately unfruitful process trying to get rainwater harvesting system on the community centre roof. In this situation CCFG were able to adapt and find an alternative solution.

'Getting permission for what seemed to be a relatively simple adaptation to a publicly owned building for the purposes of rainwater harvesting turned out to be years-long process involving multiple contacts at local authorities and frustrating disagreements with other community representatives. It was quite surprising and disconcerting to discover just how difficult it could be to make a simple change to local infrastructure for the sake of sustainability'.

Reflection from Liam





Cranbrook ☺
-presents-
BERRY LANE
FREE BERRIES
Activities
Repairing berry bushes
Community plant sale
Cakes-in-progress for the proudest gardeners
HONEY BERRY PLANT SALE!
\$22 ONLY!
AND MORE!!!