



Burdett Foundation



# Maydwell Gardens

Nurturing Food, Nature and Community for  
a Greener, Stronger Future



JUST FACT LAB PROJECT 2023-2025



POWERED BY  
**Wen.**

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# “Introduction”



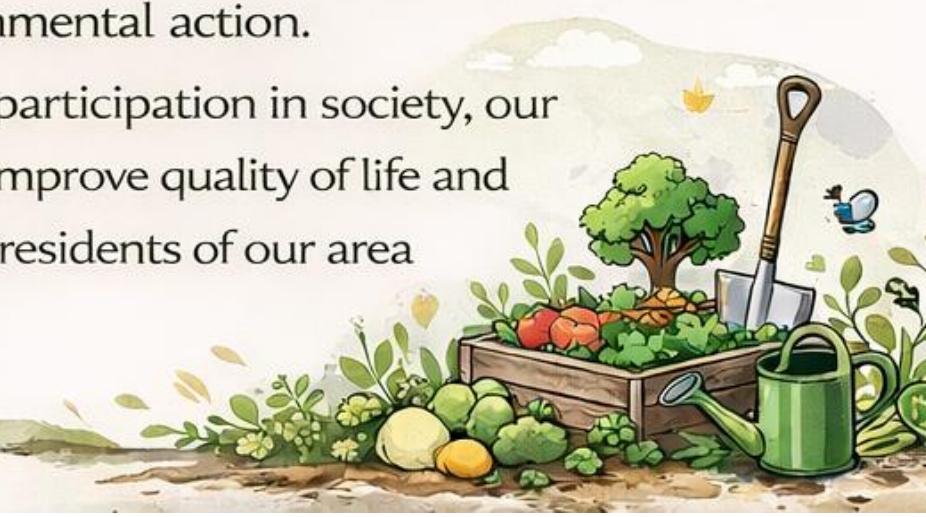
# The Foundation



## Our Story

Originally founded as a **community football club** in 2008, we have grown into a hub for local initiatives that aim to develop, empower and inspire our community. **Our motto, “More than just a football club,”** reflects our wider mission. Our projects span community outreach, football, youth engagement, education, women’s empowerment, poverty reduction, local development, and efforts that strengthen neighbourhood life and support positive environmental action.

Through active participation in society, our services aim to improve quality of life and better serve the residents of our area and London.



# Our Mission

## Our Mission

Our mission is to promote the **wellbeing** of the residents of **Burdett Estate** and the wider Tower Hamlets area, whether by working independently or in partnership with local people, local authorities, voluntary groups, and other organisations.

We are committed to supporting disadvantaged communities through initiatives in sport, health and wellbeing, tackling poverty, and community development. Burdett Estate is one of the most densely populated estates in the UK, and our work is about levelling the playing field, helping our communities win on and off the pitch.



# Our Team

## Our Team

Our team is made up of **local, talented, passionate**, and experienced individuals — including community leaders, dedicated volunteers, and industry professionals — all committed to making a difference.

From our service users and partners to our staff and management team, everyone at Burdett Foundation shares a common goal; to enrich lives and create positive change in society.

We draw on our local knowledge, strong community **connections**, and our Circle of Life model to transform the communities we serve.

Our team is here for you — united by purpose, **driven by impact**, and powered by the people we serve.



# The Project

## Our Maydwell Garden

The Maydwell Garden Project grew from our community's need for more green spaces, food-growing opportunities, and women-only spaces on the Burdett Estate.

We've created a welcoming garden where local residents can come together to grow food, share skills, and connect with nature.

Our goal is to build a greener, healthier and more inclusive community, one plant, one person, and one garden at a time.

This is more than just a garden.



# Our Mission

## Our Mission

The Maydwell Gardens Project champions environmental sustainability and community wellbeing across the Burdett Estate and Tower Hamlets.

Through Maydwell Gardens and our Women's Organisation, we empower local residents to grow food, nurture green spaces, and build stronger, healthier communities.

Our communal garden helps create access to healthy organic food, education and enjoyment supporting local action on climate sustainability and enhancing social equity.



# Our Programs

## Our Programs

At the Maydwell Garden Project, we run weekly communal gardening sessions where residents come together to grow, learn, and connect.

We also host environmental workshops focused on health, wellbeing, education, and sustainability, helping our community build practical skills for greener living.

Alongside this, we organise community events that celebrate local culture, promote wellbeing and strengthen the bonds that make our wonderful neighbourhood thrive



# Our Achievements

## Our Achievements

Since starting the Project, we've built something truly special together. We brought together a dedicated group of local gardeners who help manage and care for the space, run regular workshops and community events, and welcomed many women to get involved and grow with us.

Our garden has become a vibrant hub for the community, celebrated, well-used and always growing. We've cultivated a wide variety of produce, expanded our green space, and continue to nurture both the Land and the people who make it thrive.



# Our Future

## Our Future

We're planting the seeds for lasting community growth. Our vision is to make Maydwell Garden a space where future generations, especially our youth can learn, grow, and lead.

By nurturing skills in sustainability, teamwork and wellbeing. We want to help young people take root in their community and shape a greener, stronger future for all.



# Our Values



Community



Sustainability



Accessibility



Fairness



Respect



Wellbeing



Empowerment



Respect



Social Equity



Growth



Stewardship



Future-Building

# The Why

## The Challenges



Limited local, accessible food-growing spaces for community



Low confidence, skills and knowledge around food growing



Food insecurity due to low incomes and cost-of-living pressures



Underrepresentation of diverse communities within food-growing networks and gardening spaces

## Just FACT Objectives

- Reducing carbon emissions within the local food system
- Empowering residents to design and deliver environmental action
- Testing a scalable, community-led model of food production.
- Contributing learning and evidence to the wider Just FACT programme

## Our Response



Creating hyper-local, low-carbon food systems



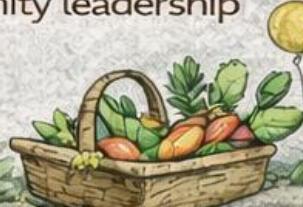
Delivering skills-based activities and long-term capacity building



Improving access to fresh, and culturally appropriate food systems



Strengthening representation and community leadership



“

What we did

”



# Our Project Journey

## 1. Brought Community Together

- Listening to Residents' Needs
- Early Community Discussions
- Maydwell Gardens Vision
- Women's Group Involvement
- Green Space & Wellbeing Plans



## 2. Community Action

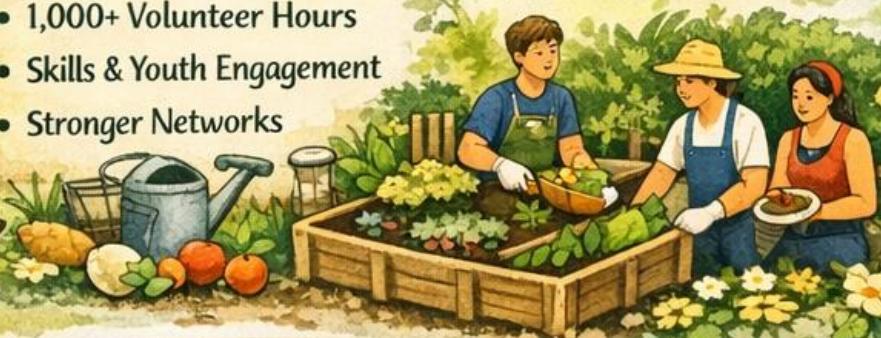
- Gardening Sessions
- Environmental Workshops
- Women's Empowerment
- Cultural Events
- Practical Skills



## Community Development

## 3. Community Development

- New Allotments Built
- 1,000+ Volunteer Hours
- Skills & Youth Engagement
- Stronger Networks



## 4. Completion & Celebration

- New Garden Beds
- Harvest Festivals
- Community Events
- Sharing & Reflection



# Project Outcomes

Burdett

Maydwell Gardens

## Project Outcomes

**100+**

Number of Residents Engaged

**12+**

Workshops Delivered

**6+**

Community Events Held

**2+**

Resources Produced

**30+**

Number of Volunteers

**20+**

Variety of Produce Grown

**15+**

Youth Engaged

**1,000+**

Digital Reach

**1,000+**

Volunteer Hours Contributed

**11+**

New Allotment Plots Constructed



# Key Elements

## Managing a Communal Garden

### Clear Purpose & Values

Shared vision and guiding values

### Community Ownership & Leadership

Residents involved in decision-making



### Simple Governance & Ground Rules

Clear, fair and accessible rules

### Celebration & Reflection

Recognising progress and milestones

### Partnerships & Support

Links with local organisations

### Resources & Infrastructure

Tools, materials and funding

### Maintenance & Care Systems

Regular schedules and shared tasks

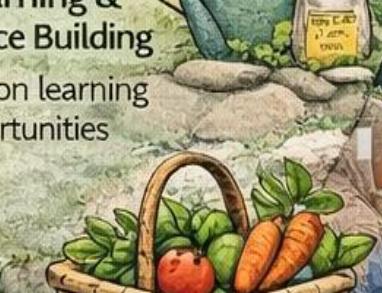
### Skills, Learning & Confidence Building

Hands-on learning opportunities



### Inclusivity & Accessibility

Welcoming and



# The Community

The heart, soul, and decision-makers of Maydwell Gardens.

Burdett is a long-established, family-centred estate shaped by generations of shared history, relationships, and resilience. From the outset, the community has not simply taken part in this project — it has led it.

Maydwell Gardens was created with residents, by residents, grounded in lived experience, trust, and collective care.

Through regular events, celebrations, workshops, shared meals, and informal gatherings, we created welcoming spaces where people could connect, contribute, and belong. These moments built more than participation — they strengthened relationships, pride, and a shared sense of ownership across the estate.

Today, it is more than just a garden; it is a living reflection of the community itself — intergenerational, inclusive, and rooted in mutual support. It is a place where food grows alongside confidence, leadership, and long-term community wellbeing.



# Building our skills and confidence



Skincare Workshop



Seedsowing



Garden Transplanting & Handling



Garden Planning and Layout



First Aid



Community Engagement & Outreach



Reflection & Celebration



Garden Planning and Layout



Soil Health & Composting



Plant Care & Maintenance



Pest Management without Chemicals



Sustainable Gardening Tools & Materials

# The Volunteers

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The communal garden would not be able to thrive without the dedication and commitment of our volunteers. From the outset, the project has been volunteer-led and intergenerational, bringing together people from across the community with a wide range of abilities, skills, and lived experiences. We have consistently supported volunteers through on-the-job learning, mentoring, and training opportunities, enabling personal growth, skills development, and long-term involvement. From gardening, maintenance and site management to marketing, community outreach, cooking and security, every role has been vital. Nothing we have achieved

would be possible without the collective effort, passion and generosity of our volunteers.

”



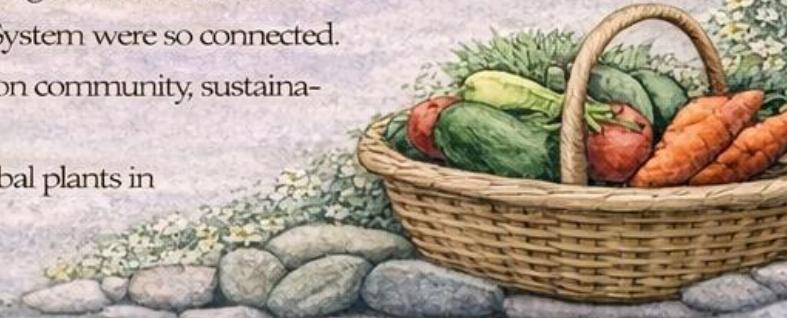
# Knowledge Exchange

Knowledge exchange is a vital element of developing and sustaining a successful communal garden. Creating space to test new ideas, approaches, and growing methods allows us to learn through practice, while being part of a wider network enables shared learning and collective problem-solving. Through collaboration, we strengthen our work by learning from both successes and challenges.

We continuously learn from the communities we serve, partner organisations on similar journeys, volunteers, and groups working to influence policy or specialising in climate change and environmental sustainability. Engagement with Just FACT partners further enriches this process, ensuring our project benefits from diverse expertise, lived experience and innovative thinking.

Here are some of our key exchanges:

- 1 **Iskon Hare Krishna Organic Eco Farm, Edinburgh** - Fascinating, beautiful eco farm, operating entirely on renewable energy.
- 2 **Lauriston Farm, Edinburgh** - Vibrant Farm which integrates food production, biodiversity and community well.
- 3 **R-Urban, London** - Interesting Garden with alternative models of living, producing and consuming.
- 4 **Sunnyjar, London** - Provided an amazing sustainable natural skincare workshop that inspired creativity, nature and beauty.
- 5 **Sustainably Muslim, London** - Educated on how the Quran contained strong environmental imperatives.
- 6 **Locavore, Glasgow** - A real community store, hyper local, organic and sustainable.
- 7 **Andalus, Glasgow** - Inspired on faith and the Food Justice System were so connected.
- 8 **Teviot Garden, London** - Efficient Garden which focuses on community, sustainability and Finances.
- 9 **Propagate, Neilston Co-op** - Amazing concepts, local herbal plants in the community garden with medicinal benefits.
- 10 **Nourish, Edinburgh** - Inspiring policy making in action where food to be treated as a human right.



# Our Impact



# How Our Community Food Growing Tackles Climate Change Food Justice



## 1 Cutting Carbon Through Local Food

We grow food where people live, reducing food miles, transport emissions, packaging and waste from the food system.



## 3 Improving Food Security with Dignity

We provide affordable, fresh and culturally appropriate food, supporting households facing cost-of-living pressures, without stigma.



## 4 Building Skills, Power and Community Control

By sharing growing skills and knowledge, we strengthen long term resilience and reduce reliance on unequal, carbon-intensive systems.

## 5 Delivering a Just, Community-Led Transition

Our garden centres underrepresented communities in climate action, ensuring environmental solutions improve wellbeing, equity and everyday life.



# Our Stories



Mrs Begum

“

I have been involved at the Maydwell Garden since the beginning of the launch in 2022. I live in a council flat with no garden of my own, I really enjoy gardening, unfortunately, I do not have a balcony, but I do grow chilli plants on my windowsill. Since I heard about the community garden, I got very excited, and have been a part of the gardening workshop and I attend regularly as I have found this therapeutic and enjoyable. I am looking forward to gardening with the team this year.

”

“

I have been part of the Maydwell House Garden Project, which started during the summer 2022. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of growing vegetables and produce in a large open space. The people who and I have participated have not had the opportunity to experience the feeling of growing our own produce in a large garden, as we all live in flats without garden. I enjoyed meeting people, whom I have not met before and am grateful to be part of a project where we are growing vegetables to help our community.

For me there are many benefits from this project. It has helped my mental well-being especially after the covid pandemic. I am very grateful and happy to be a part of this project. I am very much looking forward to continuing this project going forward.

(R Begum)



M Begum

”

”

“Was really good, everyone enjoys fresh state of mental health every has health problems so its really good to interact and be part of all the sessions that are run. Really enjoy the garden, enjoy the organic products and then enjoyed some of the exercise sessions and then we eat really good food and we cooked and ate today.” (R Akhtar)

R Akhtar



# Impact from Volunteers

30 volunteers have helped manage **Maydwell Gardens**, contributing to more than 1000+ hours of support across the two years of funding. Roles vary — gardeners, maintenance, security, support and outreach. We are very fortunate to have amazing volunteers who lead the community forward to creating

**90%+** of volunteers reported that they've experienced improvements in their mental wellbeing and level of involvement in the community by supporting the project alongside being able to make new social connections with people during sessions.



# Long-Lasting Change



## Permanent Infrastructure & Wellbeing Legacy

The project leaves a lasting legacy through permanent improvements to the garden, increased food-growing capacity and enhanced community health and wellbeing



## Empowered Women Leaders

A core group of women will be equipped with the skills, confidence, and networks needed to manage the space independently, create an inclusive environment, and grow the work.



## Increased Capacity for Future Growth

By successfully delivering and managing this project, and building strong partnerships, we are well placed to secure further funding and grow the work.



## Food Growing as Everyday Life

Food growing will become an established and accessible part of everyday life on the estate, with more residents feeling able to participate, especially for youth with their new training beds.



## Increased Capacity for Future Growth

By successfully delivering and managing this project, and building strong partnerships, we are well placed to secure further funding and grow the work.

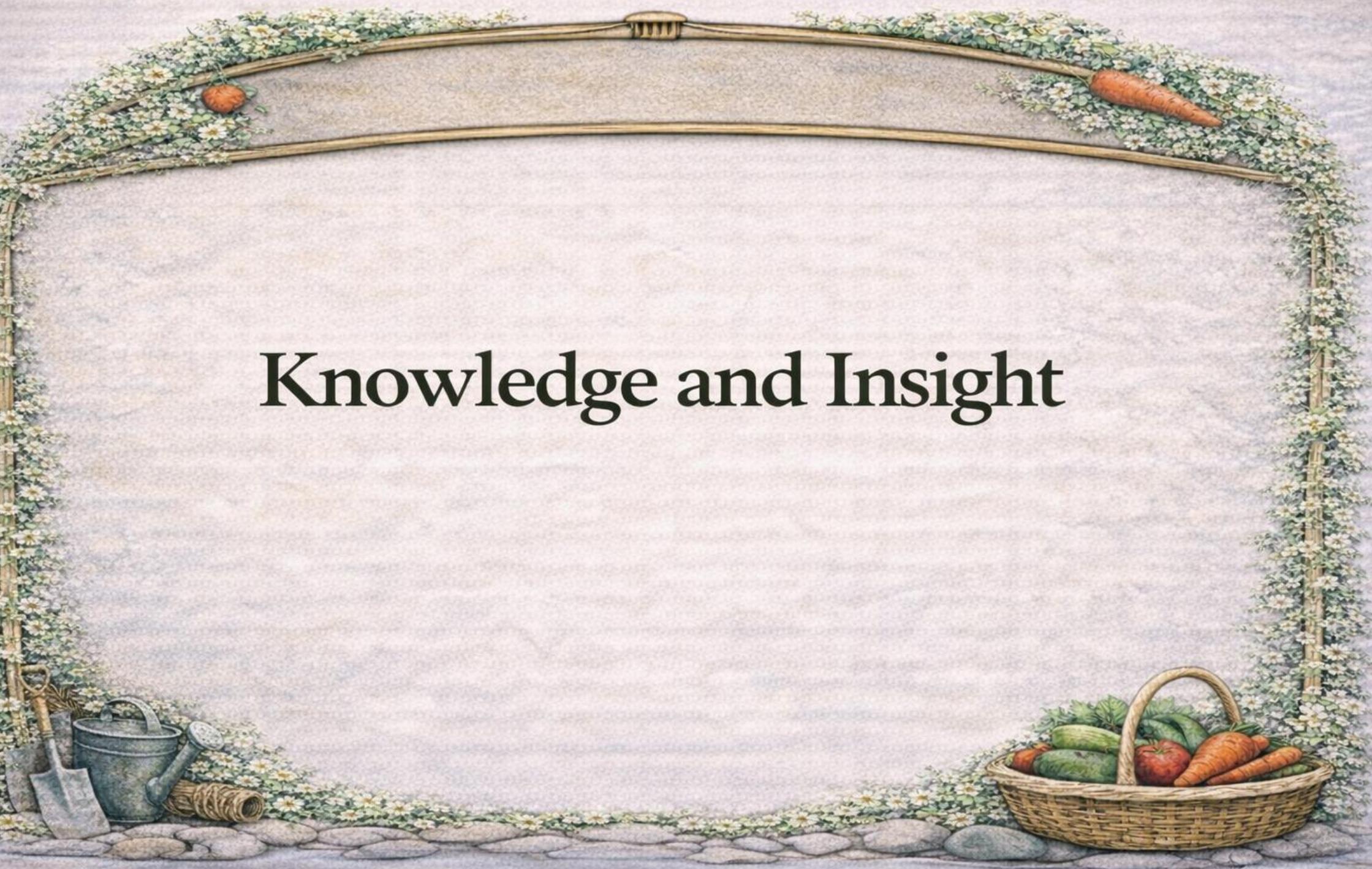


## A Model that Inspires Others

As a hyper-local, community-led project led by an underrepresented community, the garden will serve as a replicable model, inspiring other groups to develop sustainable food-growing space.



# Knowledge and Insight



# Strengthen Maydwell Gardens



## Deepen Community Ownership

Make the garden belong to more residents, not just be for them.

- Shared decision-making (what to grow, how food is shared)
- Resident champions / lead growers

**Why it matters:** Ownership keeps projects alive beyond funding cycles.



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## Strengthen Skills → Leadership Pathways

Progression routes: beginner → skilled grower → mentor

- Train residents in facilitation, coordination, and site management.
- Recognise skills formally (certificates, references, peer mentoring)



## Strengthen Partnerships, Funders & Knowledge Exchange

- Stay connected beyond the site.
- Regular exchanges with other gardens and climate-focused partners.
- Regular Meetings with Funders

### Why it matters:

No land security = no future garden.



## Secure the Space and Funding Long-Term

Longer-term land and funding agreements are required

- Clear maintenance responsibilities.
- 10% Reserve Fund for all future projects.

**Why it matters:** No land security = no future garden.



## We Care t= People, Not Just Plants

- Wellbeing is part of sustainability
- Safe, welcoming spaces (especially for youth, women and elders)
- Intergenerational activities to keep space vibrant

Space for reflection, celebration, and rest

# *Thank You and Acknowledgements*

We extend our deepest thanks to the communities of **Tower Hamlets, Poplar, and the Burdett Estate**, whose trust, participation, and generosity made this project possible from the very beginning.

Their belief, time, and commitment shaped the project into something truly meaningful.

We are profoundly grateful to our funders and the **JUST FACT** team for their trust, guidance, and unwavering support. Their belief enabled us to grow from a small, locally rooted charity into a community-led project delivering lasting change. We are proud to be part of such a thoughtful, values-driven network.

Our thanks also go to our partners and collaborators for sharing knowledge, resources, and encouragement throughout the journey. To our volunteers and the Burdett Foundation team, your dedication, leadership, and care are the foundation of this work.

To our volunteers; you are the backbone of this work. Your time, energy, leadership, and compassion have shaped Maydwell Gardens into the welcoming and vibrant space it is today. You have built connection, confidence, and care

within the community, and a legacy that will continue to grow.

