COMMUNITY GARDENS IN BRIGHTON

REPORT OF ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

PHASE 1 OF PROJECT

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This report presents the first phase results of the PhD project '**Social and Natural Relations of Community Food Growing Environments and their Impacts on Food Biodiversity – A Case Study of Brighton & Hove'.** These results give a snapshot into how community gardens are currently operating and will inform the next phases of this project which will take a deeper dive into what is happening on the ground, working closely with growers both in community gardens and allotments to measure the diversity of crops grown. This will be related to growers' experiences and perceptions of the natural and social landscapes of community food growing environments.

Source: PLOT 22 Website

UK FOOD SYSTEMS CENTRE FOR DOCTORAL TRAINING
DEVELOPING LEADERS FOR A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD FUTURE
UNIVERSITY of GREENWICH
NRI | Natural Resources Institute
US University of Sussex

Key Findings

- 24 out of 47 relevant community gardens (CGs) took part in an online survey, over half of CGs have been operating for more than ten years, and almost half of CGs are less than 250M^2 (1 allotment plot).
- The CGs engage many different groups of society, the most reported include the general public (67%), people with mental health challenges (38%), people with long-term health issues (29%), and children (25%).
- For many CGs, volunteers are referred to them through social or green prescribing (29%) and referrals from other services in the city (25%) such as mental health services.
- CGs grow a large diversity of crops (up to 17 grouped crop types), with smaller CGs tending to be slightly more diverse when it comes to the number of grouped crop types.
- The most common crop groups grown are leafy greens; root vegetables; marrows; brassicas; herbs and spices; apples, pears and quinces; and berries and currant.
- The food grown by CGs is mostly shared among volunteers, although 58% also at times donate some of their produce to food support providers in the city. It is also eaten on site together, left for the public to enjoy, two CGs also sell their produce to the public.
- CGs offer a huge range of educational and creative workshops and opportunities to learn and develop skills.
- The CGs are very environmentally conscious, with nearly all following organic gardening methods, making their own compost, using companion planting as a their main pest control method, and minimising the use of chemicals.
- CGs consider themselves to provide many benefits, the most reported includes improving mental health and social connection. The least reported is saving volunteers' money on food bills.
- Community connection, connection to nature, and connection to fresh produce are what CGs value most about their CG.
- The biggest challenges CGs report are securing funding, maintaining a consistent volunteer base, and drought and land use challenges.
- CGs are innovating in in exciting ways, especially around growing methods and climate resilience and inclusive ways of working.
- Advice that CGs have for others wishing to set up a CG includes securing a committed core group, learning from others, and engaging the local community.

Contents

Background

Defining Community Food Growing Environments (CFGEs) for this study – Key Dimensions

- **Urban/ City** - city including inner city and periphery (peri-urban) or strong links to city dwellers
- **Community/ social –** communal space, either individually managed (such as allotment plot) or communally (Community gardens (CGs), school garden). Often there is a social good being derived either explicitly through engaging more vulnerable people or implicitly through being with members of the community and sharing the space.
- **Own production -** CFGEs are mainly for own consumption/ consumption by volunteers, or donation to food support, although may have a commercial aspect such as veg boxes for sale
- **Food Growing** – space is mostly for food production (compared to growing flowers for example). The diversity of food produced depends on 'food environment' dimensions of the physical space as well as 'personal/ individual' factors that determine what's grown such as motivations, access to the garden etc.
- **Environmental contribution** to city's ecosystems services – such as increasing biodiversity, and climate regulation, forms part of 'green infrastructure'

Online survey method

- Online survey of organisers / those who run community gardens (CGs)
- CGs were identified through the, the Brighton & Hove Allotment Federation (BHAF) who supplied a list of CGs on their allotment sites, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership (BHFP) online directory, and snowballing from contacts and internet searches.
- CGs were contacted via email, phone, and/ or through their social media page.
- If there was no response, CGs were followed up with 2-3 times over the 11 weeks that the survey was live (July 17th – September 30th 2023).
- The survey had a 51% response rate. A total of 64 community gardens/ initiatives were identified. Of these 10 were removed upon closer inspection of their websites as they were not community gardens or did not grow food. The remaining 54 were contacted. Seven responded to say they are not operational, do not grow food, or do not have capacity. Of the remaining 47 relevant CGs – 24 completed the survey.
- 23 surveys were completed online, and one survey was completed over the phone and the results were imported afterwards.
- Most CGs wished to be mapped and were happy for their CG to be named in reporting, while 8 wished to remain anonymous and 6 would like more information before being mapped.
- Survey results were descriptively analysed in MS Excel. Section 4 results were analysed through inductive coding and thematic analysis.

Thank you to all CGs who responded to this survey and provided rich and useful insights. Additional thanks to those who responded to say they were no longer operational, didn't grow food, or didn't have the capacity to take the survey.

1. Demographics and Operations

Location of Community Gardens (CGs)

Figure 1 illustrates the location of community gardens that took part in the online survey. The majority are located within the boundaries of Brighton & Hove, although two are located outside of this boundary, one in Peacehaven (Peacehaven Community Garden) and one in Pulborough (Rock Farm). Although the focus of this survey is CGs within Brighton & Hove, these CGs were still included due to their strong ties to Brighton & Hove through community outreach and links to Brighton's local food system (Rock Farm), as well as useful insights to the operations of a small CG (Peacehaven Community Garden).

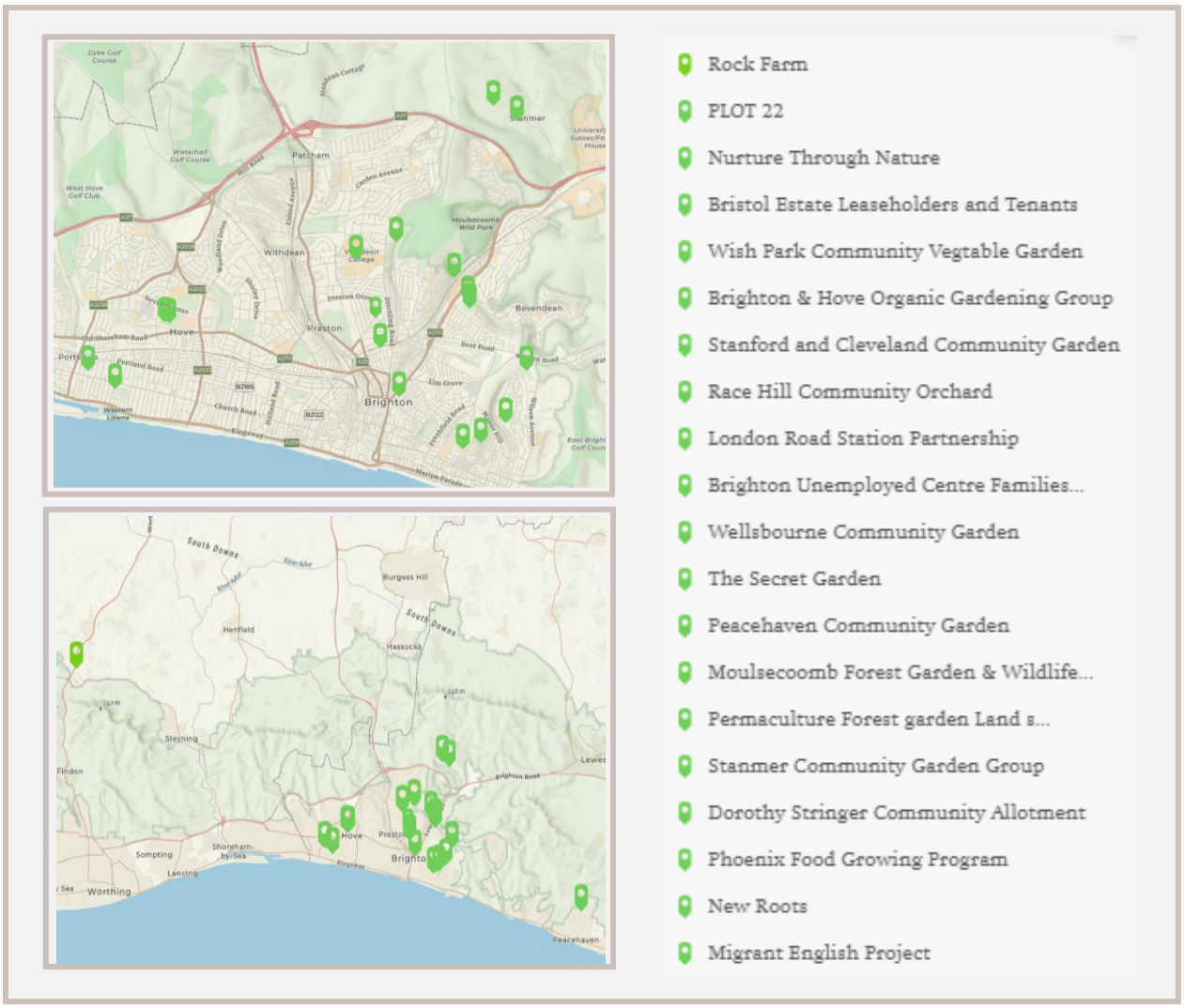


Fig.1 – Location and names of community gardens. Note – There are four attidional CGs that took part although have not given permission to be added to this map.

The location of community gardens in relation to the Index of Multiple Deprivation Score[1] across the city is illustrated in Figure 2. The darker colour represents areas of higher deprivation. Most CGs are in parts

[1] The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a measure of relative deprivation for small areas (Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). It is a combined measure of deprivation based on a total of 37 separate indicators that have been grouped into seven domains, each of which reflects a different aspect of deprivation experienced by individuals living in an area such as income, employment, health and others.

of the city where there is higher deprivation, especially in the Eastern wards of the city where deprivation is highest.

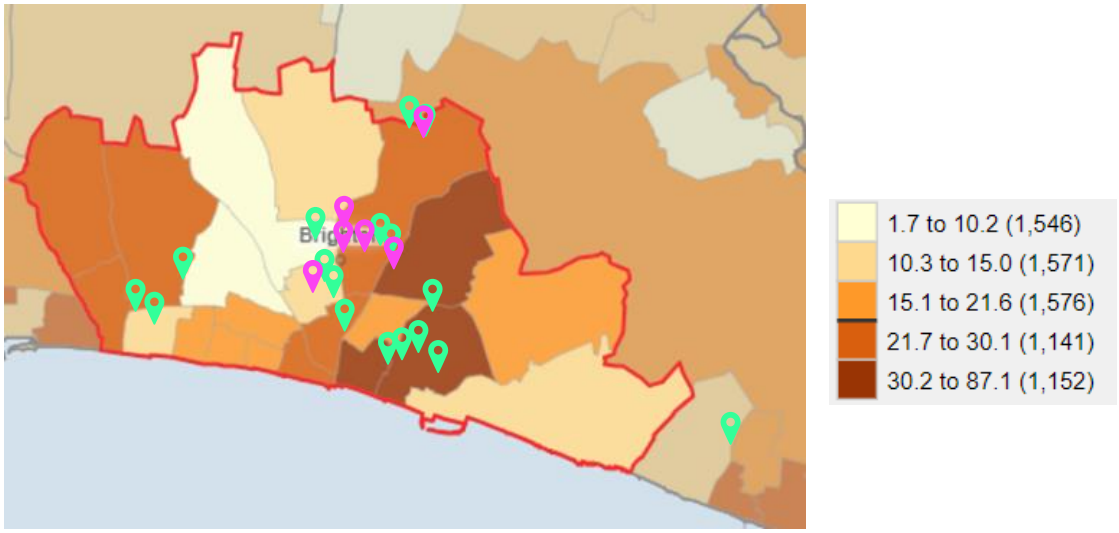
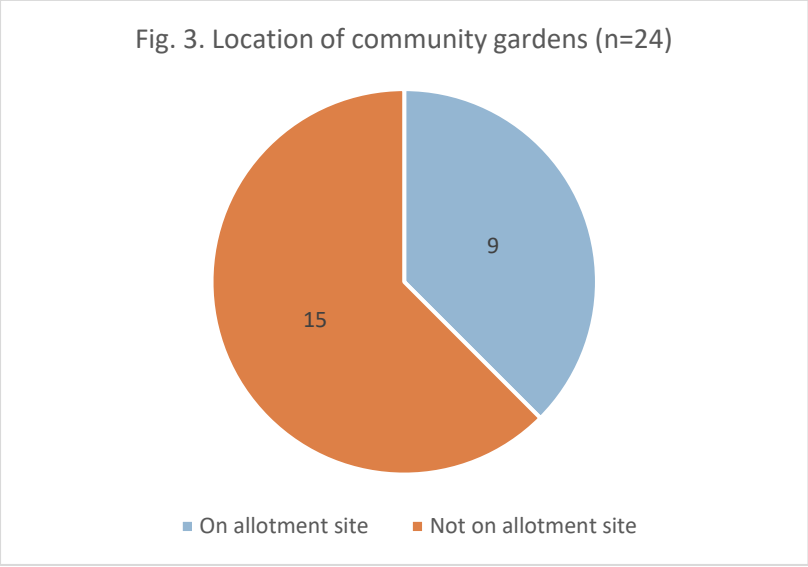


Figure 2 – Location of community gardens in relation to Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) scores (2019)

(source of IMD map: https://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/local-intelligence)

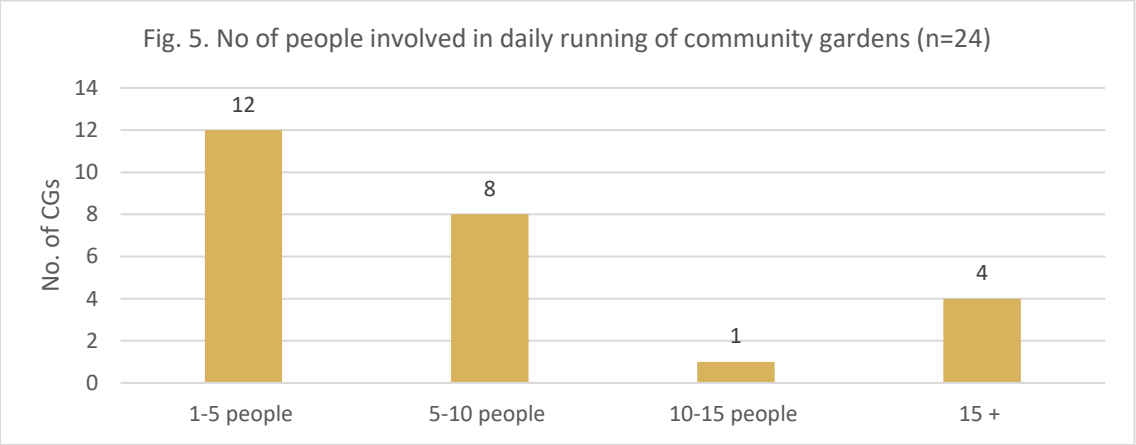
Nine CGs are located within allotment sites in the city. Fourteen are located elsewhere across the city or outskirts (Fig. 3).



Operations

Over half (n=14) of CGs have been operating for over ten years. Five have been operating for 1-4 years, and four for 7-10 years (Fig. 4).

Half of CGs are run by a small number of people (1-5 people, n=12). Only five are run by ten or more (Fig.5)



Most CGs report receiving funding (70%, n=17), although there are seven that report not receiving any, these tended to be smaller CGs, most of which have been operative for over seven years. Examples of funding sources include the city council, national lottery, trusts, foundations, businesses, subsidies from community centres, and the BHFP CG start-up fund.

People who attend the CGs

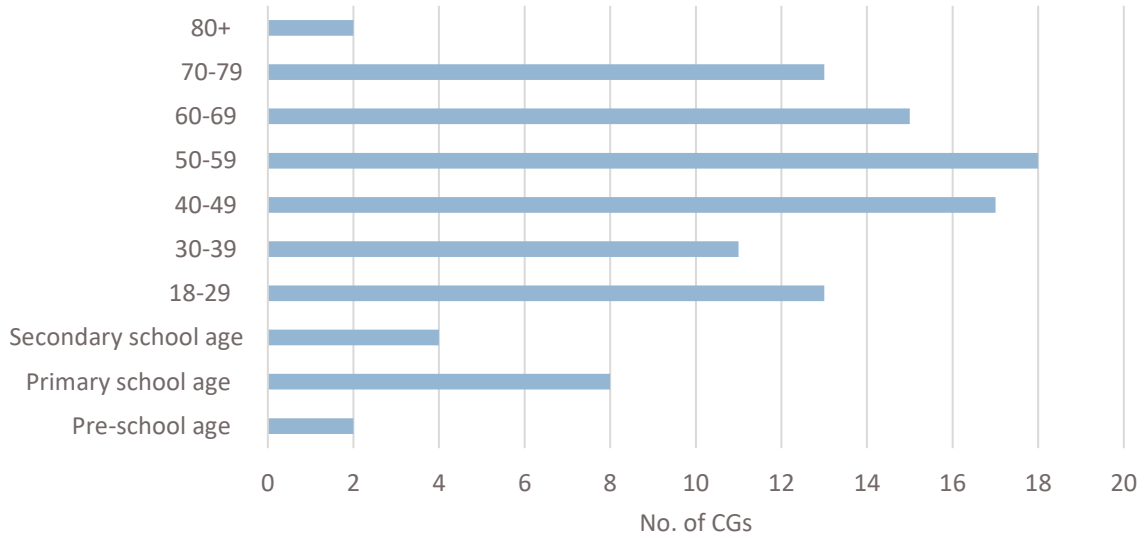
Across all twenty-four CGs, there is an average 486 volunteers coming weekly in the spring and summer, this drops a little to 427 during the autumn and winter months. The CGs engage a wide range of people in the community. When asked which groups attend CG, CGs on average named 4 different groups of people that attend. Many are open to the general public as well as encourage other specific groups – such as those with mental health challenges, long-term health issues, children, students (inc those with additional needs), volunteer & charity groups, people with learning difficulties, asylum seekers & refugees, families, socially isolated people, elderly people, youth groups, those with physical health challenges, people experiencing homelessness, ethnic minorities groups, people with dementia, unemployed & part-time employed people, vulnerable adults, women specifically (inc women referred by support services). The groups most reported to attend across CGs are the

general public (67%, n=16), those with mental health challenges (38%,n=9) those with long-term health issues (29%, n=7), and children specifically (25%, n=6).

When asked if participation had been increasing, decreasing or staying the same, there was a mixed response, and it differed according to groups of the community. Seven CGs have seen participation stay the same. Eight have seen an increase, which are reported to come from refuge groups, and referrals from social prescribers. Some put their increases down to having more capacity to promote and attract people. Ten CGs have seen a decrease in certain groups, many cite COVID-19 as the main reason – numbers tended to either drop off or increase during the pandemic, and have dropped off as people return to full-time work. Seasonality and vandalism are other reasons given for reduced numbers.

CGs engage people of all ages. Those aged between 40–79-year-olds are the most common attendees. Younger age groups such as preschool age, and secondary school age are the least engaged age groups (n=2 & 4 respectively) (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6. Ages of those who attend the CGs (n=24)



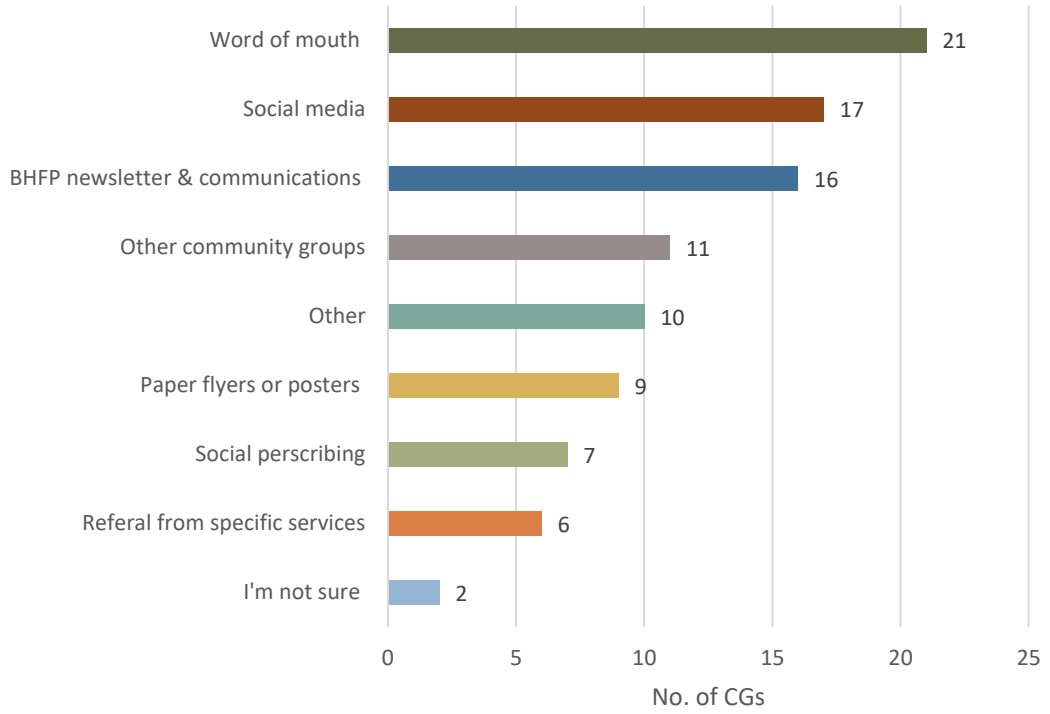
On average each CG have around seventeen people volunteering weekly in the summer (although there is a large range from 2-140 people), and a slight drop to 14 people in the winter (again a large range from 0 where the CG closes over winter to 100). Volunteers usually come to the garden once or twice per week (n=16). Rarely do people come more than five days per week (n=2).

Volunteers usually spend half a day at the CGs (n=14), or 1-2 hours (n=9), others spend the whole day (n=9), or can stay as long as they wish (n=4). The vast majority of CGs have volunteers all year round (n=20), while four close for certain periods of the year.

> *"In a world going to hell in a handbasket it's groups like ours that help provide an oasis of holistic calm for people to escape to and forget the troubles of the world - if only for a couple of days a week"* [Stanmer Community Garden Group]

When asked how people hear about their CG, word of mouth is the most common (n=21), followed by social media (n=17) and BHFP communications (n=16) (Fig.7). Almost 30% (n=7) receive volunteers through social or 'green' prescribing from places such as Together Co, GP surgeries, other support services, Grow Project, Outlook Foundation Food Partnership and health workers.

Fig. 7. How people hear about CGs



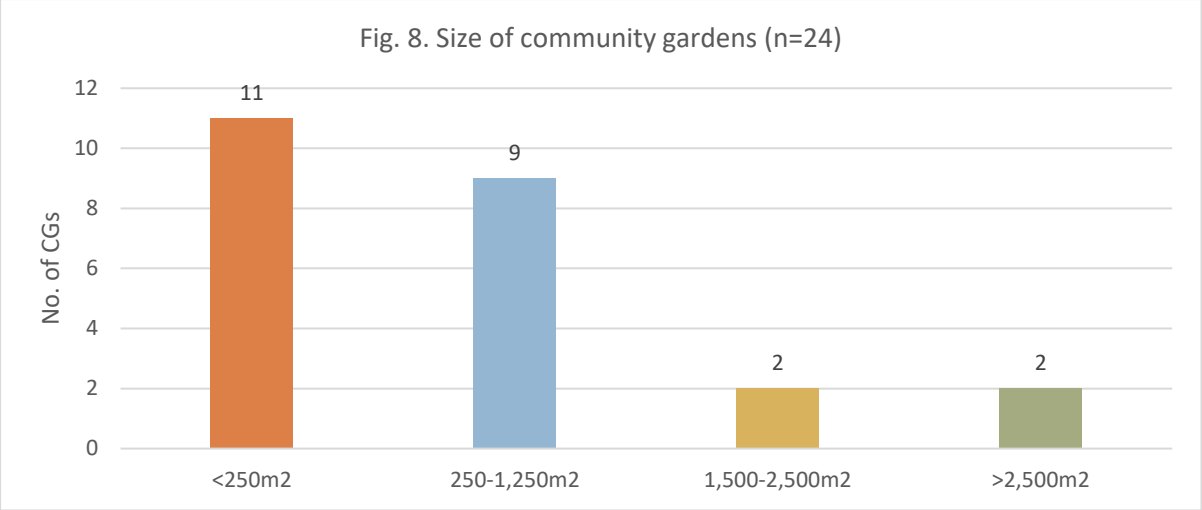
Those referred from specific services (25%, n=6) include mental health services, Grow project, NHS, Focus care practitioners, community workers, Duke of Edinburgh Award referrals, and Plumpton College.

Other ways in which people hear about CGs include via Community Works and Community Base, partner organisations including charities and universities, at charity events and classes, through Brighton University, Town Council information, and the Growing Hollingdean newsletter.

2. Facilities and Activities

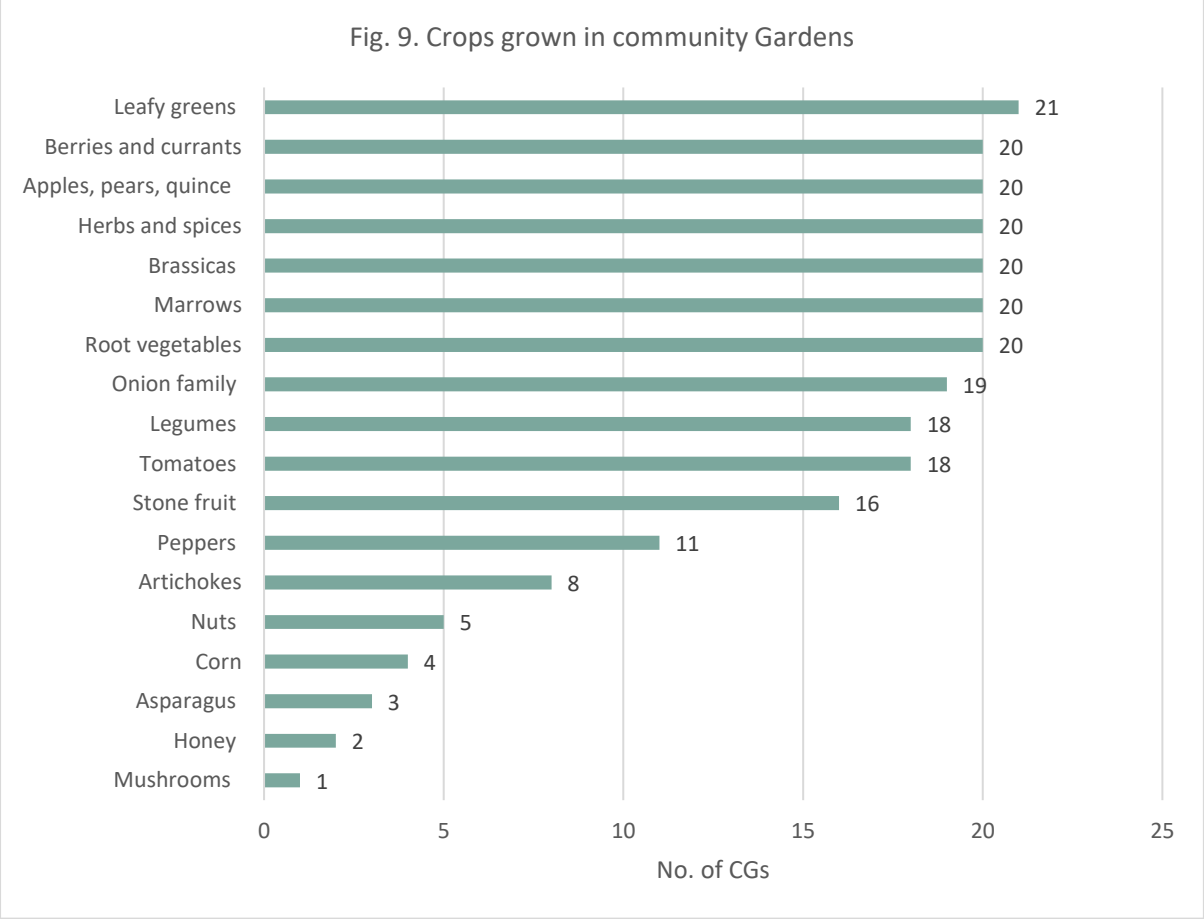
Size of CGs

Almost half (n=11) of CGs are less than the size of one full allotment plot which is 250m^2 (Fig. 8). The smallest community garden is the equivalent of a tenth of an allotment plot (around 24m^2) while the largest is Rock Farm which is the equivalent of 97 allotment plots (6 acres). Those located on allotment sites tended to be larger – mostly the equivalent of three allotment plots (750m^2), while those based elsewhere in Brighton were mostly around the size of one allotment plot (250m^2). The majority (n=19) of CGs consider their site to be the right size, four consider it to be too small (three of which are <one (250m^2) in size, and one considers their site to be too big.



Crops grown in CGs

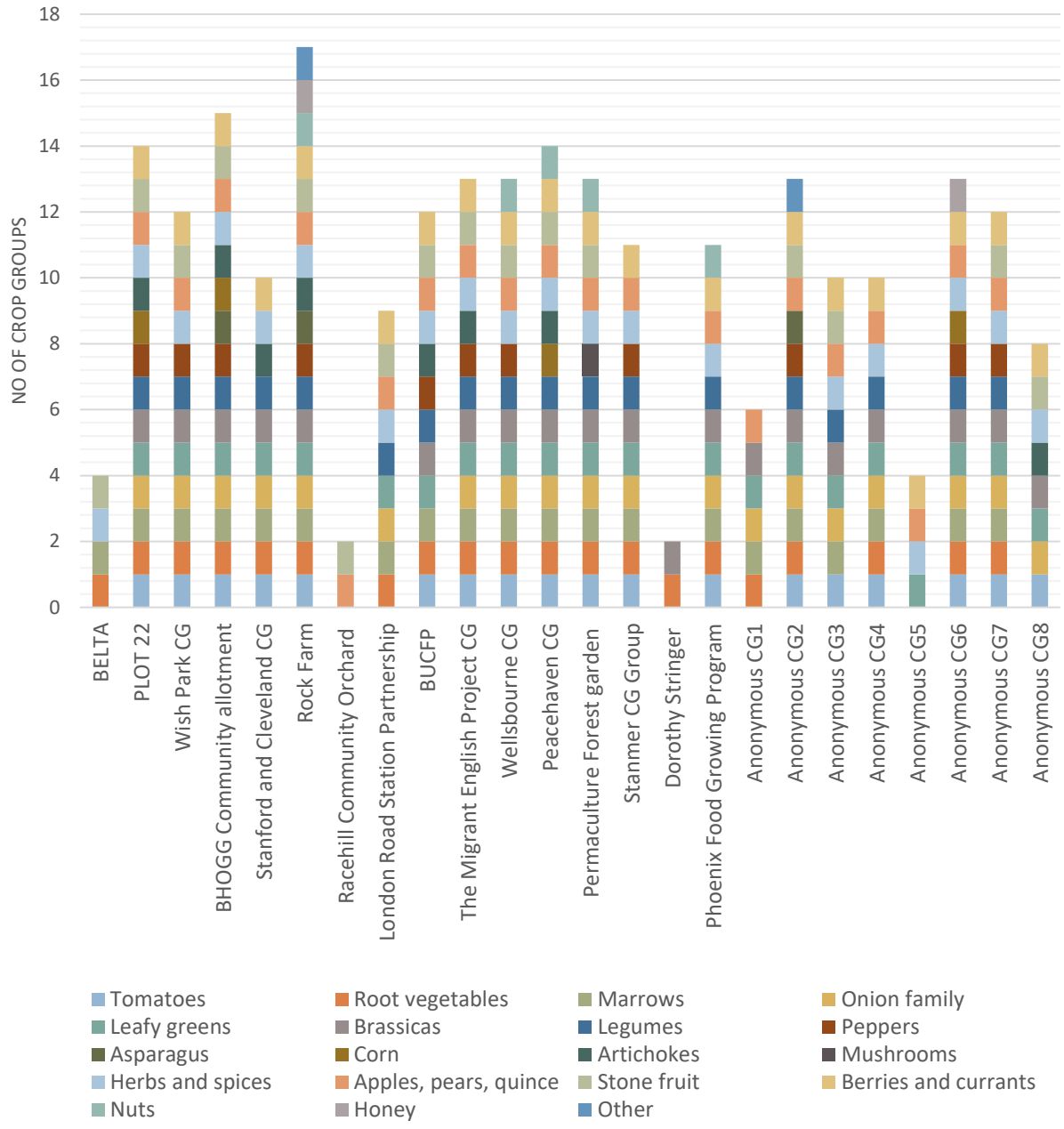
Respondents were asked to select from a predetermined list the crops that they grow in their CG. The survey listed broad crop families (eg brassicas), and some singular crops (eg tomatoes) as these were deemed as commonly grown (Fig. 9). The most grown crop groups include leafy greens; berries and currants; apples, pears and quince; herbs and spices; brassicas (such as broccoli, cauliflower), marrows (such as courgettes, squash), and root vegetables (all >80%, n=20). No CGs produced cereals, eggs or small livestock. Additional crops reported by CGs included edible flowers and wild/ foraged foods.



The average number of crop types produced in CGs is ten. This is consistent even when the size of CGs is taken into account. In fact, the smallest CGs, < 250m (n=11), produce, on average, eleven crops – higher

than the overall average of ten across both medium (n=9) and large (n=4) CGs. Diversity ranged from two crop types (Racehill Community Orchard) to seventeen crop types (Rock Farm) (Fig. 10).

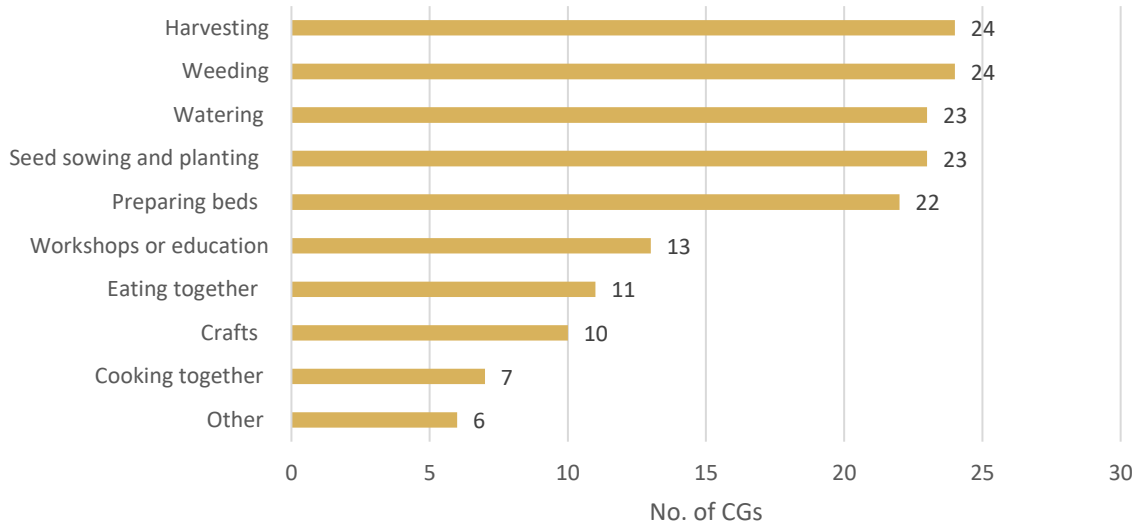
Fig. 10. Crop group diversity in community gardens



Activities taking place in CGs

There are many activities to get involved with in CGs – including those which may be expected such as preparing beds, sowing and planting seeds, watering, weeding and harvesting (Fig. 11). However, there is a diverse range of additional activities also taking place – almost half (n=11) eat together on-site or have facilities to cook together (n=7).

Fig. 11. Activities that happen in CGs



There is also an abundance of workshops and educational sessions (n=13), crafts (n=10) and other activities (n=6) taking place.

Examples of educational sessions, crafts and workshops include:

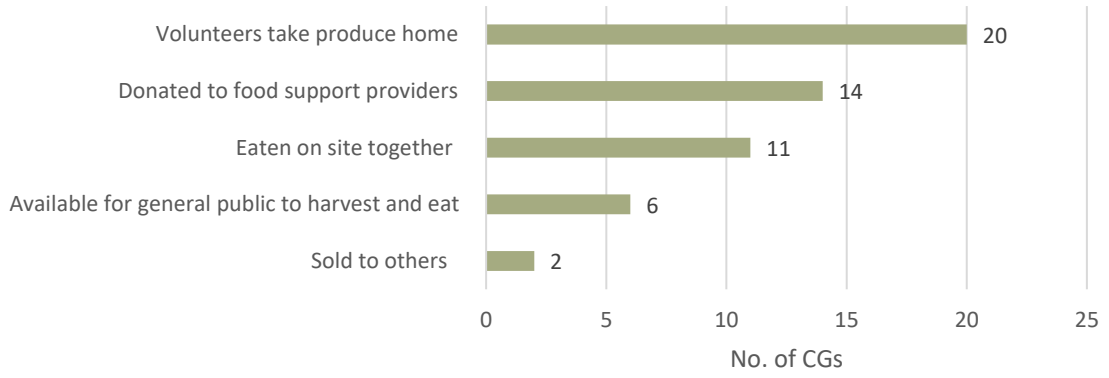
- Teaching young people how to cook with CG-grown food;
- Regular organic gardening workshops
- Food partnership training courses
- RHS online growing seminars
- Group visits to other gardens including RHS Flower Shows
- Courses at the Garden House Brighton e.g. Plant staking, Pruning, Sustainable planting
- Brighton and Hove Green Spaces Seminars e.g. Gardening in drought conditions
- Rewilding
- Pottery
- Composting
- Salad production
- Beekeeping
- Earth building
- Coppicing
- Carbon-negative growing
- Tree pruning
- Herbal workshops
- HERA (Healing Expressive and Recovery Arts Project) wellbeing workshops
- Practical carpentry skills
- Talks on bees & pollinators
- The plant cycle
- Garden bugs
- Worms & frogs
- Planting & growing techniques
- Compost management and production
- Grafting
- Tools care and sharpening
- Scything
- Botanical drawing
- Working with a resident artist
- People involved in furniture maintenance/ repairs
- Wildlife recording
- Plant sales & craft sales
- Some come and organise social events
- Bringing home-made cakes
- Singing groups and children's events.

"It is an uplifting and positive way to spend time and others who come along give similar feedback. The produce at the end is just the icing on the cake - the best part is being outside surrounded by plants sharing ideas, conversation, and thoughts about the garden itself, with the volunteers and those who pass by and stop to chat." [Wish Park Community Vegetable Garden]

How produce is shared

The CGs report sharing the CG-grown produce in a number of ways, often reporting more than one. For the vast majority (n=20), volunteers take the produce home, 57% (n=14) donate to food support services in the city and almost half also eat together on-site (n=11). Some also leave the produce for the general public to come and eat (n=6), while two CGs also sell some of their produce, these are not located within allotments as this is against allotment rules to sell the produce grown (Fig. 12). There is one exception to reporting a mixture of ways in which the produce is enjoyed, one CG donates all of their produce to food support providers.

Fig. 12. How produce is shared (n=22)



When asked about providing food to other services or providers in the city, fifteen CGs gave additional information about donating or selling their produce elsewhere. Examples of donations include surplus food redistributors such as Sussex FareShare (n=6), the Real Junk Food Project and Scrumping (n=6), others donate produce to food banks or pantries (n=5), affordable meals schemes or community cafes (n=4), community fridges (n=2), and educational food settlings (n=1). Other examples include giving the food directly to the community centre the CG is affiliated with such as the Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project, or cooking for students of their wider projects such as the Migrant English Project. For those that sell some of their produce (n=2), this is through fruit and veg box schemes and farmer's markets (Rock Farm and Stanmer Community Gardening Group).

"It gives the local community something to be proud of and a sense of ownership. It is open access 24/7 so anyone can use it at any time and all the fruit grown is free for anyone to take" [Racehill Community Orchard]

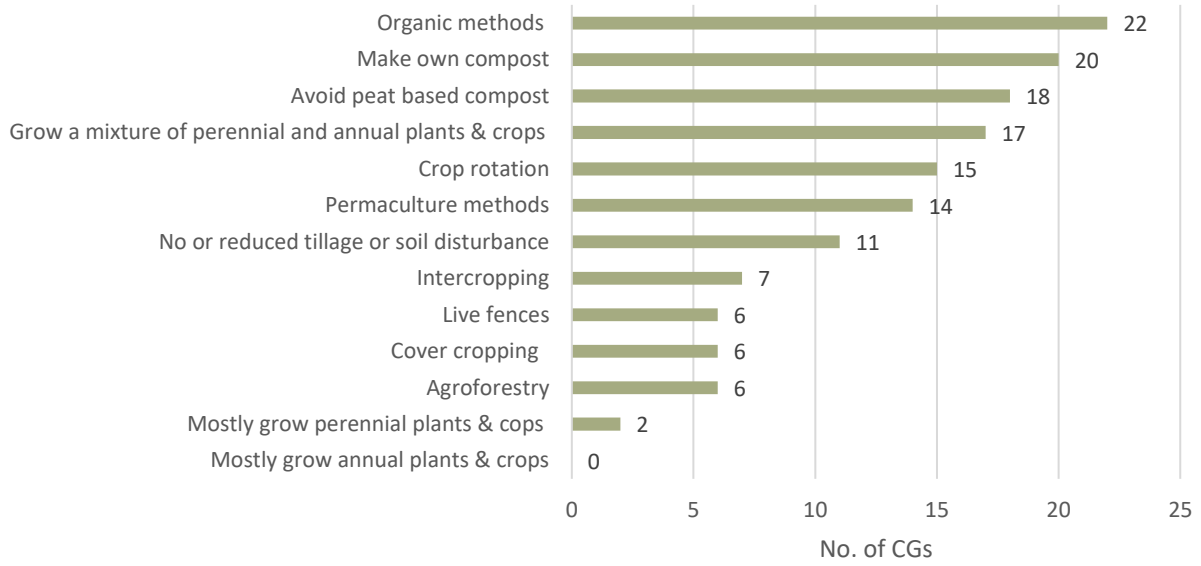
3. Environmental practices and benefits

Growing methods in CGs

CGs use a diverse range of growing methods. Most CGs use organic and/ or permaculture methods, make their own compost and/ or avoid peat-based compost, grow a mixture of annual and perennial crops, and

rotate their crops. Almost half (n=11) also try to minimise soil disturbance. Other growing methods include using 'live fences' such as planting herbs, shrubs or trees as partitions (n=7), planting cover crops (n=6), and agroforestry (n=6) (Fig.13). Other examples provided include; taking a full 'green cycle' approach through linking with their community kitchen (Bristol Estate Leaseholders and Tenants Association), Carbon negative soil cycling (Rock Farm), and building dead hedges (Peacehaven Community Graden).

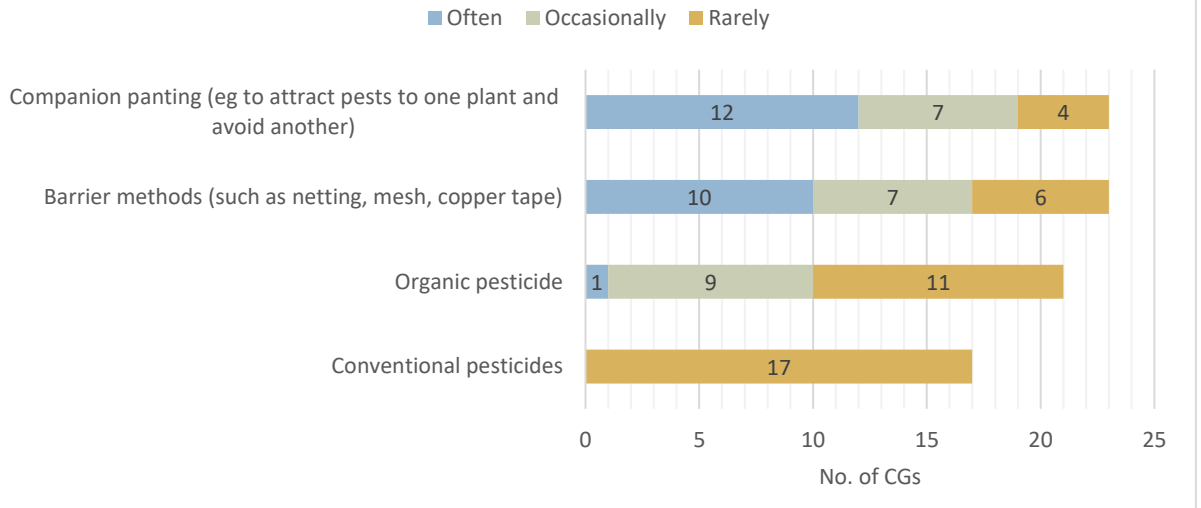
Fig. 13. Growing methods in CGs (n=24)



Pest control methods

When it comes to pest management in CGs, the most often used methods include companion planting (to attract pests to one plant and avoid another) (n=12), and barrier methods (such as using netting, mesh and copper tape) (n=10). Only o ne often uses organic pesticides and there are none that often or occasionally use conventional pesticides. Additional methods provided by CGs include the use of natural predators and manual squishing of pests (Fig 14).

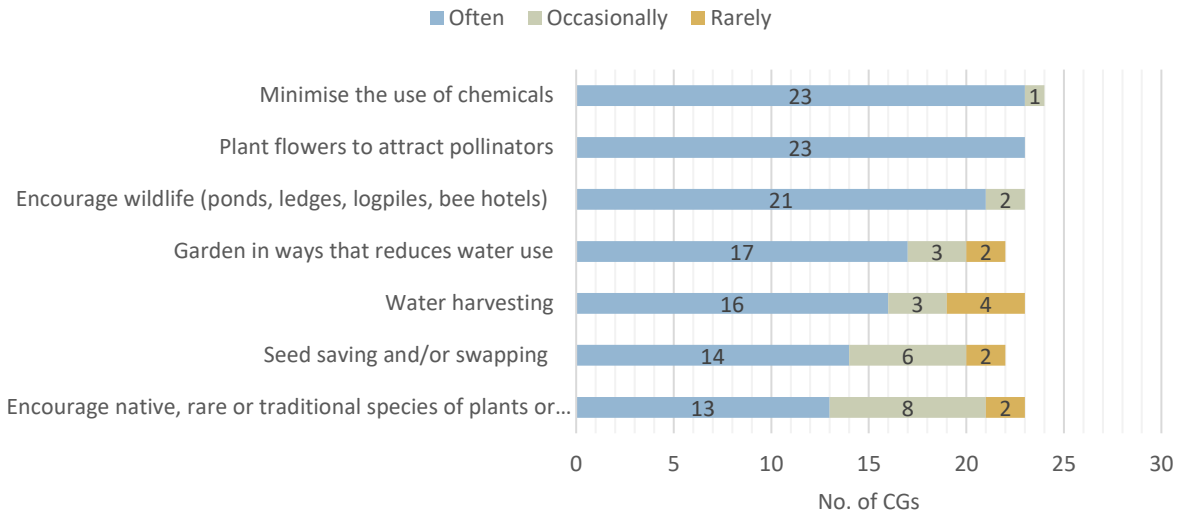
Fig. 14. Pest control methods in community gardens (n=24)



Environmentally friendly practices

CGs make a considerable effort to operate in environmentally friendly ways. This includes CGs often minimising the use of chemicals. Encouraging wildlife and pollinators is also common practice through creating habitats such as bee hotels, ponds and log piles, and planting flowers. CGs are also highly conscious of their water use with the majority often gardening in ways to reduce water and harvesting water (Fig. 15). When it comes to the plants grown, again the majority use seed saving and swapping often or occasionally, as well as consciously encouraging growing rare or traditional plants or crops (n=21). Additional environmentally friendly practices mentioned by CGs include re-using plant pots and labels, making own labels, growing plants from seed; intensive cardboard/carbon sinking; building swales and compost mulching; and learning about old environmental and crop growing wisdom within the community.

Fig. 15 Environmentally friendly practices & frequency in community gardens (n=24)

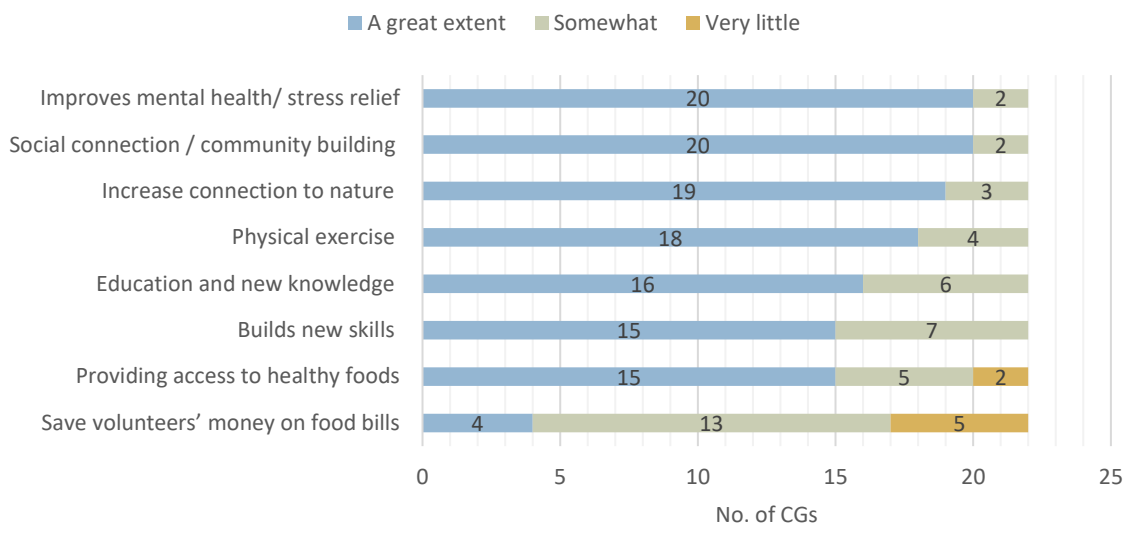


Benefits to volunteers

CGs consider themselves to provide a large range of benefits to those who get involved. The majority (n=15-20) report the following benefits taking place to a great extent: Improves mental health/ stress relief, provides social connection/community building, increases connection to nature, provides an opportunity for physical exercise, provides an opportunity for education and new knowledge, builds new skills, and provides access to healthy foods. In terms of saving volunteers' money on food bills, the majority of CGs report this as only taking place somewhat, rather than to a great extent as for all other benefits, and five happening CGs consider this to happen very little. Two CGs considered providing access to healthy foods to occur very little, however, one of these CGs donates all produce to food support services and therefore does not share the food with volunteers, and the other is struggling to keep operating due to land use issues (anonymous CGs) (Fig.16).

Additional benefits reported by CGs include the joy of giving back to your community; a chance to build friendships; showcasing what can be grown locally in a small space; reframing food production; providing links to other services which widens people's connection city-wide; making people more aware of their own skills which increases people's self-worth and value; and can help provide CV references.

Fig. 16 Perceived type and extent of benefits that community gardens provide (n=22)



"Allotment waiting lists are ridiculously long and social isolation and anxiety a growing problem. Community gardening even on a small scale has an important role to play in helping people feel more connected to the land in which they live, their fellow community, and the food they eat" [PLOT 22]

4. Qualitative insights from community gardens

What CGs value most about what they offer

CGs were asked to describe in their own words what they value most about their CG. The responses (n=24) can be summarised across three themes – Community connection (n=17), connection to nature (n=9), and connection to fresh produce (n=9). The idea of 'connection' being key, often two or all three aspects were reported simultaneously.

"It gives people a connection in nature, which breaks down barriers and people relate to each other differently" [Wellsbourne Community Garden]

Community Connection

Many referred to the connection and friendships that form within the CG including *"…sharing the garden with others in a socially and relaxed environment"*, as well as the "*great community spirit*", and being "*a focus for friendships and social connections*". Others value their CG as a "*peaceful greenspace for people to relax in away from the crowded city*" as well as being especially important for socially isolated people.

CGs value not only the connection that happens within the CG but also caring for the wider community, through donations to food support providers, as well as being "*rooted in the local community (with neighbours dropping in from time to time)*".

"Our garden has become a really important feature in the local community and we have developed strong links with other community groups and organisations. We have all benefited physically, socially and mentally. It has been so much fun growing our own produce and being

able to share it amongst ourselves and with local people and a food bank" [Stanford and Cleveland Community Garden]

Connection to nature

Many CGs value the connection to nature that they bring including a "*deep connection to specific ecosystems*" and the benefit of "*increasing biodiversity*" and care for local wildlife.

Connection to fresh produce

Many CGs value the "*supply of fresh food*" and "*the range and diversity of produce we grow*", especially when people may not otherwise have access. This is coupled with the knowledge that is gained and shared about where and how food is produced.

Challenges CGs have faced over the past three years

CGs were asked to describe in their own words the challenges they have faced over the past three years. There were common themes across responses (n=22) including funding (n=12), volunteer participation (n=11), and drought and land use (n=10).

Funding

"*Funding. Funding and funding!"* Sustaining funding is a regular challenge as well as "*Time spent on fundraising events and applying for grants*". A couple of CGs have experienced a recent shift, either longer-term funding coming to an end, or grants stopping coupled with having to pay yearly rent which in the past was not required with the only solution being "*… the volunteer supervisors now pay a monthly sub fee to help keep the group going*." At a city level, the lack of affordable buses to transport people to the site was seen as a financial challenge.

Volunteer participation

"*Having a consistent volunteer base*" was a repeated challenge in terms of recruitment, but also high attrition, volunteers having limited time, and losing volunteers during COVID-19 lockdowns. For some attracting volunteers is less of a challenge, the challenge lies in finding those who are willing to step into a coordinator role or take on more responsibility. Some also report that "*Managing personalities can at times be challenging. Everyone needs to feel valued and sometimes there are dominating personalities*", or else volunteers may come from statutory services with complex mental health challenges and the CG relies on self-disclosure of health challenges and this can be hard to manage at times.

Drought and land use

"*Drought: keeping the garden going during droughts of 2022 and 2023 was very hard*." Others cite "*extreme dry weather*" "*lack of water supply when very dry*" and "*running out of water*" as challenges in their CGs. Others reported more general land management issues such as the constant maintenance, especially during COVID-19 lockdowns, difficulty "*negotiating use of the land by the owners*", or delays and uncertainty around land use and tenancy.

Ways in which CGs have innovated over the past three years

Despite these challenges, CGs are places of constant innovation (n=20). These have been grouped by themes of growing methods and climate resilience (n=13) and ways of working (n=9).

"Rock Farm is unique in the local landscape because it engages both marginalised communities for nature-based therapy and serious local food production using innovative ecological techniques". [Rock Farm]

Growing methods and climate resilience

Many CGs have been innovating through their growing methods, one CG reports "*Learnt how to work with nature and not against it like leaving clumps of wild scrub instead of trying to get rid of it*". Others report applying biodynamic gardening planting principles, permaculture principles, no dig methods, planting a forest garden, rewilding perennial areas, and encouraging natural predators, such as hedgehogs, by removing fence slats.

Many describe "*Having to adapt to drought-like conditions*" and the "*Constant innovation around climate-resilient growing methods (including water conservation, biodiversity enhancement and carbon-negative soil building)*". Others have introduced drought-tolerant plants and are increasing perennial crops.

Ways of working

Many have innovated in ways that make taking part easier including creating "*Starter beds for people on the allotment waiting list*", flexible drop-in sessions for the wider community as well as "*Having a direct connection to the health practice which encourages patients from the health centre through green prescribing*". Others have incentivised participation as a way to gain new qualifications for example "*several members have done introduction to permaculture and certificate in permaculture courses*".

Some CGs report innovating by ensuring inclusivity of participation such as "W*e involve our volunteers in regular user groups so they can have a say in the funding of the garden, and support everyone to have confidence to speak up*." As well as avoiding any potentially stigmatising dynamics through encouraging people to "*take part in an activity, and the community fridge happens to be available at the same time. Avoid(s) labels like food bank*." From a logistics perspective, innovations have included creating WhatsApp groups and online databases to manage volunteers and activities and constructing an outside shelter for safer work in rainy weather during and post COVID-19.

Advice for setting up a community garden

The CGs were asked to share any advice they had for those wishing to set up a community garden. The responses (n=22) have been grouped into the themes of commitment and consistency (n=12), learning from others (n=5) and engaging the local community (n=6).

Commitment and consistency

The CGs repeatedly stressed the importance of building a committed team/ "*core group*" as well as committed volunteers and support network for the CG in order to create local ownership, share responsibilities and help negotiate with the council landowners etc. Two CGs stressed that one person is not enough to run a CG, another suggests having two coordinators is important so share admin and duties on site. Training staff in terms of safeguarding and first-aid was also advised. Other recommendations include having a consistent social media presence to attract people as well as having clear agreements in place with landowners and ensuring land is secure before committing too much time to the CG. Others suggest recognising what your physical, time and financial limits are and working within these.

Learning from others

CGs advise to "*Get involved in other ones first - preferably multiple ones, to see what works, what doesn't and help to give you inspiration about how you might like to go about yours. It will depend on the plot you have access to etc. but it is good to learn from others' experiences*." Stanford and Cleveland Community Garden have experience in helping others, for example, "*groups have come for visits and we have shown them our portfolios which we keep as a record of our work and events and advised them on insurance, risk*

assessments, fundraising, planning for planting etc." This is echoed by others who suggest to "*Research other groups already operating*", and to "*talk to your local council and other community gardens*".

Engaging the local community

Many CGs advocate the importance of connecting with the local community where the CG will be located. "*Know your community first. It's just as important as knowing your local ecosystem*". This includes the need to "*Communicate with the local people and find out what they most want out of the garden. Some people have ideas and knowledge that will be invaluable*" as well as "*make sure you… have support of the local community by advertising so there is ownership by the local community and the area is cared for*". Others promote the need to "*Focus on the benefits, and make people feel good*." as well as *"… make sure there is an opportunity to share tea/coffee/drinks/possibly food and a chat. Engage everybody in doing what they feel comfortable doing - and that may mean that ambitions have to be reduced - but also find out what skills people have that can be used*". Finally,

"Go for it. We need more." [Plot 22].

Inspiration from other community gardens

CGs were asked to note any positive activities taking place in other CGs. The responses (n=18) can be grouped according to the activities that take place (n=7) and engagement in CGs (n=5).

Activities taking place in CGs

CGs positively regarded the diversity of activities taking place across other CGs including having an integrated kitchen and cooking together (Living Vital mentioned), having a fire pit to cook and eat together (Plot 22 and Millen Horizon mentioned), hosting workshops and events (Preston Park Demo Garden mentioned), "*Albion Hill garden, Brighton, invited members to create and personalise their own 'corners' - lovely idea*", encouraging growing in any space possible (incredible edible specifically mentioned), Community Supported Agriculture Schemes in order to share the benefits and risks of harvest, keeping chickens and offering other activities like yoga (Whitehawk Community Garden mentioned), and finally "*holding small fetes with live music and stalls and family activities*".

Engagement

CGs acknowledged the importance of having a variety of different opportunities across CGs in order to be able to engage a variety of volunteers. Others noted the importance of CGs that focus on specific groups such as children and young people, refugees, and those with mental health challenges citing that "*the academia is overwhelmingly positive in the effect green development, such as gardening can have on improving ones mindfulness*". Coordination from umbrella organisations such as the Lewis District Food Partnership and Greenhavens was seen as advantageous to sharing ideas, funding, training and volunteers.

Next steps of research

These survey results will be summarised into a two-page brief to circulate among local stakeholders to showcase the contributions of CGs in Brighton & Hove. In the longer term, these results will inform the next phase of research design of the PhD project 'Social and Natural Relations of Community Food Growing Environments and their Impacts on Food Biodiversity – A Case Study of Brighton & Hove'. This next phase will take a deeper dive into what is happening on the ground, working closely with growers both in community gardens and allotments to measure the diversity of what is being grown at a species richness level. This will be related to growers' experiences and perceptions of the natural and social landscapes of CFGEs. This will involve participatory photography, in-depth interviews and crop record keeping. This project also aims to explore what some barriers may be to accessing these spaces and how they may be overcome from a policy perspective.

If you would like more information or are a community food grower and would like to take part, please contact:

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This PhD project is part of the UK Food Systems Centre for Doctoral Training Programme. More information can be found online at: https://foodsystems-cdt.ac.uk/