



GROW LEARN THRIVE

Using therapeutic horticulture
to work with local communities
to create safe, encouraging and
empowering environments for
children and adults to learn and
improve their well-being.

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



ABOUT HAYGROVE COMMUNITY GARDENS

The Haygrove Community Gardens Charity was established by our parent company, soft fruit farm and growing systems experts, Haygrove, in 2017. The charity aims to support people who would benefit from the therapeutic nature of horticulture, to engage school children in growing healthy fruit and vegetables, and to provide accessible green space for education and enjoyment.

We develop our own community gardens and support others, aiming to give young people an awareness of how food is produced and opportunities for fun outdoor learning, to improve the mental health and physical wellbeing of disadvantaged and disabled people by improving self-confidence, social interaction and teaching new skills.

We have our own projects in Ross-on-Wye where we have been working for over 10 years, Ledbury where we run a Tabletop Gardening Group and are working on creating a new garden on a site close to the town, and Newent where we have a beautiful young woodland situated on the banks of the Ell Brook.





CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Do something remarkable, dammit!

At Haygrove we believe the world would be much better if business defined and measured success across three bottom lines - **Profit, People and Planet**. Since 2013, one of our contributions to those bottom lines is the **Haygrove Community Gardens Charity**. Some of our achievements in 2024:

- We had a record year for schoolchildren visiting our Ross garden
- We set up our new Family Hub with the support of Herefordshire Council, providing group and 1:1 support to families in South Herefordshire
- We welcomed over 75 employees from local businesses through our team building days and 25 businesses involved in supporting our projects.

In 2025 we look forward to welcoming visitors to our new garden in Ledbury and continuing to build on our success.

2024 IN NUMBERS

We have had a remarkable year:

126 individual volunteers, who provided **4396 hours** of volunteering,

64 adults with mental health needs and learning disabilities were provided with **1868 hours** of support in Ross-on-Wye,

1248 schoolchildren, visiting between February and November,

128 children enjoyed our Stick Man Trail,

We handed out over **40 tonnes** of food through our Zero Waste Stall,

19 young people volunteered with us as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award,

We provided **453 hours** of therapeutic gardening support to **24 adults** with learning and physical disabilities and mental health needs in Ledbury,

We ran **8 wellbeing walks** in our Woodland Garden in Newent,

Our events attracted over **2000 visitors**.



ROSS-ON-WYE COMMUNITY GARDEN



The Community Garden in Ross continued to develop and provided garden sessions on several mornings a week – these remained popular with adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues alike. This year we were also involved in Dementia Action Week in May, hosting a Tai Chi session for those suffering with dementia, and Learning Disability Week in June, where many of our users created paintings which were displayed in Ross Library.

Maintenance of the garden, particularly during the growing season, is always a challenge; those who use the garden may not be physically able to undertake the more strenuous jobs, so we were lucky to have the help of the Community Payback Team (part of the Probation Service) who visited the garden once a month.

The support of other agencies such as Age UK and Taurus Healthcare is crucial, and this year we relaunched our Talk Community Hub offering signposting and a listening ear. As part of our work with Talk Community we continued to run exercise classes and a free pre-loved uniform stall. We even appeared on TV – starring in an episode of ‘Escape to the Country’!

OUR WORK WITH ADULTS

We continued to have a good number of regular attendees for our garden sessions, many of those attending have physical and learning disabilities or mental health needs. The highlight for many is still our End of Year Awards when every participant receives a certificate, not only for their amazing work throughout the year but also to celebrate being a central member of our community.

We don't charge for most of our activities or require people to navigate a referral procedure to access our services. Both could discourage the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our community from visiting us. We engage with people in a low-key, non-threatening way, and somehow spending time in our beautiful garden environment encourages people to open up, trust and engage with us – we can then introduce people to more specialised services that can help. For example, our recent collaboration with Taurus Healthcare means that people who are not registered with a GP or are reluctant to attend a GP surgery can access health advice such as blood pressure tests and medication advice in an informal setting.





OUR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people are at the heart of our charity. We asked children, young people and their families what is important to them and found that there is a growing interest in connecting with nature, growing and food. At our Ross garden, young visitors experienced first-hand how to grow and nurture plants to become the food that we eat, how to create low cost, healthy meals from produce grown in the garden, how wildlife in the garden such as bees and butterflies helps to provide a healthy environment for plants to grow as well, and how to use natural resources to create beautiful crafts.

Through this work we demonstrate that the garden is not just a place to learn and understand about plants, but also to understand how the natural world can really transform our own lives and improve our well-being, and a place to reflect and relax. Children living in families affected by serious illness have also benefitted through our partnership with Hope Support Services, a local charity who held a fortnightly session at the garden.

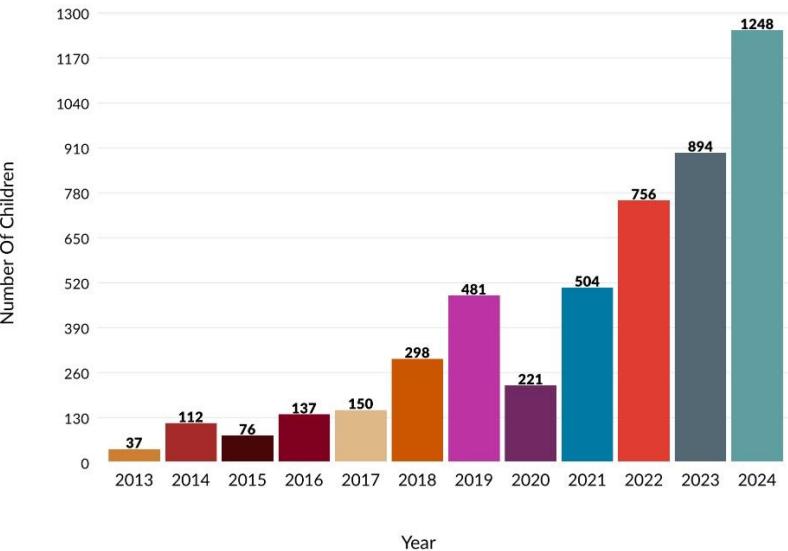


OUR WORK WITH SCHOOLS

Our schools' work has gone from strength to strength this year. Building on last year's achievement of 894 schoolchildren visiting Ross-on-Wye Community Garden, we set ourselves a goal of breaching the 1000 mark... and we smashed that target, with 1248 children from 13 schools attending at least one garden session during the year.

We were pleased to welcome older children from John Kyrle High School to the garden for the first time this year with a group attending in the Autumn term.

School children visiting the garden





OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

To cater for children in school holidays, we ran our Holidays, Activities and Food Programme again this year, providing craft activities and an Easter Egg Hunt during the Easter break, and three activity weeks in August; Pottery Club, Creative Writing Club and Arts and Crafts Club. These sessions were aimed at children receiving free school meals with each session providing activities, support and a hot meal cooked from scratch.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is a wonderful opportunity for your people to become involved in community activity and this year 19 young people started volunteering with us through the scheme, working on bronze, silver and gold awards.

Cooking and Growing Clubs continued at weekends during the summer, supporting children and young people to learn about healthy meals and where our food comes from.





ROSS FAMILY HUB



With the help of funding from Herefordshire Council's Safer Communities Fund, in April this year we set up our Family Hub. The aim of the project was to support families in need at the earliest stage; to offer a listening ear, support, training, resources and peer support.

60 representatives from local organisations attended our launch day in June; this was followed by our Family Fun Day, the first of many activities throughout the summer and autumn months, including a Teddy Bears' Picnic and a Halloween Party:

'Really fun; good to do something sociable without spending lots of money; good community use of garden'

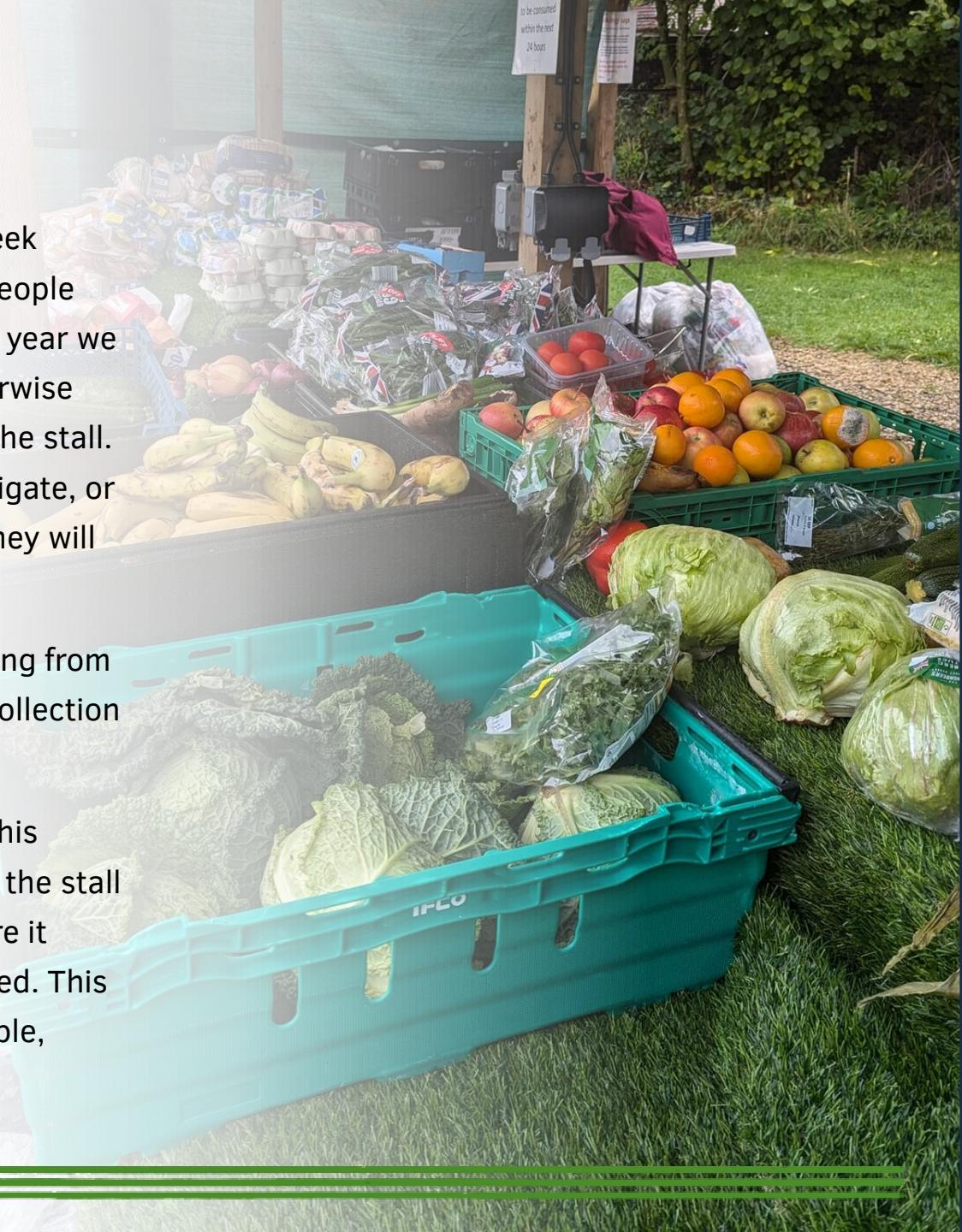
The project supported families who were home educating through a regular drop in and provided 1:1 support for families in need. Free, pre-loved school uniform was provided through stalls in the summer holidays and at the start of term.

ZERO WASTE STALL

Our Zero Waste Stall continued to open six days a week throughout the year and provided a vital service to people who struggled with the increasing cost of living. This year we redistributed over 40 tonnes of food that would otherwise have been wasted and we had over 10,000 visits to the stall. Unlike Food Banks, there is no referral system to navigate, or form to fill in – we assume that if people need food they will come.

The team of volunteers do an excellent job of collecting from local stores seven days a week and from FareShare collection points twice a week.

We have found that one of the knock-on benefits of this activity is the regular gathering of people waiting for the stall to open. Some will arrive as much as two hours before it opens, demonstrating how much this service is needed. This creates an opportunity for us to come alongside people, listen and support them as much as we can.



LEDBURY COMMUNITY PROJECT



We have been looking for a site to develop a new community garden in Ledbury and 2024 was the year that we found it! Our new site will be on the Hereford Road just to the west of Ledbury - and we hope to develop that site in 2025. Meanwhile, our successful Tabletop Gardening Group continued, having moved to Leadon Bank in early 2024.

The group ran weekly throughout the year with a break in August and included a visit to Hampton Court Gardens in Herefordshire. Group members enjoyed a variety of activities depending on the seasons, from planting seeds to exploring the sensory properties of herbs, to flower arranging and natural crafts.

A big part of the work was the social and emotional support that the group gained. People reported feeling less isolated and those with mental health needs started to open up more. We observed people with learning disabilities, some of whom have quite complex needs, including behaviours that challenge and communication needs, started to relax in the group. There were also some good friendships made between group members.

NEWENT WOODLAND WALK

We planted trees on our beautiful meadow bordering the Ell Brook at Newent, and started running some activities in early 2024:

Well-being Walks - gentle guided walks around the site, focusing on seasonal interest and connecting with nature to improve mental and physical well being.

Images of Nature - facilitated sessions looking at our natural environment and how we can capture that beauty using words and images.

Dogs and Clogs - dog walking social group – for fun and socialisation with other dog owners.

Later in the year we worked in some health and safety improvements for the site, including water safety measures on the Ell Brook. Flooding has affected the site at times during the year; we have found that the water recedes almost as soon as it appears. We look forward to increased activity on the site in 2025!





WHAT PEOPLE SAY

'We regularly ask for feedback and like hearing what people have to say about our activities:

'It reminds me of when I had my own garden' (older person attending garden session)

'Such a great day, thank you to all involved' (parent attending Teddy Bears' Picnic)

'A lovely thing to do for the children - my boys had a great time! Thank you!' (mum of children attending Halloween Party)

'I've made new friends and found a new interest' (person with mental health needs)

'I've enjoyed the variety [of activities] that you've put on. The light-heartedness is always welcoming and fun' (support worker of young man with learning and physical disability)

'I found the group interesting, helpful and friendly. Staff were welcoming and soon knew us all by name' (older person)

"Lovely varied group. It's a happy place (older person)

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Business engagement is crucial to our work. We started our journey by realising that businesses can do more – they can provide expertise, equipment and most importantly, funding, to support those living with less.

Thank you to all the businesses who have supported us in 2024:



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Haygrove Community Gardens offers the opportunity for employers to use our sites for team building and employee volunteering events. This year Christmas trees were recycled with the help of Chapel Tree Services, alongside our young Duke of Edinburgh volunteers, and we also welcomed back Telus Agriculture & Consumer Goods, Berries Unlocked and, of course, our friends from Haygrove Growing Systems team.

We find that offering the gardens to employers is a win-win activity. Employees get the chance to 'make a difference' – to work with and help people less fortunate, and our gardens get short term intensive help when we most need it. Community gardens facilitate the integration of other local businesses into the community. By forming partnerships with local businesses, we can not only help ensure the gardens' ongoing success but also provide a means by which their staff can benefit from using our gardens, whilst helping other visitors.





WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Part of the ethos of Haygrove community Gardens is to forge good relationships with other community organisations and groups – if we can't help, we will know someone who can... Inviting our partner organisations into the gardens means that we can offer a holistic approach to people who may not be able to find the right support for themselves. Amongst others, this year we have worked with:

- Talk Community
- Taurus Healthcare
- Shaw Healthcare
- Hope Support Services
- Probation Service
- Ross Community Development Trust
- Ross Library
- Herefordshire Wildlife Trust

Thank you to all our partners and supporters!

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

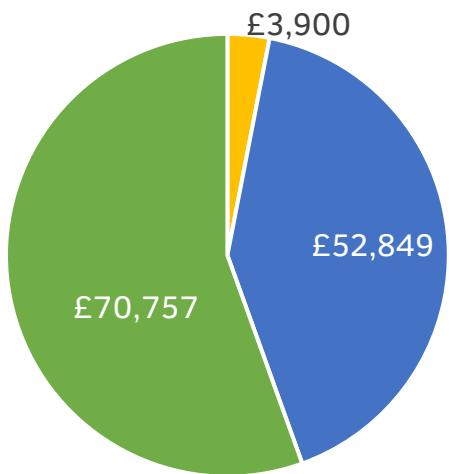
2024 has been a year of growth and change for the charity. We have recruited three new workers and a new trustee who will influence and inspire us over the coming year with fresh ideas and energy. Our aims for the next year are:

- Ross-on-Wye Community Garden – expand on our work with children and young people, and consolidate our Family Hub
- Ledbury Community Project – develop our new site into a community garden for the Ledbury area
- Newent Woodland Garden – provide more well-being walks at Newent Woodland Garden and start working with local schools
- Establish more links with more businesses and encourage their involvement
- Diversify our funding base to include more fundraising activities.



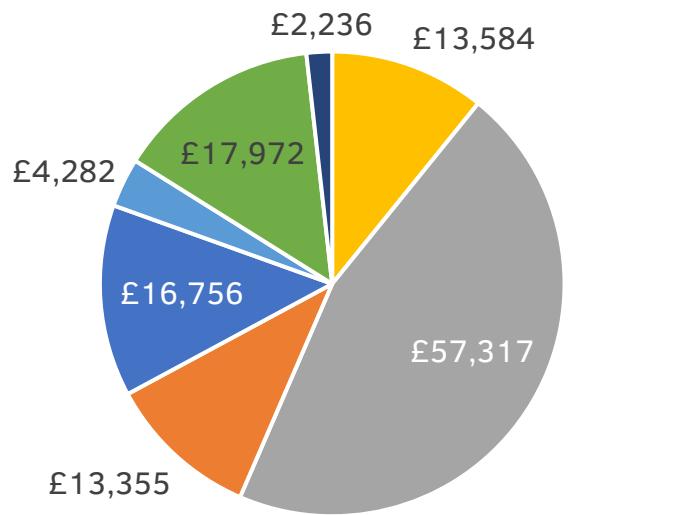
ACCOUNTS SUMMARY

In 2024 our income was £127,506 (£86,123 in 2023):



- Restricted donations
- Unrestricted donations
- Grants

Our expenditure was £125,502 (£90,715 in 2023):



- Garden costs
- Garden visitor costs
- Professional fees
- Other
- Project delivery
- Garden administration
- Charity management

At December 2024 our reserves were £48,943, of which £26,193 were unrestricted funds.
Our full, audited accounts are available on our website.



OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our gardens would not be the thriving and beautiful places that they are today without our team of over 100 amazing volunteers. We value and nurture volunteers, providing training and support, and opportunities to socialise and have fun.

'I can't explain how much the garden means to me. To be able to spend time here and help others; it's a wonderful experience'

Our volunteers have provided support in a wide variety of roles, from supporting our tabletop sessions in Ledbury, to making cakes for our events in Ross; from chatting to a vulnerable person with mental health needs to chatting with members of the public by helping on a stall at a community event; from clipping hedges to mending fences; from supervising teenagers to helping to run a schools session for 30 6-year-olds; from distributing food on the Zero Waste Stall to distributing free school uniform to parents.

Thank you to all our volunteers!



OUR STAFF & TRUSTEES

Our trustees during 2024 were:



Angus Davison
Chairman



Peter Scrimshaw
Treasurer



Sara Roberts
Trustee



Tim Crossman
Trustee



Sarah Francis
Company Secretary

Our staff during 2024 were:



Cath Baker
Director



Tim Shelley
Garden Manager



Helen Saunders
Garden Manager



Kathryn Porteous
Garden Assistant



Kris Ehmer
Children and
Young People's
Worker



Tina Knapman
Family Link
Worker

OUR FUNDERS

Thank you to our funders and supporters for their generosity this year:



The **Eveson**
Charitable **Trust**

W
Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION



E F BULMER
TRUST

Herefordshire
Council

West Mercia
POLICE

John Campion
Police and Crime Commissioner
West Mercia

PEOPLE'S
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COMMUNITY
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Ross-on-Wye
Town Council

co
op

TALK COMMUNITY

HERE FOR HEREFORDSHIRE
HOLIDAYS

the
ODDfELLOWS
SINCE 1810
making friends, helping people





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Charity no: 1176183

Company no: 10573185

www.haygrovecommunitygardens.org

