

METROPOLITAN PUBLIC GARDENS ASSOCIATION



Annual Report and
Accounts 2020



Myatts Fields, LB Lambeth

Originally designed in 1893 by Fanny Wilkinson, the MPGA's Landscape Gardener.

Front cover picture:

Alexandra Park, LB Haringey

Alexandra Park received a Heritage Park of the Year Gold Award from London in Bloom 2020, sponsored by the MPGA



ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2020

CONTENTS

02	OFFICERS
03	INTRODUCTION FROM PRESIDENT
04	CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
06	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
08	THE LONDON SPADE – 50th ANNIVERSARY AWARDS
10	GRANTS 2020
14	ADDITIONAL AWARDS
18	BULBS FOR LONDON
19	ELMS FOR LONDON
20	2021 UPDATE
23	GARDENS & GREEN SPACES UNDER THREAT
28	FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
34	JOIN THE MPGA

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Hugh Johnson OBE

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Joyce Bellamy MBE
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Trustees

William B Fraser OBE, Marjorie Dowbiggin, Rex Thornborough MStJ RD, Alistair Gould, Nicholas Evans,

THE CHARITABLE PURPOSE of the MPGA is the protection, preservation and enhancing of public gardens, disused burial grounds, churchyards and open spaces or land situated within the Metropolitan Area of Greater London; the provision of seats and the planting of trees within places of public resort and the encouragement of public interest in the cultivation of gardens or similar public areas.

Edited by Annabel Ward

Website www.mpga.org.uk

Email secretary@mpga.org.uk



MPGA@MPGA London

Registered Charity Number 303330



INTRODUCTION FROM PRESIDENT Hugh Johnson OBE

As if we needed proof, the sights and sounds of Lockdown in Spring 2020 rubbed in how vital the experiences of nature are to our sanity. Who could forget the night time stillness, the dawn chorus heard for the first time in busy parts of London and the blackbirds celebrating their sudden triumph over universal noise.

Many Londoners made their first acquaintance with the green squares in their neighbourhood, or at least looked upon them with fresh eyes. The effect has not rubbed off. Our parks, squares and gardens have been busier than ever before.

Londoners under fifty or so probably don't remember that, until the 1970s, the other great London tree apart from the plane, was the elm. There were seventy or eighty-footers, busy with birds, in all our green squares. It seemed impossible at the time, but Dutch elm disease killed them all. They were the earliest trees to green in spring and the latest to go bare, often keeping their bright golden canopies until Christmas.

It has long been an ambition of mine to repopulate London with elms. Recent successes in hybridisation have given us new varieties, immune to the killer. There is a row of splendid young specimens in front of Kensington Palace. The MPGA is active in promoting and planting new elms and is offering token elms to every borough to publicise their restoration.

Under our new Chairman, Rex Thornborough, the Association is all the more active in bringing nature's beauty into sometimes neglected corners of our capital. London owes its gratitude to our volunteers, our donors and supporters. Your support is more needed, more appreciated and for more reasons.

With good green wishes.





CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020

Rex Thornborough RD FCSI

As we look back on the past year of pandemic with mixed feelings, sorrow for those whose lives have been taken as a result of COVID or who have been unable to access medical treatment because of the pressure on our wonderful NHS, our appreciation of the green spaces in our capital city, its parks and public gardens, has grown enormously. Trees, plants, grass and flowers have done so much to lift spirits and maintain both mental and physical health in these dark times. Birdsong triumphed over airplanes and road traffic noise and people became much more aware of bees, butterflies, moths and all sorts of other pollinators as well as the wide variety of wildlife in our city which previously went unnoticed because of the hectic pace of life.

The MPGA continues to do what it was founded to do by our Victorian forefathers, working towards protecting and enhancing green space in the London Metropolitan area. We couldn't do this without the terrific support we get from our partners particularly Taylors Bulbs of Holbeach, for their part in the Bulbs for London project, and Bulldog Tools for their sponsorship of the London Spade Award made each year to a project or an individual, or last year to two individuals, who had made a special positive difference to the green scene in London. So many parts of London are brightened by Bulbs for London and Taylors Bulbs continued their support even at the height of the pandemic when demand for their bulbs had virtually cleared out all stock by the end of Autumn. We are most grateful.

Lockdown meant that a large number of projects were put on hold just as our income fell because of dividend cuts and less money around, so the requests for support that we usually get fell as well. We were, however,

pleased to support a number of schemes that did get up and running and we look forward to continuing to do so in the future. I am pleased to report that the Association is in reasonable financial health and wish to publicly thank our previous Treasurer, Marjorie Dowbiggin, for her 12 years of looking after our finances and to welcome Tara Healy-Singh who has taken over from her. Changing signatories on bank accounts in a pandemic has not been easy so my thanks are due to all involved for their forbearance.

We have taken further steps into the digital world by becoming part of the Google Arts and Culture website [g.co/GardensUnited](https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/gardensunited) and our own MPGA website is undergoing a transformation. For both of these, our thanks are due to Shirley Brihi for all the work that she has put into this as well as the Google developers and their colleagues.

As we officially launch our Elms for London (E4L) project at the AGM this year, it is perhaps worth remembering what an impact the Elm tree has had on London life over the centuries. Elm is a wood that does well in water or underground. When the old London Bridge, the one with the houses and shops on it, was demolished in 1831, the footings, which were of Elm, were still in remarkable condition after a mere 600 years. The remnants of the old bridge, i.e. the remains of some of the now nearly 800 years old Elm footings, can still be seen in the Thames at low tide some 30 metres downstream of the present bridge. Elm was also used for pipes to bring the first piped water into our capital city so the impact on the historical development of London life is obvious. We feel that it is time to reintroduce this wonderful tree and to use the new disease resistant varieties available today to replace

the many thousands lost to Dutch Elm Disease some 50 years ago. It has been the aim of our President, Hugh Johnson, for the MPGA to instigate a Trees for London project for some time and the E4L initiative ties in nicely with Her Majesty's Green Canopy Project for 2022. It is hoped that collaboration with a number of other charities, such as Veterans Growth in Sussex, will provide space to "grow on" whips and small trees for London Boroughs to purchase in the future providing both training and income for these charities.

The Association will continue to lobby against poor and opportunistic planning applications where valuable green space is at risk. Our recent opposition, along with the Garden Museum and many others, to the proposed Paradise Gardens development in Lambeth meant this application was called-in by the Secretary of State and refused. It also highlighted that planning policy only requires that land receives 2 hours of sunlight measured at midday on the 21st of March and that is supposed to be sufficient for people and plants. Again, along with the Garden Museum and others, we are asking that the Minister set a new standard of a minimum of 6 hours to deter the proliferation of tower blocks and the blight that their shadows cast on surrounding communities.

So, there is a lot to look forward to in the coming Platinum Jubilee year from Elm trees to digital and beyond! No doubt there will also be more insensitive planning applications to oppose.

I would like to publicly thank our President and Vice-Presidents for their continued support and advice and of course the Committee who give so unselfishly of their time to ensure that our work continues.

Let us hope for much less interesting times in the future!



St. Luke's Gardens, Chelsea, originally designed by Fanny Wilkinson

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

For the first time in its history the Annual General Meeting of the MPGA took place digitally, with attendees joining via Zoom from the comfort of their own homes.

Chairman Rex Thornborough welcomed attendees, including several London Mayors, and thanked the MPGA's President, Vice Presidents, Trustees, and members of the Executive Committee for all their support over the past year. Particular thanks were given to the MPGA's sponsors: Taylors Bulbs of Holbeach, Bulldog Tools, the Worshipful Company of Gardeners and Joseph Rochford Gardens.

He noted that the experience of lockdown has provided mounting evidence of the value of green space to health and mental wellbeing. Yet the relaxation of government planning rules means that green space is under more threat than ever and the MPGA's efforts will have to increase.

President Hugh Johnson thanked all the volunteers involved in the MPGA for their goodwill, research, activity and effort, and announced that a project is now underway setting up an initiative to restore the elm as a major tree in London. Breeding work is going on to find trees that are resistant to Dutch Elm Disease, and suitable ones will be offered to the Mayors of all London boroughs.

Minutes of the previous AGM, and the 2019 Annual Report and Accounts were approved, as was the appointment of Officers and Committee members.

In its 50th anniversary year, two London Spades (provided by Bulldog Tools) were presented: to Tony Leach, CEO of Parks for London, for his outstanding contribution to London's green spaces, and Trina Lynskey, on behalf of Deptford Folk, for the improvement, preservation and protection of Deptford's parks.

Tony Leach talked about the work of Parks for London, whose aspirations for growth are focused on championing green space; providing a brokerage service to encourage collaboration and partnership so that all parts of councils understand the value of parks; attracting and protecting resources; and developing skills.

The Deptford Folk had prepared an inspiring short video showing the range of their activities, including 200 Trees for the John Evelyn project, pond restoration, cricket, and a forest school. One inspiration is Ada Salter, based in Bermondsey in the early 20th century, whose catchphrase was "fresh air and fun".

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking the team who had organised it and all those who attended.



*Victoria Park, Bethnal Green, LB Tower Hamlets
Heritage Park of the Year 2020 Gold Award from London in Bloom, sponsored by the MPGA*

THE LONDON SPADE – 50TH ANNIVERSARY AWARDS

In celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the London Spade, it was decided for the first time to honour two worthy recipients namely Tony Leach, CEO of Parks for London, and Trina Lynskey on behalf of Deptford Folk.

Tony Leach : CEO, Parks for London

Tony has had a busy 2020 with Parks for London (PfL) establishing itself as a fully independent charity, having been hosted by the Greater London Authority (GLA) for 18 years. Their supporter feedback was positive with over 66% responding with high levels of satisfaction; 92% agreeing that their activities were very relevant and useful.

Tony and team have worked hard on guidance and support over the course of the Covid pandemic. The constantly evolving government guidance and national lockdowns impacted on the way land managers and owners delivered their services, having to react rapidly to a changing and unprecedented situation. Tony was key to bringing together a new alliance to help coordinate the public communications across the London Boroughs. Weekly alliance meetings brought together The Royal Parks, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, the GLA and London Councils.

Parks for London were delighted to report that Tony was awarded the 'London Spade' by the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association (MPGA), for his outstanding contribution to London's green spaces. PfL have also become corporate members of the MPGA and the London Gardens Trust.



Tony Leach, CEO of Parks for London

The 'Good Parks for London' report, fourth edition, was published in November 2020. It provides an effective tool to promote good practice, raise quality standards, encourage collaboration among London Boroughs, and to lobby to protect resources for parks and green spaces. It evaluates how well London Boroughs protect and invest in their parks and green spaces using the 10 'Good Parks Criteria'.

Currently, Tony is focusing on translating the aspirations of the London Green Spaces Commission report alongside a new Equal Opportunities Policy. He continues to facilitate cross-sectoral and cross-jurisdictional collaboration, encourage debate, and inform policy and practice in identified priority areas with an expanding team.

Deptford Folk led by Trina Lynskey

When the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association was established in 1882, its principal objective was the 'acquiring for permanent preservation of public use, of gardens, disused burial grounds, churchyards, open spaces, areas of land likely to be used for building purposes, strips of land adjoining roads and footpaths...' and the provision of seats and planting of trees.

In 2015, a group of residents in Deptford, south east London, had much the same idea when Lewisham Council announced it was turning their local park into a pay-to-play astroturf football pitch. 'We only have a few small parks round here, and we didn't want the grass where our kids were already kicking a ball around to be replaced by a plastic pitch with floodlights,' says Trina Lynskey, the dynamic Chair of the Deptford Folk. This constituted park group was set up by Trina and other local volunteers to persuade the council of the folly of their proposal, lobby the community about what was actually wanted from the parks, and then make it happen.

'It was important that we got a true picture of what everyone thought, not just the opinions of the sort of middle-class people (like me!) who usually respond to surveys,' says Trina. 'We wanted to hear from the kids, so we came up with the idea of offering free cycle repairs, in association with a local cycling charity, in exchange for taking the survey.' The event was a massive success and 98% of those who got their bike fixed rejected the council's proposal.



Trina Lynskey, Chair of Deptford Folk

'What they actually wanted were bins, benches and more trees to improve the parks we have,' says Trina. 'They also loved the cycle repairs, and that has now become a really sociable monthly event, along with occasional open air theatre, cinema and other community events.'

In 2018, Deptford Folk planted 200 trees to mark the 200th anniversary of the publication of 17th century Deptford resident John Evelyn's diaries, assisted by a grant from the MPGA, and in 2020 were awarded the prestigious MPGA London Spade, in recognition of the transformative work carried out by this impressive group of volunteers.

'This kind of recognition really helps us, both with motivation and with raising funds for everything that we still want to do,' says Trina. 'We have delivered on everything we initially promised – bins, benches, trees, pond repairs and better play space. Now we want to enhance and ornament our parks with more planting and more events. These parks are so important. Without common space you can't have a vibrant community.'



Deptford Folk, LB Lewisham

MPGA GRANTS 2020

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Alexander Community Garden London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Alexander Community Garden was created from an unused, almost derelict, strip of land behind a housing block in Tower Hamlets by the charity Seeds for Growth, partially funded by a grant from the MPGA. Members of the MPGA Grants Committee visited the Community Garden to advise on the successful development of the site before work began. Since then,

we have been delighted to see this shady and unappealing patch being transformed into a lovely garden, complete with play area, attractively planted raised beds and a shed for tools. The garden has been particularly appreciated by the community during lockdown. As one happy tenant said, her whole family is delighted by the creation of a 'wonderful new garden on the waste and neglected land that we used to have. My children love playing on the rope swings – as I do also when no one is looking! We look forward to enjoying our new garden in the post COVID summer.'



Alexander Community Garden,
LB Tower Hamlets



Bede Estate

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

The Bede Estate in Tower Hamlets contains 460 properties, including 33 which are overcrowded with tenants having priority health needs. The existing green spaces between properties were in a poor state but, over the last year, a project spearheaded by Trees for Cities and Eastend Homes and partially funded by the MPGA, has seen the transformation of the area. Despite lockdown restrictions, there has been an extensive programme of planting, including over 500 whips enhanced with bulbs and general herbaceous plants. All different varieties were chosen to increase local biodiversity, in the hope of encouraging house sparrows, wild bees, and other wildlife, whilst also helping to improve air quality and significantly improving the amenity value of these pockets of land.

Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha

London Borough of Hounslow

Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, in Hounslow, which serves the local Sikh community as a place of assembly and for worship, approached the MPGA for a grant to buy fruit trees, compost and plant liners. These were intended to improve the appearance of a stark area of paving adjacent to the temple, while offering the prospect of home-grown organic apples in the years to come. The MPGA were delighted to support this application, and although the pandemic caused some problems with logistics, two Malus 'Red Falstaff' have already been planted and more trees are expected to be added in the months to come.

HCRA Community Garden

London Borough of Harrow

Harrow Civic Residents Association (HCRA) volunteers turned a patch of wasteland outside a local shop into a community garden in 2015, and were devastated when the garden was vandalised in December 2019. Funding from the MPGA has helped to bring the garden back to life with new plants, compost, mulch, and renovations to wooden raised beds.

The grant from the MPGA was confirmed in September and a small working party completed the garden revamp. The garden is now back to looking lovely and lush with new flowers and foliage. The garden is a much-loved green space. People's fondness for it is exemplified by the fact one local resident saw the work taking place on the garden as they went by on the bus and jumped off at the next stop and came to help – despite the torrential rain!



Harrow Civic
Residents
Association,
LB Harrow

The Yard Theatre & Hub 67

London Borough of Hackney

Hub67 is a community centre in Hackney Wick, run by The Yard Theatre. The Hub runs street parties, leadership programmes and skills mentoring for teenagers, free after-school arts, crafts and drama clubs for children. Activities such as yoga and film nights are masterminded by local residents. The area in front of the Hub comprises a small courtyard and four raised beds. Five raised beds outside the building, were also in need of renovation.



Hub 67, The Yard Theatre, LB Hackney

The MPGA were pleased to award the funds to carry out this work.

The planting plan incorporated a mixture of bee, insect and butterfly friendly flowers, herbs and vegetables. Together with hardy pollution-resistant evergreen shrubs, trees and ferns, the planting was designed to provide interest throughout all seasons so that visitors can enjoy The Hub all year round. The grant awarded by the MPGA enabled the purchase of tools, plants, bulbs, seeds, small trees and compost.

MUSEUM

Garden Museum

London Borough of Lambeth

Garden Museum Sponsored Swim

In 2020 we were very happy to support the sponsored swim which Christopher Woodward, Garden Museum Director, was planning to raise funds to stop the Garden Museum from closure. However, in consequence of the pandemic, it wasn't until Friday 30 April 2021, that Christopher finally set foot on the Isle of Tresco, after completing his sponsored swim. This makes Christopher the first person to ever swim the 50 mile route from Newlyn, Cornwall, to Tresco. As of 1st May 2021 donations to the Swim had reached £418,000 (incl. Gift Aid), and over one thousand people and organisations had donated, including the MPGA.



Christopher Woodward, Director Garden Museum

At the time, Christopher said "Thanks to our Friends, Patrons and supporters, our Emergency Appeal has succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. If we reach this new target [of £500,000] the Garden Museum will be safe. Not just safe, ready for an exciting programme of exhibitions and festivals in the year ahead, and we can go back to our work teaching children about plants and gardens, and building an archive of Britain's garden history."



Garden Museum, LB Lambeth

BENCHES

Three years ago we acquired a number of wooden garden benches following the closure of the Royal National Rose Society Gardens which we were able to re-use thanks to the good offices of Paul Rochford of Joseph Rochford Gardens. Your Chairman jet-washed them all to clean them up and make them

presentable and Paul saw that they were repaired where necessary. The first 8 were delivered to Pinner Village Gardens and we are in the process of delivering the remainder to a further six sites including 3 schools, the Huguenot Burial Ground (LB Wandsworth), Walworth Garden (LB Southwark) and Beverley Park (RB Kingston). A good example of re-purposing and teamwork in operation in the horticultural sector!



Bench donated to Pinner Village Garden Park, LB Harrow
Photo courtesy of Bill Chalmers

ADDITIONAL AWARDS

Open Gardens Squares Weekend

With the impact of Covid-19 and the consequent restrictions, the Trustees of the Open Garden Squares Weekend reluctantly took the decision to cancel the 2020 event which was due to take place on 2nd September.

The risks of running this very popular event for thousands of ticket holders, gardeners, volunteers and staff whilst the pandemic persisted, were just too high. The cancellation denied everyone the chance of a wonderful visit to some of London's best closed gardens and left the London Parks & Gardens Trust without the income they rely on.

2021 will show an on-line virtual tour of the gardens and it is hoped that during 2022 the annual event will return to its former glory.

London City Farms & Community Gardens

Since 1999, members of the London City Farms and Community Gardens Association have gathered each autumn for a Harvest Festival celebration, and for the last 15 years, the MPGA has been pleased to sponsor two awards that recognise the achievements of this inspirational group.

Cathy Maund, Director of the Hammersmith Community Gardens Association, has helped organise every one of the 22 Harvest Festivals, including a very special 'lockdown' event in 2020. Festival events normally include an animal competition, horticulture show, hands-on craft sessions and a hotly contested tug-of-war competition but, as she explains, 2020 was inevitably rather different.

'We did miss the fun of getting together with all our friends and colleagues, but the unexpected advantage of holding our first online festival was that we got entries from a lot of smaller community projects which hadn't participated before. We know that it can be genuinely life changing for a lot of the young people who get involved with what we do, so it was great to see so many more of them taking part.'

Categories for the virtual event included Best Portrait of a Volunteer or Staff Member, The Most Pleasantest Pig

and the Best Goat Beard. Photos of the winners can be seen on Twitter @LDNHarvestFest. 'It was brilliant that technology came to our rescue last year, but we are looking forward to meeting in real life in 2021,' says Cathy.

The 23rd London Harvest Festival will be held at Lambourne End in Essex and, although it will not be open to members of the public because of the ongoing pandemic, the MPGA will once again be proudly sponsoring two awards at this most joyous of celebrations.



Mudlarks Community Gardens

Winner:
Best Portrait of a Volunteer or Staff Member

Sponsored by the MPGA

London in Bloom

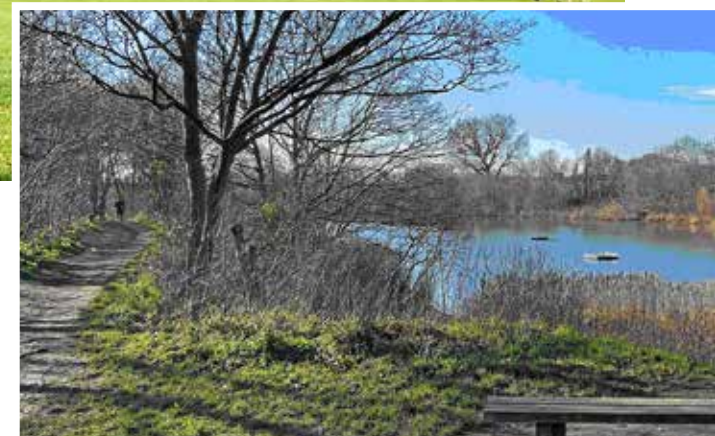
Due to lockdowns and other restrictions it was not possible to run the London in Bloom competition in the usual way during 2020. The organisation also suffered from a substantial loss of income, because of the withdrawal of sponsors and the halving of entry fees to reflect the difficult circumstances in which groups were operating. However, this competition, which encourages horticultural excellence and community involvement, was well placed to respond to the increased interest in gardening as a source of wellbeing that became apparent over lockdown. By instituting a desktop assessment programme, and providing online and telephone support and advice, the London in Bloom team were able to support participants and to issue awards for their achievements.

Under the circumstances no overall winners in each category were declared and therefore no trophies awarded. However, several Gold Awards were made for the Common of the Year which the MPGA supports amongst which were Streatham Common, Clapham Common, Tooting Common and, on their first attempt, Barnes Common. The MPGA also sponsors Heritage Park of the Year and there were nine contenders which achieved Gold Awards including Brockwell Park, Lambeth and Alexandra Park. Much positive feedback was received from the groups involved which range from small local community gardening projects to large London boroughs and the Cities of London and Westminster.

The MPGA are pleased to have helped to ensure the continuation of the London in Bloom competition in a year when the importance of gardening came to be acknowledged so widely.



Brockwell Park, LB Lambeth



Barnes Common, LB Richmond

BULBS FOR LONDON

2020 was a difficult year for the gardening world, with garden centres closed until the middle of May and staff shortages. In fact we were not sure that Bulbs for London would go ahead this year with our partners Taylors Bulbs of Holbeach. As it transpired, Taylors did an amazing job and managed to provide mixed boxes of bulbs to 38 gardens and green spaces across the London boroughs.

In spite of the limited number of bulbs available, we were still able to supply a wide range of sites including parks, community gardens, schools, allotments, libraries, nature reserves, almshouses and hospice gardens. For many people, London's parks were a lifeline during the Covid pandemic and it was gratifying to see people escaping to the parks and enjoying this wonderful resource. All in all, we supplied bulbs to 12 parks, including Deptford Park in Lewisham, Perivale Park in Ealing and Brockwell Park in Lambeth. As well as the John Keats Primary School in Southwark and Childeric Primary in Lewisham, we gave bulbs to a school gardening club operating at Baxendale Street Gardens in Tower Hamlets. We were also pleased to provide bulbs to the

garden of the Henry Dickens Community Centre in North Kensington, which is in the shadow of Grenfell Tower. Here they hold a range of courses and provide a safe and welcoming space for local residents.

Old Paradise Gardens has also been in the news this year and they were delighted to receive their BfL bulbs. It's a small urban garden close to the Garden Museum in Lambeth and has been under threat owing to a proposed tower block which would have put the park in shadow for much of the day. You can read more about this in 'Gardens under Threat'.

We always let Taylors know just how much their bulbs are appreciated and send on to them some of the wonderful photographs we receive. Each year we are struck by the sincerity of the emails from our recipients and it's obvious that the bulbs make a huge difference to the daily lives of so many people, especially in deprived areas.

Finally huge thanks again to Taylors for their continuing support and for making this project possible. We're also grateful to the various Friends Groups, garden organisations and volunteers who play a large part in the success of this excellent scheme.



Church Street Square,
LB Richmond upon Thames

Columbia Road,
LB Tower Hamlets



'Thank you for the flowers'
Garden Museum, LB Lambeth

ELMS FOR LONDON

The 2021 AGM will see the launch of a major new MPGA initiative to plant more elm trees across London. Elms once made up a significant proportion of the city's tree cover, enhancing our streetscapes and providing a unique environment for the many moths, and their caterpillars, that feed predominantly on elm leaves. Sadly, in the past 50 years, the majority of these stately specimens have succumbed to disease, changing the face of our capital. Their only legacy is the many streets, parks and houses named for a great elm which once stood in that location.

Today, few amongst the younger generations have ever seen an elm, but with the recent introduction of many excellent new disease-resistant cultivars, there is a chance this situation can now be reversed. Over the past few months, a group set up from the MPGA Executive Committee has been liaising with various interested parties, including those involved in research and planning, to further this important enterprise.

It is the intention of this Committee to encourage London landowners, park managers, garden designers and borough tree officers to join us in the repopulation of this genus through the Elms for London initiative. This will be a collaborative project bringing together experts from across the country to ensure we keep abreast of ongoing cultivar developments and fully understand the wildlife implications. We aim to capture the public imagination by evoking the historical context and reinforcing the environmental importance of this iconic tree and, with our combined years of experience in charitable support, community engagement and specialist horticulture, we can ensure that our funding opportunities are effectively utilised.

Throughout the MPGA's history, we have been involved in many important and profound causes, all for the City's benefit, and it is hoped that our members will share the excitement as we embark upon our next great campaign.



Elm in Bethnal Green Park, LB Tower Hamlets



Ulmus glabra samaras

2021 UPDATE

March 2020 saw the first Covid lockdown, since when we have faced varying degrees of disruption. Our work and the way we operate has obviously been affected, with our AGM and quarterly meetings being held online, and many other adjustments having to be made.

Archives

Our search for the remaining missing Annual Reports more or less came to a halt as many archives and museums were closed and volunteers' activities were restricted. To recap, we are still looking for the 1889 and 1903 Reports. After our appeal last year, an MPGA member kindly gave us a lead to the 1903 Report which we hope will be fruitful. The Reports for the years from 1975 to 1986 are incomplete and when we can we will check the Minutes for the relevant information.

Most of our archives are held at the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) in Clerkenwell and they have agreed to accept a further batch of our more recent material. Unfortunately the transfer has been delayed, as they have been closed and have only recently started to work through their backlog.

Blog

Marc Owen, our favourite blogger, was unable to go out and about to visit gardens in the past year. However, we are delighted to report that he has recently written a blog on Christchurch Gardens, Blackfriars, and this can be found on our website. Christchurch Gardens, a very overcrowded churchyard,

was rescued by the MPGA in 1899 and converted into a very attractive garden by Fanny Wilkinson, our resident garden designer. For their Centenary Year in 2000, Christchurch restored the gardens, for which they received our Spade Award. We've had a long and interesting connection with Christchurch for over 120 years, and we're delighted that Marc has featured this beautiful garden in his recent blog. All Marc's MPGA blogs can be found on our website www.mpga.org.uk. Marc also publishes a blog, Marc's Gardens, in which he writes on various topics of interest for the gardening fraternity.

Database

The database is building up nicely, thanks to the hard work of our volunteer Dr Hazel Russman. As we reported last year, some of the Annual Reports are very long, requiring numerous entries. This is obviously very time consuming, but we are making progress and are indebted to Hazel for the enormous effort she has put into this, as well as her database expertise.

Blue Plaque Application

As previously reported, we lodged our application with English Heritage for a Blue Plaque to be erected in Bloomsbury for Fanny Wilkinson, the first female professional Landscape Gardener in England, who was employed by the MPGA from 1884 to 1904. English Heritage recently advised us that they were experiencing delays in processing the application due to Covid, but this is very much on their agenda and they are trying to get it finalised as soon as possible. However, they have told us that we may not have their confirmation

until the middle of 2022. The photo on the inside front cover of this report shows Myatts Fields which was one of Fanny's first projects for the MPGA. Others can be seen on Page 36.

Fairchild's Garden

We contacted Hackney Council some years ago as we were concerned that this small one acre garden had become dilapidated and neglected. Since then we've had several meetings with Hackney Council and have been regularly following the progress of this renovation project.

The garden contains the tomb of horticulturalist Thomas Fairchild who died in 1729. In 2017, we were involved in the renaming of the site in his honour in commemoration of the 350th anniversary of his birth. Soon after this, a public consultation was held and funding put in place, but the work was delayed due to Covid.

We have now heard from Hackney that the project was again slightly delayed as they were waiting to hear from St Leonard's Church in Shoreditch, the owners of the site, for their agreement to the proposals before proceeding. This has now been obtained and the Faculty Public Notice installed on the site on 20 August. If there are no objections within 28 days, the work will proceed. This is excellent news and we offer congratulations all round!

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

People across the UK are being urged to plant trees in an initiative to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022, to honour the Monarch's 70 year reign. Known as the Queen's Green Canopy,

it will see new trees planted as well as ancient woodland and forest protected. To launch the scheme, the Queen joined the Prince of Wales to plant the first Jubilee tree at Windsor Castle earlier this year (2021).

The MPGA has always donated trees to the Queen on the special anniversaries of her reign. We are currently discussing our options as to the species of tree for the Platinum Jubilee and where it will be planted.

Google Arts And Culture - Gardens United

The Google Arts & Culture project is a new collaboration celebrating the unique, beautiful gardens of the UK from royal palaces to local allotments. This interactive digital hub features a wide range of gardens across the country. This joint venture, 'Gardens United', between Google and over 30 cultural partners, of which the MPGA is one, is a remarkable project. Since its launch in July, the site has attracted an enormous amount of publicity and is an excellent resource for all garden lovers.



London's Lost Drinking Fountains

We were contacted earlier this year by Sebastian Bulmer, who is researching the lost historic drinking fountains of London, as there is no comprehensive list in existence. Sebastian feels that cities such as Paris, Barcelona, Rome and Zurich value their surviving historical drinking fountains and that the old and new drinking fountains of London should be part of a city-wide network. This would not only improve our quality of life but very importantly help to address single plastic bottle pollution.

We were able to give Sebastian details of around 40 fountains which were erected by us between 1884 and 1901 (there were subsequently more). The majority were installed in churchyards such as St John's Hackney, Christ Church Blackfriars and St Paul's Rotherhithe. Several were also placed in London Squares including Ebury Square, Carlton Square, Wilmington Square and Northampton Square. Lord Meath, our Chairman at the time, approached MPGA members requesting specific donations to finance these drinking fountains, which would then be erected by the MPGA.

Many historical fountains have been lost over the years but miraculously some still survive, like the one at St Peter's Walworth, to whom we gave a grant last year for planting around the fountain. There are, of course, many in London which were donated by other charitable organisations, but we are pleased that our archives and records hold some of the answers to this intriguing research.

If you know of an historic drinking fountain in your area, or anywhere in London, do let us know.



Photo courtesy: Marc Owen

*Christchurch Gardens
Blackfriars, LB Southwark*



Twitter

Our Twitter account continues to attract new followers and we currently have over 1350. It is certainly an excellent resource, which keeps us informed and up to date on the activities of gardens across London.

Twitter is a very good medium to raise issues such as gardens under threat, which is so important as we know that, once a park or green site has been destroyed, it can never be replaced. We encourage all green sites, parks and gardens, to join Twitter if they want to publicise any loss of green space or trees in their area.

GARDENS AND GREEN SPACES UNDER THREAT

GARDENS AND GREEN SPACES UNDER THREAT

We campaign to protect, preserve and enhance London's parks and green spaces. We lend our support in a variety of ways by providing a grant, a letter of support or some relevant historical background. The threats which we highlight below have been brought to our attention but we are aware there are many others. We are always ready to investigate and help if we can.

The CPRE and several other amenity groups, including ourselves, are monitoring **Burgess Park** a large well established inner city park of 57 hectares in Southwark. There are several planning applications in the pipeline for developments close to the Park which are causing a great deal of unease. The Friends are concerned that one particular development would entail building on Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), as well as a corner section of the Park itself. The MOL was originally designated to become part of the Park, but it appears that there has now been a change of heart by Southwark Council. The proposed development would introduce a tower block, which they feel would greatly damage the amenity of the park and the newly planted wildlife area, which was completed in 2019 at a cost of £3.5 million.

To understand the impact of this development, the Friends have recently raised funds to commission an Ecology Report from the London Wildlife Trust. The fear is that the development will reduce the sunlight in the Park, cast deep shadows on the woodland and change the character of the habitat, making it dark and unappealing for both

people and wildlife. Apart from trees, the woodland consists of the woodland floor, deadwood, shrubs, fungi, birds, bats and insects.

Plans have also been submitted to the Council for four separate developments backing onto the park. Although there are no confirmed dates for the Planning Committee to consider any of these, it is a worrying situation as there is bound to be a loss of sunlight and wellbeing for the park users.

The London **Green Belt** Council advise that rural areas face the threat of 400,000 new homes being built on greenfield sites in the South of England in the next five years to meet revised house building targets. This is of great concern as building on the Green Belt leads to urban sprawl, undermines our ability to tackle pollution, climate change and causes the collapse of ecosystems and wildlife habitats.

Enfield Road Watch, representing large areas of the Enfield Green Belt, have launched a local plan consultation, which is one of the most important consultations in recent years. If this draft plan passes unchanged, much of the area will be lost for ever. The threats to Enfield Green Belt are very real, a lot of which is already owned or optioned by developers.

Although we appreciate the necessity for new homes, building on the Green Belt is not the answer to the housing problem - we need to secure London's Green Belt for future generations. In addition, people living in Green Belt developments have poor access to public transport and are tied to owning and using cars.

Finally, it would be tragic to squander the Green Belt especially as millions of Londoners have discovered its life-saving value in the wake of the Pandemic.

Five years ago, the London Borough of Southwark applied to build over **Peckham Green**, a 1.48 acre public park, also known as Jocelyn Street Park. Since then much has changed - a climate emergency has been declared and there has been a Coronavirus pandemic. People have become more aware of the consequences of building on green spaces, which involves numerous trees being felled as part of the development. The fight to save Peckham Green has broad support across Party lines, as well as strong support from local residents' groups and several protests have been organised in an effort to save this park from becoming another housing development.

A very strong and vocal Twitter feed has been set up to publicise the views of local people who actually use this park each day. They feel that they were not consulted or adequately considered when the Planning Decision was made by the London Borough of Southwark.

Last year we reported on the proposal to build tower blocks adjacent to Old Paradise Gardens in Lambeth, which would have placed the park in shadow for the majority of the day. Our Chairman, Rex Thornborough, and Christopher Woodward, Director of the Garden Museum, amongst many others, joined the outcry and wrote to the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP. We recently received some excellent news and are delighted to report that the application to build towers of luxury flats on the site of the Fire Brigade's workshops adjacent to Old Paradise Gardens has been refused.

Mr Jenrick supported the Inspector's decision that Planning Permission was not appropriate owing to harm to the heritage and to the adverse impact on light in residential properties.

Lee Valley Regional Park encompasses 10,000 acres and is situated along the Lee River which winds its way for 26 miles from Ware in Hertfordshire through Essex and North East Greater London, through the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park to the East India Dock Basin on the River Thames. The campaign group **Save Lee Marshes** does an excellent job, playing a key role in protecting this huge area and monitoring a very wide range of issues including development, the environment, flooding and any problem leading to a loss of open green space or threat to wildlife. The area contains a wide variety of award winning spaces which require monitoring and protection. They often join up with other groups to clear up areas of the park to create a cleaner and greener environment. They also run a very regular Twitter account which highlights the ongoing problems which, as it is one of the biggest parks in London, is of great value.

Some years ago an earlier incarnation of Save Lee Marshes won a well documented campaign against a large scale housing development of 88 acres close to Walthamstow Marshes. Save Lee Marshes is very vigilant and active and much appreciated.

Victoria Tower Gardens is a beautiful park in the heart of Westminster, close to the Houses of Parliament, which has received considerable media coverage due to the Government's proposal to build a Holocaust Memorial there. The plans include twenty-three large bronze sculptures and an underground learning centre, and would destroy a beautiful open space which is enjoyed by many in an already overcrowded area.

The protest has attracted an enormous amount of support across the Party spectrum, as well as from leading London gardening organisations led by the

London Gardens Trust supported by the Thorney Island Society, Victoria Tower Gardens, the MPGA and others. All supporters have made it clear that they are in favour of a new Holocaust Memorial but that this is an inappropriate site.

The application was carefully considered by Westminster Council before being rejected. It was then called in by the Minister of State, the Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP, who gave the go ahead in July 2021 for the Memorial to be built on this very sensitive site. This decision was very disappointing and sets a dangerous precedent for preserving open green space and protecting heritage landscapes within the planning process. The London Gardens Trust and others are looking at ways to challenge the decision and we await the outcome.

Grove Park Conservation Area. The community group 'Keep It Green' in West London is trying to stop developers from building four new houses in the riverside garden of a locally listed Victorian Villa built around 1890. This is Grove Park's largest garden and is home to a rich variety of wild life including bats, owls and woodpeckers.

The London Borough of Hounslow is considering this application, which includes the felling of 30 trees to build these four luxury homes on a flood plain. The garden and tree lined riverbank currently helps to prevent local flooding. This is another example of precious green space, with all its advantages, being lost to yet another luxury development.

The Friends of **Mais House**, who again have a very vibrant Twitter account, have been fighting the City of London's plans for the Sydenham Hill Estate (one of the highest points in London) since they were approved by Lewisham planners in August

2020. The development involves building 110 new social homes on the estate and mature trees will be cut down. People living there say the plans are too dense, will put pressure on local amenities, encourage social unrest and do not have appropriate disabled access. The proposed development will negatively impact on the Grade II listed Lammas Green and the conservation area, but on balance the planning committee felt the need for social housing was more important.

The Friends of Mais House persisted and secured a successful judicial review from the High Court in April 2021. In spite of Lewisham Council losing this High Court review, they intend to put the controversial development before another Planning Committee.

Several **social housing estates in Lewisham** (LB Southwark) are campaigning to save the existing green spaces on a number of of the Borough's estates, with many of them mounting effective Twitter campaigns. As well as residents, many other locals have come out against the proposals. They support new housing but not at the cost of estate green space, public parks, playgrounds and ball courts by the introduction of infilling, roof terraces etc.

The Building for Lewisham programme aims to tackle their waiting list, but infill and development plans are causing problems across the borough. Several sites on social housing estates have been earmarked, for example Valentine Court in Perivale, Drake's Court and Greystead Road Estate in Forest Hill, as well as Bells Gardens, Ryehill Park Estate, Brenchley Gardens Estate and many others.

In May 2021 BBC London News featured the reaction of residents to Southwark's plans to build on estates and local parks. The message from residents was loud

and clear - they do not want building, infilling or roof top development.

Some of these campaigns are working! The 'Save Brenchley Gardens' Campaign is a story of hope. In June, the Council issued notice that they were putting the project on hold and it now seems that they have reconsidered and will no longer build on the Brenchley Gardens estate.

Finally 'Save Elim Ballcourt and Garden' is a campaign to stop Leather Market CBS (Community Benefit Society) building 32 homes on the play area on the Elim Estate, which would remove children's outdoor space and other green areas. This has been resisted by the residents and many other locals. It appears that the planners are deliberating and their decision on this controversial infill project has been delayed.

Park Road Development and Allotments. This proposed development within Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area, at the edge of Syon Park, will lead to the loss of local open space. The site is designated as an important part of the local green infrastructure and the proposed development is being strongly opposed. Two thirds of this existing open space would become a housing estate, with the development also reducing substantially the scope of existing allotment lettings. This would lead to the loss of 22 mature trees, a loss of biodiversity, food growing, health benefits and physical activities as well as habitats. The local open space in question forms an important part of the unique character of the area, the allotments having been in use for over 100 years and the site open space for centuries. The loss of this important asset, representative of the area's historic culture of food growing and market gardens, is in no way justified.

Edgebury Grazing Land in Slades Drive Chislehurst is designated Open

Space and is an important part of the local infrastructure. The proposal to build an educational development would lead to the loss of a large section of this green space. The impact on the habitat for wildlife, in particular bats which are known to be in the area, has been omitted from the impact assessments. The potential risk of flooding is very high and a major concern is also poor vehicle access to the site. It is felt that there are alternative, more appropriate, sites which could be considered for this facility in Bromley, including redevelopment of existing educational facilities. Until all alternatives have been properly considered, the use of green space should not be advised.

Saving sunlight for London's Green Spaces Christopher Woodward, Director of the Garden Museum, recently realised when dealing with a local planning application that the current planning policy is flawed in that only 2 hours of direct sunshine per day is required across parks and green spaces, as measured on the Spring and Autumn equinoxes. This two hour rule makes no sense in today's environment, where access to sunlight and green space is essential for the physical and mental health of the population. Christopher organised a very successful petition and asked the Mayor and Robert Jenrick, Minister of Housing Communities and Local Government, to set a minimum standard for sunlight in London's parks, playgrounds and nature reserves. Over 10,000 people signed the petition because, as we all appreciate, sunshine really matters. Apart from the specific need for vitamin D in people and photosynthesis in plants, many people rely on city parks for their outdoor exercise and mental well-being. Our Chairman, Rex Thornborough, wrote to the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick, in strong support of this campaign to set a minimum standard for sunlight.

MPGA FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

31 DECEMBER 2020

Statement of Financial Activities For the year ended 31 December 2020

Notes	Income £	Capital £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
INCOMING RESOURCES				
	11,708	-	11,708	13,098
	17	-	17	73
	513	-	513	775
	3,945	-	3,945	4,070
Total Incoming resources	16,183	-	16,183	18,016
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
2	5,809	-	5,809	20,670
	-	-	-	2,210
	1,552	-	1,552	1,561
	7,361	-	7,361	24,441
Net incoming/(outgoing)	8,822	-	8,822	(6,425)
	-	(15,614)	(15,614)	48,775
Net movement in funds	8,822	(15,614)	(6,792)	42,350
	11,203	333,067	344,270	301,920
Balances carried forward at 31 December 2020	20,025	317,453	337,478	344,270

The notes on pages 4 to 5 form part of these accounts

Independent Examiner's Report: I have examined the financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2020 from the books and records and information and explanations supplied to me. In my opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Association as at 31st December 2020 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year ended 31st December 2020.

John Clark FCA Chartered Accountant

Date

Balance Sheet

31 December 2020

	2020	2019
Note	£	£
FIXED ASSETS		
Investments	317,453	333,067
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	101	155
Cash at bank and in hand	19,924	14,815
Total Current Assets	20,025	14,970
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Creditors	-	3,767
NET CURRENT ASSETS	20,025	11,203
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	£337,478	£344,270
REPRESENTED BY:		
Capital Fund	317,453	333,067
Accumulated Income Fund	20,025	11,203
TOTAL FUNDS	£337,478	£344,270

Approved

R M Thornborough
ChairmanMrs M Dowbiggin
Hon. Treasurer

Notes to the Accounts

31 December 2020

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

- (a) Expenditure is dealt with on an accruals basis, which includes making provision at the year end for grants approved which have not yet been paid.
- (b) Dividends, interest and life subscriptions receivable are credited when received.
- (c) Investments are shown at their market value at the year end. Realised and unrealised gains or losses on investments are credited or debited to the Capital account.
- (d) Contributions received as a result of appeals for capital are credited to the Capital Account.
- (e) Policy on reserves. The total of grants approved over any given period is chosen to keep income and expenditure broadly in balance, and avoid the accumulation of large cash balances. It is therefore not appropriate to specify a precise level of reserves to be maintained.

2. GRANTS, AFFILIATIONS AND LONDON SPADE**Grants and Donations Approved**

Watling Gardens	290
Seeds for Growth	765
HCRA Community Gardens Harrow	500
London in Bloom	1,000
Garden Museum	1,000
Trees for Cities Bede Estate	1,000
Gurdwan Guru Singh Hounslow	350
Yard Theatre	651

Affiliations

London Forum	19
Fields in Trust	50
London Spade - including engraving	184

TOTAL	5,809
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Notes to the Accounts

31 December 2020

3. FIXED ASSETS

	Equities Investment Fund for Charities	COIF Income Units	COIF Deposit Account	Total	2019
	£	£	£	£	£
As at 1 January 2020	155,440	177,527	100	333,067	284,292
Realised and unrealised gains & losses	(26,968)	11,354		(15,614)	48,775
As at 31 December 2020	£128,472	£188,881	£ 100	£317,453	£333,067
Holding in Units	9,360	10,486.77		£122,503	
Cost of investments 31 December 2020	£5,881	£116,622		£122,503	
31 December 2019	£5,881	£116,622		£122,503	

	2020	2019
	£	£
Tax recoveries due	£101	£155

	2020	2019
	£	£
St Thomas the Apostle	-	652
St Peter's Church Walworth	-	860
Friends of Latchmere Recreation Ground	-	426
Garden Museum Old Paradise Gardens	-	889
St Augustine's CE High School	-	450
S Brihi	-	490
Total	-	£3,767

Notes to the Accounts

31 December 2020

6. CASH at BANK and in HAND

	2020	2019
	£	£
TSB Bank	457	237
COIF	6,316	6,316
Metro	13,151	8,262
	£19,924	£14,815

Included in the Metro account is £2,000 received from the Worshipful Company of Gardeners for 2021.

7. COMMITMENTS AT YEAR END

Firm Commitments

	Contribution	Borough
	£	
London in Bloom	1,000	London wide
London in Bloom Awards	70	London wide
London Parks and Gardens Trust re Squares Day	1,000	London wide
London City Farms Prizes	300	Various

Firm commitments are subject to projects, events proceeding as planned.



GET INVOLVED AND JOIN THE METROPOLITAN PUBLIC GARDEN ASSOCIATION

The MPGA is a long established charity founded by Lord Meath in 1882, which has remained true to its principal objective - the protection and improvement of public spaces across the London boroughs.

How the MPGA does this has evolved over the years, but our hard-working team of volunteers still remain committed to providing modest grants and expertise to the many dedicated local groups who create, maintain, beautify and improve the Capital's parks and green spaces.

Diminishing government funding and growing development is putting huge pressure on our green spaces, large and small. We endeavour to monitor all public gardens and green sites under threat and support campaigns and petitions where we feel we can make a

difference. This all takes time, effort and of course funding.

If you are passionate, as we are, about the environment and protecting London's parks and green spaces for ourselves and future generations, do make a donation towards our work and become a member of the MPGA. Full details are on the form overleaf and our Annual Report will also keep you abreast of our activities.

Our Membership Form can be found overleaf or downloaded from our website www.mpga.org.uk



JOIN THE MPGA

Name _____

Address _____

Post Code _____

Tel day _____ Mobile _____

Email _____

Signature _____ Date _____

SUBSCRIPTION RATE - ANNUAL

Adult £25 Student/over 60 £

LIFE SUBSCRIPTION - single payment

Adult £250 over 60 £

Corporate £500

Donation £

Cheque/Banker's Order enclosed £

I want the MPGA to treat all my donations as **Gift Aid**. I am a UK Taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax/Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference. *Please tick box.*

BANKER'S ORDER FORM/DETAILS FOR BACS

Bank _____

Branch Address _____

Post Code _____

Sort Code _____ Acc No _____

Acc Name _____

Signature(s) _____

Date _____

Please pay MPGA the sum of £ _____ and again on 1 January 20 _____ and on 1 January each subsequent year until further notice.

Bank Metro Sort Code 23 05 80 Acc No 31202116
Acc Name Metropolitan Public Gardens Association

RETURN FORM WITH CHEQUE/BANKER'S ORDER TO:

Hon Treasurer, MPGA, 60 Worlingham Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 9HD

Fanny Wilkinson (1855-1952) – first professional female landscape gardener in England. Fanny designed 75 public parks in London for the MPGA, many of which we still Support.



Meath Gardens, LB Tower Hamlets



Paddington St Gardens, LB Westminster



Vauxhall Park, LB Lambeth



De Beauvoir Square, LB Hackney



St. James's Park, City of Westminster
Gold Award winner London in Bloom

Photo courtesy: Mark Wasilewski, Manager St James's & Green Park

BULBS FOR LONDON

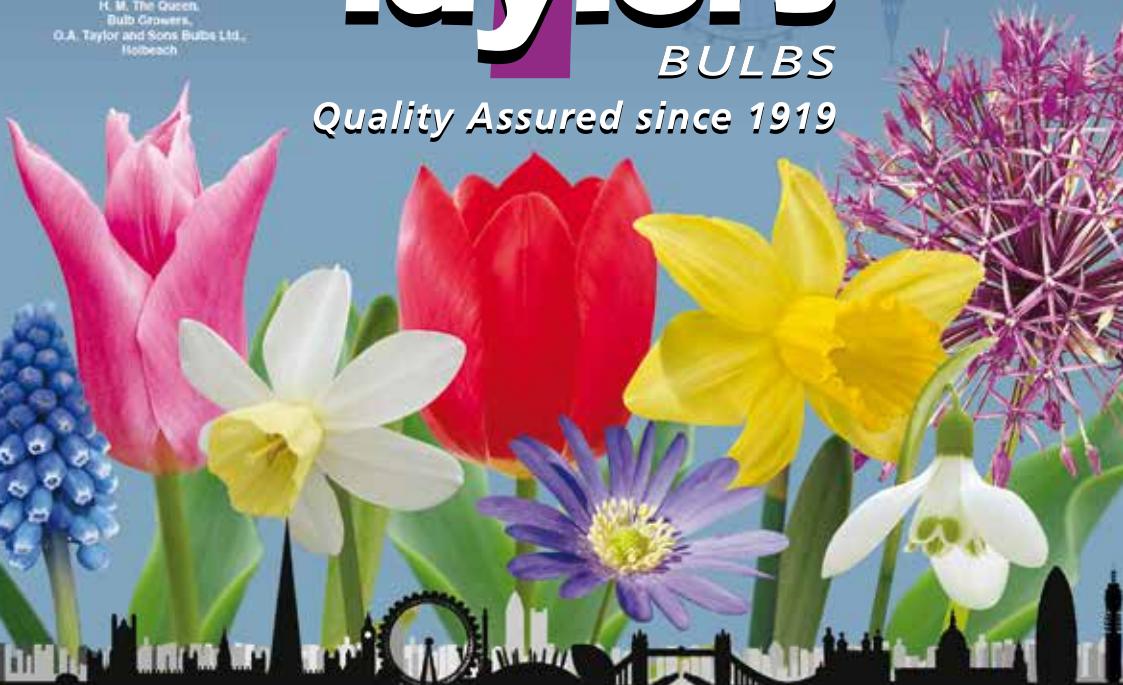


By Appointment to
H. M. The Queen,
Bulb Growers,
O.A. Taylor and Sons Bulbs Ltd.,
Holbeach

Taylor's

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Proud to Support London's Green Spaces

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