

Secret Garden Newsletter

Winter 2014 www.stmaryssecretgarden.org.uk



After a mild autumn, the weather's getting chilly, the nights are drawing in and the end of another year in the garden approaches. We've bubble-wrapped up the greenhouse, mulched the beds and brought tender plants under cover. The gardeners are still facing the elements and preparing the garden for the season ahead as well as getting ready for the festive season.....

News

It's time to say goodbye to our final group of garden trainees from Otesha. They have been coming to us for 2 years via the **Branch Out project funded by City Bridge and run by Otesha**, and 35 students have gained a City and Guilds qualification in Practical Horticulture. We hope to have an awards event in the near future to present certificates and get everyone together. Well done to all the young people who took part, and best wishes to you all for the future. And a big thanks to Shaun and Anna at **Otesha** – it's been great working with them. Also thanks to **Gustavo Montes from Golden Company** for all the bee workshops he ran for the students.



We have received a **£500 donation** from our local **Nisa Convenience store in Fellows Court**. The money will be used to buy carpentry tools, such as a jigsaw, to make birdhouses, signs for plants, and door numbers for properties on the Fellows Court estate. It's great that the sponsorship is local and that the money will help develop residents skills and improve the local area. The **Making A Difference Locally** charity was established by Nisa to support communities by raising money in store.

Paul's **New Leaf** training group has had a number of successes and we've waved goodbye to a few student. **Ten people have graduated** over the last 6 months, gaining a qualification in City and Guilds Practical Horticulture level 1, with four going on to do level 2 at the Hoxton Trust. Well done and good luck to all of them!

More thankyou's are in order, this time to the team from Barclays Bank who came to the garden this autumn and created new (and innovatively designed!) compost bays and painted fences around the garden perimeter. Thanks also to the group from Santander, who added soil to our woodland (5 cubic m!), cut back ground ivy and planted bulbs.



Bridge Academy school girls have started volunteering here as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award- they've been giving us around an hour a week on Thursday afternoons, helping to clear up after a large therapeutic group, as well as doing small gardening tasks.

Our vintage gardeners had a special treat when ex-volunteer Tanja Willmot, (tanjawillmotillustration.blogspot.co.uk) ran a **natural art printing workshop** here. There has also been a **bee keeping workshop** with Gus and they are looking forward to a **wreath making workshop** on December 4th. It's all go at the Vintage club! If you are interested in joining the club, or know any over 60 gardeners, they meet up on **Thursday mornings from 10 -1** for gardening, cooking and craft activities and of course, to socialise and make new friends. For more info or to sign up, phone 0207739 2965 or email antoinette@stmarysgarden.org.uk . We're planning to run a herbal workshop making winter warmer tinctures and lotions very soon - book your interest now.

A group of our gardeners from St Mary's helped with a stall at the **Big Do** event organised at the Petchey Academy.

Stephanie Linden from the self-advocacy organisation, **POhWER**, which organised the event along with Hackney Council said: "This is a chance for people with learning disabilities to speak up and have their voice heard about services in Hackney." Our gardeners enjoyed it very much and took the opportunity to promote the garden and our services, with Ellen working the room and handing out leaflets – well done Ellen!

Upcoming events



We will be opening late this Thursday, December 4th, for wreath-making (which is all booked up) but also festive sales of chutneys, lavender bags, natural dog biscuits and catnip mice – fabulous stocking fillers and gifts for the family and pets! For the first time, we have a St Mary's Secret Garden 2015 calendar with beautiful images from the garden. We will also have lovely plants for sale – deliciously fragrant paper whites for winter scent and colour, plus winter flowering cyclamen and potted spring bulbs.....and lots more.

Festive treats will also be on offer! ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️

If you can't make it to the garden on December 4th, there will be more festive sales coming up. We will have a stall at the CHUG Christmas fair on Sunday 7th December, a great event in Kingsland basin with craft stalls, floating traders, a raffle, mulled wine, roast chestnuts, cakes, and Santa Boat Tours!

As usual, we will also be at the De Beauvoir Christmas Fair at St Peter's Crypt, Northchurch Terrace on Saturday December 13th from 11 – 5. It's always a fabulously festive event with plenty of stalls, a raffle and mulled wine. ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️ ❄️

This winter in the garden...

Be sure to protect tender plants this winter; some can be wrapped with fleece or hessian such as bananas, some varieties of Agapanthus, Cordylines, Melianthus major, and tree ferns; some can be cut back and mulched for protection against winter cold such as Cannas, Eucharis, and hardier Agapanthus. If plants are in pots, it can be an easier solution to bring them into a greenhouse, polytunnel or cold frame; cannas and dahlias can also be lifted and stored. Pelargoniums can be cut back and stored in a frost free place. Whatever you do, don't leave it too late and end up losing your favourite plants to early frost or snow.

❄️ We wish you all health and happiness for the festive season and the coming year! ❄️