

# **Impact report**

**April 2020 - March 2021**



**Discovering plants  
Enriching lives  
Sustaining the future**



# Foreword

As I write this Foreword, the international climate conference in Glasgow (COP 26) has just finished, with people around the world still uncertain about how we're going to tackle the urgent needs of the climate emergency and the impact it's going to have on each of us if we don't act soon. Although the SLBI is in some ways small and local, we play a vital role in bringing people together to learn more about the natural world. As Covid-19 has meant that a lot of our botanical education this year has been online, we have been able to reach an ever-increasing geographic, scientific and environmental community.

This report shows the SLBI's impact from April 2020 to March 2021, now commonly called 'the first year of Covid'. We closed our physical doors in March 2020 for most of the year, focusing on open garden days, walks in green spaces, online botanical talks and children's holiday activities in the garden. By adapting to the crisis, we reached around 2,000 people – about half the number of the year before, but not at all bad considering our 'closure'.

I hope you enjoy reading our report and seeing the difference that we've been making. We continue to plan for our future, and you can read more about our new Business Plan 2021-26 later in this report. Our plan is to welcome people to our activities in increased numbers, from wider sectors of our 'community', ensuring that learning about the importance of the plant world in tackling the climate crisis and sustaining future human life, is spread far and wide.

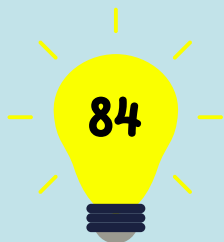
Thank you to everyone who has been part of the SLBI this year. We are indebted to the ongoing support of so many committed people, including our members, volunteers, donors, event leaders, community partners, grant funders and trustees – thank you all, and we hope to see you soon. **Caroline Pankhurst, Education & Project Manager**





# Our year in numbers

Almost 2000 people took part in our activities



**84 adult education activities including talks, walks & workshops**

**1,526**



**1,526 adults took part in 84 adult educational events**

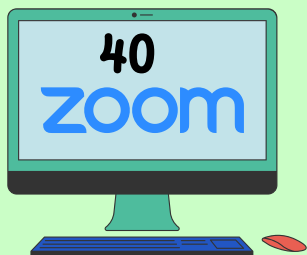


**313 adults attended stalls and talks**

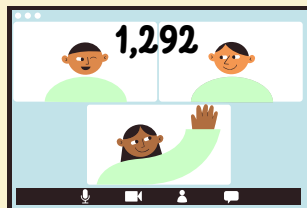
**22**



**22 walks led by Roy Vickery**



**40 online sessions on Zoom**



**1,292 Zoom participants**



**11 children's sessions**

**49**



**49 children attended the children's sessions**

**“ Thanks, it was a great trip and we saw a huge variety of plants and fungi. June's encyclopedic knowledge appeared to have no end! ”**  
(Foray for Fungi, Hampshire)



**6 people at a time  
could join our garden  
activities due to  
Covid restrictions**



**29 event leaders,  
including 17 new  
tutors/speakers**



**Around 20 volunteers  
supported the SLBI  
and joined Coffee  
Mornings on Zoom**



**1 Big Botanical  
Birthday  
Challenge  
for our  
110th birthday**



**5 new trustees**



**361 people were  
members at the end of  
March 2021 (25% more  
than in March 2020)**



**Around 2,000 people  
received our monthly  
e-newsletter**



# Adult learning

Without the use of the building or the resources within it, we were unable to run face-to-face courses or workshops for the entire year (except one in the garden), affecting both our reach and income. However, we adapted what we did and moved a lot of our educational work online and held a lot of botanical walks in green spaces. We are grateful to City Bridge Trust for relaxing the terms of their grant, and continued to incorporate **Botany on your Plate** content wherever possible.

## Our online talks included:

- Herbal medicine
- Container food growing
- Plant folklore
- Pavement plants
- Bats
- Forensic botany
- Cannabidiol
- Dyeing with plants
- London's wild plants
- Madagascar botanists
- Black botanists
- Brixton vegetable market
- Plants that changed the world
- Fruit families
- Flora of the Arctic/Cornwall/Nigeria/South Africa
- Women in botany
- Bees' needs
- Plant mindfulness

“ I found the two talks this week (Black Botanists and A Common Language of Land) very interesting thank you - though I'm not a great fan of zoom, they were well worth signing up to. (Online talks by Sarah Webley and Zakiya McKenzie) ”

Screenshot of online talk: Tonic Talk with Mark Nesbitt & Kim Walker







Selling plants in our garden

**“ I’m pleased to say I have now listened to the recording and really enjoyed the talk - have heard/read so much about CBD over-the counter products so it was good to get some hard facts! (Cannabidiol, online talk with Chandni Hindocha ) ”**

**“ Getting a chance to hear bats' echolocation with the bat detectors, and learning more about bats in Brockwell park! So much fun! (Brockwell Park Bat Walk with Iain Boulton) ”**

Online talk about bees, hosted by Sarah Arnold

**“ I would just like to say how much myself and my husband enjoyed the workshop with Mark on Sunday. It was absolutely fascinating. ”**

(Forensic Ecology, online talk with Mark Spencer)

Sarah's back garden: winners and losers

At least 39 bee species

Not very good at all:  
 Akiebia - Chocolate Vine  
 Alchemilla  
 Crocosmia

Visited, but low diversity:  
 Borage  
 Echinops  
 Hebe species  
 Hellebore  
 Flowering currant

# Children

Unfortunately, we had to cancel fully-booked school visits to the SLBI for spring/summer 2020, due to Covid, and were unable to welcome any schools back for an entire year. However, we adapted our teaching materials to make resources available online and were still able to run a number of children's holiday activities in the SLBI garden.

Sarah Webley, who joined us as Education and Outreach Coordinator in February 2020, reshaped our offer, creating curriculum-compliant online resources, activities and videos for parents doing home-schooling and school teachers still running classes. When permitted, she led a wide range of Covid-secure children's holiday activities in the SLBI garden, funded by City Bridge Trust, Postcode Local Trust and Lambeth's **Making Summer Memorable** project.



Our new bicycle planters for the **Making Summer Memorable** project

“ Thank you very much! Rae had a great time and her Halloween Apple head is truly spooky!  
(Celebrating Apple Day) ”



11 activities were run in the school holidays - 10 in the SLBI garden and 1 online. They attracted 49 children. Parents were very pleased to get their children away from screens and out into nature again. Around 30 resources (worksheets and/or videos) were developed for our website and promoted on Facebook and YouTube, and were appreciated by parents and teachers.

### Events included:

- Apple day
- Printing workshops
- Christmas bird feeder
- Planting
- Project Pollinate campaign
- Pancake day quiz
- Pond dipping and habitats



Propagating herbs for the **Making Summer Memorable** project

Apple Day



### Online resources included:

- Getting to know your plants throughout the season
- Black botanists - a resource for Black History Month
- The amazing world of food plants
- How to make seed bombs
- How to make origami paper pots

“Would be happy to bring my children back for workshops in future, as in previous years they were a bit too young, and I know they'd be keen to learn more about anything related to gardening and wildlife.  
(Children's Herb Shoebox Workshop)”



Easter shoe-box herb garden



Walks with SLBI President, Roy Vickery



Celebrating Apple Day



Evening events in the garden



We opened our garden on Thursdays and summer evenings when Covid allowed



Six children's activities funded by Lambeth's 'Making Summer Memorable'



Dr. Charlotte M Taylor  
Most prolific LIVING female author, 409 names  
combinations in the coffee family (Rubia)

We held four talks to celebrate International Women's Day

## Online talks

Black Botanists – from the Past to...



...the Present.



We held five talks to celebrate Black History Month



Foray for Fungi in Hampshire



## Online talks

Task: Tea Meditation



Our online talks attracted people across the UK and some worldwide



New local visitors seeking out nature during the pandemic

Our membership offer of free seeds was more popular than ever



Selling plants at Christmas stall





# Growing Greener

In December 2020 we were awarded £15,295 from the Mayor of London's **Grow Back Greener** Fund to carry out community planting along Norwood Road, Norwood High Street and on Norwood Works, Lambeth's largest industrial estate.

We received the grant in partnership with the Station to Station Business Improvement District, which serves almost 500 businesses within the Tulse Hill and West Norwood area.

**Pavement Plants for People** is a project that will transform many grey pavement areas of the high street into a greener environment to be enjoyed and cared for by the local community, who have little nearby access to open space and nature. The educational community project will include:

- Adding 'depaved' plant beds, planting areas of pavement with beautiful, pollution tolerant (and sometimes edible), wildlife friendly plants;
- Incorporating SuDS/'rain gardens' that reduce local flood risk;
- Planting trees & shrubs in painted oil drums around the industrial estate.

The aim is to provide a greener, cleaner space that improves the physical/mental well-being of local residents, improves air quality, increases biodiversity, creates important wildlife habitats and helps combat climate change.

Planting has started in Summer 2021 by school children and other local community groups, organised by the SLBI Education Team, helping people to learn gardening skills, environmental knowledge and the importance of plants. An education trail will be created and information boards will explain the project, ensuring lasting impact.

# Sustaining the future

In January 2021 we completed our **Botanical Education: Sustainable and Thriving (BEST)** project. This was an 18-month project funded by £86,500 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to enable the SLBI to increase its long-term resilience, in terms of finance and governance, and to broaden its income generation methods and reach a more diverse audience. The benefits of this project are ongoing and will contribute to the charity's long-term sustainability.

One key outcome of the project was the development of a new SLBI Business Plan for 2021-26, which has 4 key aims:

- To retain our current audiences and broaden our audiences in line with local demographics.
- To make the SLBI's building and collections more physically and intellectually accessible.
- To maintain existing and build new partnerships and collaborations locally, regionally and nationally to fulfil our aims.
- To make the SLBI more financially resilient and sustainable, reducing dependency on grants.

The plan will help us as we recover from closure due to the pandemic and enable us to increase our impact even further in the coming years.

“ It was a very thoughtful reflection of the current and future situation for the profession of botany and view of the plant world in general.  
(Growing the next generation of botanists, online talk with Leif Bersweden) ”

Marlowe Russell (Trustee) and Roy Vickery (President)



# Partnerships

We extended our reach to new audiences through continued and new partnerships with other organisations and as part of larger networks.

Groups we worked with this year included:

Botanic Gardens Education Network Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses  
Chelsea Fringe Eco-Attractions Group Friends of Brockwell Park Friends of Tooting  
Common Friends of Wandsworth Common Friends of Streatham Common Imperial College  
Lambeth Council Lambeth Heritage Festival London Environmental Educators' Forum  
London Natural History Society More than Weeds Norwood Forum Open Garden Squares  
Open House Royal Botanic Gardens Kew Station-to-Station Business Improvement District  
University of Reading University of Greenwich Vertical Veg Wandsworth Heritage Festival  
West Norwood Feast West Norwood Cemetery

We continue to seek out and form new partnerships with groups and organisations, locally and across the UK, so that we can increase the diversity of our audience and programme.

SUPPORTED BY  
**MAYOR OF LONDON**





# Thank you

We would like to thank all our generous donors and supporters, as well as our funders: Mayor of London's 'Grow Back Greener Fund', National Lottery Heritage Fund, City Bridge Trust, Postcode Local Trust and Lambeth Council.

We remain indebted to our dedicated trustees and volunteers, many of whom have been involved in the SLBI for some or many years and others we welcomed for the first time during 2020 - 21.

We are grateful to all those who have led events, delivered lectures, taught courses and workshops and guided field meetings. Thanks also to our few hard-working, part-time staff, freelance gardeners and wardens.

We thank all of our members and supporters for championing us over the year with donations, feedback and words of encouragement. With your on-going participation we can continue to grow our impact and do even more!

“ *I had always wanted to visit the SLBI and it was so impressive to see such a vast array of beautiful plants in this wonderful essentially urban garden.* ”  
(Open Garden Visit)

SLBI volunteer outing to the Royal College of Physicians



# Support us

**Can you help support the future of botanical education in South London?**

**Here are some ways that you can support us this year...**

- Become a member
- Tell a friend about us
- Make a donation
- Volunteer with us
- Fundraise for us
- Buy our range of plant-related merchandise
- Buy a gift membership for a friend or loved one
- Hire the Institute or garden for your event
- Consider leaving a gift in your Will

To find out more visit **[www.slbi.org.uk/support-us](http://www.slbi.org.uk/support-us)** or get in touch



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