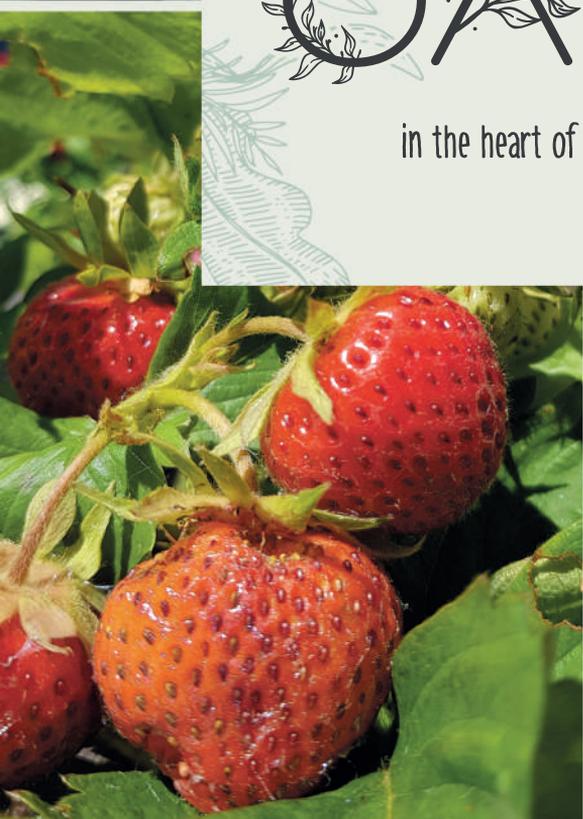




The Green Team presents our

OASIS

in the heart of the community





Welcome to the
Chatterbox Project.

The Chatterbox Project is an entirely volunteer led organisation, run by and for the community.

Our project organises activities and groups like our Parent & Toddler sessions, community gardening & Art Classes and in collaboration with local group Morrisso Health CIC exercise classes for Mum & Baby, and a separate adult class.

For those in our neighbouring community Chatterbox also provides support in the form of a food pantry service, which can assist with clothing, small items of furniture, bedding and other basic household items.

We really care about the people who walk through our doors by making every effort to help them feel safe and cared for. Here everyone is welcomed with kindness, whether they visit regularly or are coming to see us for the first time.





Working with the

COMMUNITY

The Chatterbox Project is based in the centre of a busy estate, providing a pocket of calming nature in the heart of a built-up community.

We want everyone to feel welcome and be uplifted by our gardens and are always here for our community as a place where people know they can find a little peace and sanctuary.

The ever-changing gardens attract attention and encouragement from the community, giving us an excellent way to connect in welcoming surroundings.

Alongside the project is a public pathway, which allows a great view of our latest blooms and gardening experiments while on the way to local shops and schools.

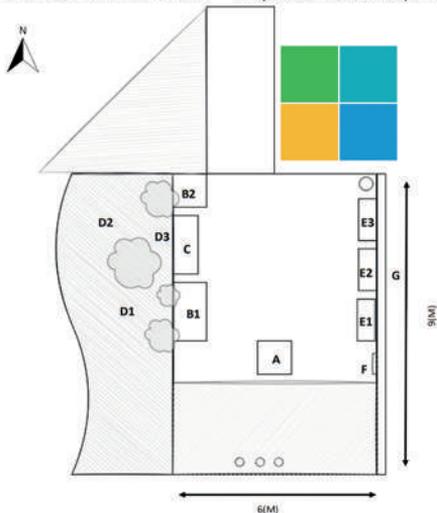
Since last year we have been forging plans to renovate the public space at the end of our pathway into an additional natural area for people to enjoy.

Chatterbox, alongside **Charlestown Community Action Group, Winning Hearts & Minds** and the **Co-Op** are combining funding to allow Sow the City to help us to create the **Charlestown Eco Oasis**.

After we had created a mood board to work from, **Sow the City** put together a design, with a plan to start work on the area beginning in late 2022.



Charlestown Eco Oasis - Proposed Redevelopment



MAP LEGEND

- A. 1 x 1 Square tall raised planter (Ornamental)
- B. Raised beds, edible perennials (Shaded area) consider when planting
- C. Bench (Vandal proof)
- D. Wild area, trees with bird boxes, climbers planted along fence, (Hedera, Lonicera etc.), bug hotel, hidden wood rounds.
- E. Raised sensory beds, touch, smell, taste, lower height suitable for children.
- F. Sign with information about the space.
- G. Mural painted along perimeter fence to brighten area



Last Spring, we gave out sunflower seeds to encourage people to grow sunflowers with their children at home, receiving lovely photos of children stood with growing sunflowers in return.

Our '**Introduction to Fruit and Veg Growing**' course last September taught new skills and let people get to know the Green Team.

Graduates of the course received a **Level 1 AQA accreditation**. The course was so successful it was extended with sessions like wreath making run from local retirement housing Whitbeck Court.



For **Mental Health Awareness Day** (Oct '21) and **Week** (May '22) we held open days allowing people to come for a chat and take part in activities like plant pot/bird box decoration and planting flowers in biodegradable pots to take home.

Groundwork helped residents create a 'living wall' from a repurposed pallet that has since grown, and **The Lancashire Wildlife Trust** set up informative activities like 'match the seed to the leaf'.

Sow the City also ran a seed planting stall teaching the process to try themselves at home with free bulbs provided.



The Chatterbox Project connects with Remedi UK, who regularly bring young people to work on our gardens as part of their partnership with the local Young Offenders Team, where those who are required to undertake Unpaid Work Orders can carry out work in the local community.

They have helped with weeding, tidying, painting planters and more, to help keep the gardens looking fresh and tidy.

We have also been able to connect Remedi with other volunteer-led organisations who may be able to provide placements in North Manchester.



Growth



Features of this year's

GARDEN

Our volunteers have worked throughout the last year to produce many new features and expand our green space in some fantastic ways.

This has enabled us to grow not only the greenery we care for, but also our bonds with local residents and organisations further afield.

Judges last year suggested we turn some front square planters into **Alpine beds**, so we experimented with Alpine and rockery plants, and various rock and sand elements to add height and depth to our newest planters.

A fun new addition to this area is our **water feature**, which has been sunken into the sand and provides another pleasing focal point for people passing by the gardens.

Our long-standing leaf bin has been giving our **leaf mould development** some real attention this year, and our **composting area** has been built on by one of our volunteers who **upcycled old fence wood** from a nearby fly-tipping.

We thrive on finding uses for old things and take any opportunity we can to get creative! **Repurposed guttering** was used for the new front fence strawberry planter – secured and styled with **cable ties** and **broken plant pots** – and some old pots had a splash of added colour in a paint revival.





This year we've worked on growing our strawberries across the gardens.

You'll find them in the living wall, in our new front fence guttering planter, in the front planters and near the polytunnel.

We want to continue growing these so that when people visit, they can take a strawberry to nibble on as they walk round.

One day we would like to harvest enough to feed our parent & toddler group but we're not quite there yet!



In winter we planted many bulbs around the local community, giving extras to passers-by for their own gardens.

Despite warnings that local children would destroy them, we planted heart shapes on the front green space, which thrived and bloomed in spring. Next year we will be planting a few different varieties.

The **Alium bulbs and Chives** have come up wonderfully this year - the bees have loved them! Next year we want to plant even more Alium as the flowers are beautifully dramatic and eye-catchingly colourful.

They are a real talking point - people enjoy watching the bees come and go.

Colourful





The Wildlife Trust created a **Barrel Pond** for our staff area to attract wildlife to the garden and our existing bird pond and gardens continue to attract all kinds of animals.

Our **Heucheras** have come back strong, so we separated them and planted them further around the pond. Despite two **hostas** being munched by slugs, our third has really thrived.

The Wildlife Trust also created two beetle houses; our **bug hotel** is regularly raided by animals (presumably looking for tasty bug treats) and finally we invested in a **Hedgehog house** after hearing of hedgehogs in the area.

The team have noticed that blackbirds sit on the planters in our **Woodland Corner** to sing us a tune, and our resident Robin regularly visits there too, so we have added a **Robin House** under cover as we are aware they like a near-ground, hidden spot.

One volunteer donated **roses and climbing plants**, which were used in our staff area to enclose it with some beautiful blooms.

Always willing to give things a go, we try to give our volunteers time and space to try things and figure out what works. Many plants are propagated by volunteers at home and brought to the gardens; we've also grown from seed in our **polytunnel**.



Wildlife



Recycle for Greater Manchester and SUEZ Recycling & Recovery UK granted our application for a one tonne bag of compost - certified to PAS 100 standard, peat free compost made from Greater Manchester food and garden waste.

We use this to enrich the soil and to level up the beds in our **Garden of Remembrance** - our peonies have very much appreciated it.

Throughout the last year we have been attending the **Winning Hearts & Minds Community Reference Group** - a chance for those across North Manchester to discuss their local area, providing a space for growth and sharing experiences.

Through the group we are now connected to a wider community than just our neighbours. We're building connections with other communities and have gained volunteers and supporters that contribute to the success of our garden.

Our new storage container, donated & installed by **Emmanuel Whittaker**, has helped organise our equipment, making our outdoor activities easier to run.

Through working with Emmanuel Whittaker, we met two wonderful women who became volunteers and brought a group of people with them to help us out with fixing our fence and tidying the garden after terrible weather. Connections like these have enabled us to reach more people.







We all agree that the best part of looking after the gardens is when we all work outside together, with a cuppa, chat to local people passing by and discuss new ideas.

We are all enthusiastic about what we have created and love to see the joy that it gives to so many people in our community.

We already have so many plans for for next year, here are just a few of them...

Creating & growing the new Charlestown Oasis.

More experiments with plants, fruit & vegetables.

Matured climbing plants in the staff area.

Improved strawberry & tomato harvests.

New events, activities, and growing the Green Team.

A variety of flowers just outside the project.

More bulbs across the local Neighbourhood and nurturing all we have created so far for an even more colourful display next year!

With thanks to our friends...



All photos in this booklet were taken at Chatterbox Gardens

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