



Project Overview

The Coastal Kitchen Family Community Garden Project has been established in partnership with Minstead Trust to create a thriving, sustainable growing space that connects people with food, nature, education, and wellbeing. The project brings together food production, environmental stewardship, community engagement, and skills development, demonstrating how urban green spaces can support both people and wildlife.

At its heart, the project seeks to reconnect people with the origins of their food while creating opportunities to learn new skills, improve wellbeing, and strengthen community connections through gardening.

Project Leadership

The Community Garden Project is led by Louise Moreton, whose extensive experience in horticulture, outdoor learning and community gardening has shaped its vision and direction.

Louise has been key to the design and management of the award-winning community teaching gardens at Wicor Primary School, creating a highly regarded outdoor learning environment that connects children and the wider community with nature, food growing, and environmental awareness.

A passionate advocate for horticulture in education, she has spent many years promoting the benefits of growing, harvesting, and cooking seasonal produce to support health and wellbeing, as well as environmental understanding through the National Garden Scheme.

Her wider contributions to horticulture include growing plants for RHS Chelsea Flower Show exhibits, contributing to a Gold Award-winning garden with Miracle-Gro, and serving for four years on the editorial review board for Gardeners' World magazine. Louise has also shared her knowledge and passion through appearances on Gardeners' World TV, BBC News, BBC Radio, the Gardeners' World Podcast, and numerous other media publications over the past fourteen years. These experiences have helped develop an approach that values sustainability, biodiversity, education, food production, and community wellbeing equally. Those principles are embedded throughout The Coastal Kitchen Family Community Garden Project and continue to guide its development in partnership with Minstead Trust.



The Vision

The garden space itself is remarkable, especially given its city location. It is large in size and rich in established greenery, with a protected ash tree at its centre, an elder behind it, and a small hornbeam nearby. Having experienced very little interruption over the years, the garden has become lush and thriving, supporting an abundance of wildflowers and wildlife; the air is often filled with birdsong.

From the outset, the aim has been to work with nature rather than against it. Protecting and supporting the existing ecosystem ensures that bees, moths, ladybirds, birds, frogs, and other wildlife can continue performing the essential roles that help crops thrive naturally. Wildlife-friendly methods are used to manage pests and protect crops; slugs and snails, for example, are an important food source for birds and frogs, so rather than harming them, natural deterrents such as coffee grounds, food-processing byproducts, companion planting, and other sustainable growing methods are used.

Sustainability sits at the heart of the project. Efforts are made to reuse, reduce, and recycle wherever possible, with ideas and contributions gathered from The Coastal Kitchen Family teams. The project connects food production with minimal food miles, benefiting both people and the planet by delivering freshness, flavour, and nutrition while reducing environmental impact.

Getting Started

When work first began, the garden was heavily overgrown, with piles of rubble and soil scattered throughout the site. A set of low raised beds had fallen into disrepair and blocked the natural flow of entry into the garden. Around the boundaries, dense bramble and ivy had started to dominate.

While these areas provided valuable habitats and food sources for wildlife, the objective was to create a balance that preserved biodiversity while making the space productive for growing fresh produce for The Coastal Kitchen Family restaurants.

Working Together: A Community Garden

A large part of the project's success has come from collaboration and community involvement. By creating a clear programme of work and prioritising tasks, staff have been invited to participate in community gardening sessions, helping to steadily move the project forward. This approach has not only helped reduce establishment costs, but has also created opportunities for the people supported by Minstead Trust to learn new skills, spend time outdoors, connect with nature, and experience the wellbeing benefits that gardening can bring.

The garden is becoming far more than simply a growing space. It is creating an environment for positive change, connection, and improvement. People often feel more connected to places that are cared for, and that sense of pride and ownership naturally encourages respect for the wider environment. Because the garden is visible from outside the boundary, passers-by have been able to observe its transformation over time. Neighbours regularly stop to share positive comments and encouragement; there is a genuine sense of curiosity, interest, and community growing around the project.

Next Steps

The next phase of development includes constructing additional raised beds in the garden space behind the courtyard area. These beds are being built by supporters of Minstead Trust, helping to keep start-up costs low while strengthening community involvement. The new beds will be made using the same decking-board materials as those already installed in the courtyard garden, giving the entire site a cohesive and naturally weathered coastal-rustic feel.

One of the greatest challenges during peak growing season is watering. Fresh vegetables are typically made up of around 90% water, so ensuring plants have consistent access to moisture can significantly impact both crop quality and yield. Periods of unusually high temperatures have highlighted the importance of maintaining a reliable watering programme, particularly for young plants growing in trays, which can wilt rapidly if left without sufficient water.

Minstead Trust staff have been incredibly supportive, helping to water the garden regularly and taking an active interest in its development. Conversations sparked by the garden often lead to people sharing stories of their own gardens, childhood memories, or the simple enjoyment of spending time outdoors in a green space; a reminder of the powerful connections that gardens can create.

Hopes for the Future

Looking ahead, the project aims to continue providing opportunities for staff, volunteers, and the people supported by Minstead Trust to connect more deeply with food, understand how it grows, and develop new skills.

A future greenhouse or polytunnel would significantly expand the project's potential, enabling year-round growing opportunities and increasing productivity through crops that require different growing conditions. Future aspirations also include practical storage facilities and a dedicated potting area to support ongoing work within the garden. Such developments would allow the garden to play an even greater role in community engagement, training and education, and food production.

A Garden for All Seasons

The quieter months are just as important as the busy growing season, providing valuable time for preparation and planning. Many activities, including tree and hedge planting, are best carried out during cooler months, ensuring the garden continues to evolve and thrive across every season.

Ultimately, the vision is to create a sanctuary within the city: a place for connecting with nature, connecting with others, and producing beautiful, seasonal, sustainable food throughout the year. As the project develops, we hope that it will become a lasting example of how these incredible aspects can come together to create something truly valuable. By nurturing both people and nature, The Coastal Kitchen Family Community Garden Project aims to leave a positive legacy for everyone involved, now and in the future.

