

SUSTAINABLE LIVING INITIATIVE

ABOUT SUSTAINABLE LIVING INITIATIVE

Sustainable Living Initiative (SLI) started in Norwich in 2004 and aimed to bring together people who are interested in growing fruit and vegetables, especially those with little or no experience, and share skills, tools and information.

SLI is a registered charity run by Trustees. The office is at Marlpit Community Centre on Hellesdon Road. The founder of SLI and programme manager is Mahesh Pant. SLI is membership-based and is also open to non-gardening people who support its objectives and wish to be involved. Young people under 16 are welcome to join but parental consent is required. The membership fee is £5 a year. The fee is included in the rent for those who take a plot in one of the community garden projects (GO² Bluebell and Marlpit). Benefits include a 10% discount on products and services provided by SLI except plot rent charges.

SLI membership is a forum for discussion, sharing ideas and skills and initiating collaborative action in growing vegetables and practical gardening training.

But SLI offers all the benefits of a healthy lifestyle: being outside in fresh air and a 'green' environment, benefitting from exercise, and meeting like minds. There are lots of opportunities to meet other members at food-sharing lunches and learn and share cooking skills at sessions in the community centre. GO² Bluebell and Marlpit rely on the cooperation of their members and are run by them.

Grow-our-own (GO²) Bluebell

GO² Bluebell is on Bluebell South allotments off The Avenues and has been going since 2004. We rent 12 plots from Norwich City Council. There are about 100 members of all ages and diverse backgrounds.

The emphasis is on manageable-sized plots. GO² Bluebell plots measure 1.30 metres wide x 6 m long approximately. Current annual plot rent (October 2016 – September 2017) is £22 for the first plot and £20 for each additional plot. We also have wheelchair-accessible raised boxes (measuring 1.2 x 1.2 m) for £9 a year. You do not need to bring tools or plants and seeds. We provide these as well as manure and compost. Practical advice and information is always on hand and we run skill-sharing training sessions such as pruning, how to sow seeds and look after your soil. If you are a complete beginner, we can arrange for someone to help get you started.

When joining, you are committing to give at least three days' worth of help a year towards running GO² Bluebell and maintaining communal facilities. There is a communal work morning on the first Sunday of the month followed by a food-sharing lunch.

You will be asked to agree to the terms by signing the member's agreement form. You choose which task group you would like to help with and the facilitator for that group will contact you. Communication is by email where possible. Once you have joined you will be given the password to access the members' area on the website.

In accordance with Council allotment rules you are responsible for looking after your plot and keeping the paths around your plot tidy. Failure to do this may mean you lose your plot and there is no refund.

The GO² Bluebell main shed is open on Sundays from 10 am - 1 pm. Members are on hand to provide advice, plants and seeds. If you would like to sign up for a plot, please come to and see us between those times and you will be shown round. You will be allocated a plot once you have joined and paid and you'll receive a welcome letter with more detailed information. Forms are also available in the shed and on the website. For directions, follow this link: <http://grow-our-own.co.uk/bluebell/bluebell-maps/>

Marlpit Community Garden

The Marlpit Community Garden (MCG) started in June 2013. It is a seven-acre field in Marlpit Lane, near the Marriott's Cycle Way and close to the river Wensum. The site is divided into plots for individual and families, plots for schools and community groups, forest garden, apiary, orchard, herb garden, wild-flower areas and meadows.

Marlpit offers small plots each measuring 1.20 x 10 metres approximately. The plot rent is £30 per year (October-September). Concessions are available to people who cannot afford to pay the rent in full. We can also arrange for payment to be made in instalments.

The use of tools, a choice of seeds and plants, and manure and compost are all included in the rent. Practical advice and information is always on hand and we run short training sessions on various aspects of gardening, such as how to sow seeds and look after your soil.

As a plot-holder, you are responsible for looking after your plot and keeping the paths around your plot in order. MCG relies on the cooperation of all

its growers and is run entirely by volunteers. We therefore expect you to give at least three days worth of help a year towards managing the scheme and maintaining communal facilities. When you join, you will be asked to agree to the terms by signing the grower's agreement form.

We are open on Saturdays from 10 am to 12 pm and on Tuesdays from 10 pm to 3 pm when volunteers will be around to provide advice, plants and seeds.

If you would like to sign up for a plot, please come to the site on Tuesdays **between 10 am and 2 pm** when you will be shown around and can choose a vacant plot. You can also apply on line (please visit our website for details).

MCG is a car-free zone; there are plenty of cycle stands but only a few car parking facilities for blue-badge holders. For directions to MCG, follow this link: <http://grow-our-own.co.uk/marlpit> and for more information, visit our website: <http://grow-our-own.co.uk/about/marlpit>

School/Community Group Plots

If you are a Norwich-based school or community group interested in having a plot in Marlpit Community Garden, we would like to hear from you. We can also arrange for your plot to be looked after while you are away during the summer holiday.

Grow-at-Home

The Grow-at-Home scheme provides practical help and advice for people who want to grow fruit and vegetables organically in their own gardens. Members of the Grow-at-Home scheme also have the opportunity to come and meet other growers on the allotment and share experiences. The fee, currently £16 per year, includes seeds and seedlings, access to gardening information and updates and one home visit by a SLI member.

On joining members have access to the SLI website, which has plenty of gardening information, updates and useful tips, and will receive the fortnightly newsletter.

If you live in Norwich and wish to join as a grow-at-home member, please follow this link [http://grow-](http://grow-our-own.co.uk/home/about-sli/grow-at-home/#main)

[our-own.co.uk/home/about-sli/grow-at-home/#main](http://grow-our-own.co.uk/home/about-sli/grow-at-home/#main) or contact us at the address at the bottom of the page.

Volunteering

The volunteering scheme provides an opportunity to learn gardening skills, meet like-minded people, work collectively and get fresh allotment produce free of charge in return for help. Regular volunteers with satisfactory performance will be offered free SLI membership after three months of joining.

Volunteering mornings run on Tuesdays at Marlpit Community Garden from 10am to 3 pm. These sessions have many benefits: some of our volunteers have been out of work for a long time and their skills and confidence are helped while they carry out essential gardening tasks for MCG and enjoy each other's company.

Volunteers are given a free lunch, using our own produce, and they also get seasonal produce to take home in return for their help. Anyone is welcome to join without any long-term commitment or any particular skills. If you want to learn basic skills in gardening and conservation, make new friends or you already have skills that you'd like to offer, please get in touch or follow this link - <http://grow-our-own.co.uk/home/documents/bluebell-documents/bluebell-application-forms/#bb-apply-renew>

Ordinary Member of SLI

Anyone who supports SLI aims and objectives can join as a member for an annual fee of £5. Members also receive the newsletter which tells you what to plant, when and how, feedback from our members, and 10% discount on training sessions run by SLI. Other benefits include free admission to our social events (food-sharing lunch and cooking club), Suma Cooperative Group (where you can buy Suma products at the wholesale price) and supply of organic seeds at a discounted price.

Please follow this link to complete an application form <http://grow-our-own.co.uk> or contact us at the address below.