

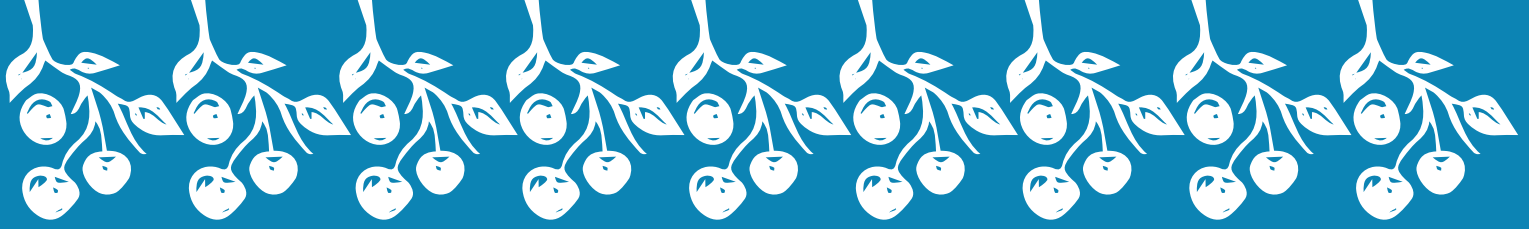


Annual Report

2022-2023



Fruit & Nut
Village 



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Executive Summary

Fruit & Nut Village CIO brings together community volunteers to plant and care for orchards and forest gardens in public and semi-public places. Voluntary activity on the project began in 2017 but it was in late 2021 that the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) was established.

This report describes what the charity achieved during its first full year of operations and what the key challenges and goals are looking ahead.

It was a year filled with a great deal of varied activity and one that saw Fruit & Nut Village become firmly rooted, not only in Sturchley where it all began, but also in Balsall Heath and Druids Heath. By the year end, 45 separate sites were established across the three Fruit & Nut Villages, encompassing around 600 trees and nine forest gardens.

The charity attracted an ever-expanding pool of volunteers, overseen by a Project Coordinator, to be engaged in planting, watering, weeding, pruning, mulching and generally working hard, in all seasons and all weathers, with an average of four sessions running each week.

Enormous amounts of energy and enthusiasm were poured into large, established growing sites such as Pebble Mill Playing Fields and Kingdom Forest Gardens, which welcomed more people, and more new plants than ever before. But many new, smaller sites were also added across a huge range of settings, from parks and allotments, to churches and mosques, showcasing many different styles of planting and growing in spaces that are always inclusive and accessible to local residents and visitors.

In addition to the weekly work sessions, a programme of propagation and grafting workshops and community events, such as storytelling and Wassails, have proved enormously popular. Altogether Fruit & Nut Village activity in 2022/2023 involved more than 750 people, either as attendees or as active participants.

45
sites

600
trees

9
forest
gardens

750+
people



Working in partnership with others has been fundamental to the success of Fruit & Nut Village and the results of collaborations over the past year are clear evidence of this. Across all three neighbourhoods Fruit & Nut Village has forged connections with community trusts, venues and forums, Friends groups, arts organisations, the University of Birmingham, Birmingham City Council and The National Trust. These partnerships have brought people, plants, ideas and energy and, in some cases, much needed funding.

Volunteers continue to talk enthusiastically about a wide range of benefits that they enjoy as a result of their participation. feature prominently in conversations and feedback

- Improvements to physical and mental wellbeing
- New friendships
- Renewed pride in local green spaces
- Acquiring knowledge and skills
- Enjoyment of nature
- Sense of achievement.

The challenge for Fruit & Nut Village has been, and will continue to be, securing reliable on-going sources of funding; thinking creatively and strategically will be key to this.

Extreme heat and dry conditions will always require additional effort from those involved and acquiring new sites and attracting more volunteers to cultivate and nurture them will never cease to be important.

In order to rise to these challenges Fruit & Nut Village is developing a 2040 plan. This will provide a strong sense of direction and purpose to underpin its expansion and inform future collaborations.

D Edmonds
Chair

Alex Connack
Trustee

Helen Tomkins
Trustee



Introduction

Fruit & Nut Village brings community volunteers together to plant and care for orchards and forest gardens in public and semi-public spaces that have relevance to people's lives. Our work aims to support a vision of a future where:

“Our communities grow and are surrounded by abundant, perennial food.”



Through carrying out our work of orchard and forest garden planting and care, propagation work and community events Fruit & Nut Village reduces isolation, improves mental and physical well-being for active volunteers, increases biodiversity and helps to counter the effects of climate change, whilst creating food-rich landscapes.

The Fruit & Nut Village project dates back to 2017, when some preliminary work was carried out in setting up a model forest garden and funding was sought to continue this work. Planting of productive trees and bushes began in late 2018 and from then on the work has expanded to include a larger number of sites in the original 'Village' of Stirchley, increased plantings in most sites and an additional two new 'Villages'. In late 2021 we became established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with a Board of people drawn from Fruit & Nut Village volunteers and enthusiasts of our work.

Our aim is to create 'Fruit & Nut Villages' that bring diverse communities together with a shared purpose, furthering the knowledge and understanding of volunteers and others in the neighbourhood around perennial food growing.

A 'Fruit & Nut Village' is a collection of people, across a city, ward, neighbourhood or even at a more local level. In support of our vision, communities may be led by or inspired by Fruit & Nut Village. These communities live among collections of plants that are growing together and are mutually, ecologically supportive. More broadly, these collections extend to include animals, fungi and even microorganisms living in our growing spaces.

We demonstrate perennial food growing through different styles of orchard, including trained fruit trellises, forest gardens themed in different ways and developed in different settings and by showing how other plants can be grown to provide perennial crops.

We work with Birmingham City Council, on parkland, on allotment sites, with churches and mosques, at community buildings and in any other setting that is inclusive, open and non-commercial.



Our first year

Fruit & Nut Village's first full year of operating as a CIO has been a busy and productive time.

Over this period we have built up our operations to include three separate Fruit & Nut Villages entailing 45 growing sites.

Our sites are very varied – from just a few trees, up to forest gardens as large as several thousand square metres containing 50 or more trees.

Included in our 45 sites are 9 forest gardens and around 600 trees in total.

45
sites

9
forest
gardens

600
trees



Over the course of the year we have had over 2,100 separate attendances at our events. More than 750 people took part in at least one activity with us. We ran 206 separate sessions across the year, a total of almost 4 per week.

As well as the tree planting work and forest garden development and care, we have run workshops and community events. Twice we organised a story-telling evening and we also held two Wassails in January 2023 – one in Balsall Heath and one in Stirchley.

The summer of 2022 was perhaps our most challenging to date. We had carried out a significant amount of new planting work in winter 2021/2022 and these new trees, bushes and other plants sometimes appeared to be very likely to suffer from the extreme heat and the dry weather. We met on many occasions solely to water vulnerable trees and we were greatly pleased to receive support with this from a large number of enthusiastic volunteers. Sadly, a fire in some long, dry grass on one of our sites in Stirchley did severely damage two of our nut trees, planted in the winter of 2018/2019.

We were supported in our work by an undergraduate student from the University of Birmingham's School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences. They worked at evaluating some of the environmental services provided by our forest garden sites. This is a piece of work that we hope to build upon in coming years.

We strongly believe in the value of forest garden development to individuals, to communities, to nature and to improving the health of the global environment.

We were extremely pleased to be given local radio coverage at the beginning of 2023. We were invited onto Radio West Midlands to speak about our work three times!

2,100+
attendances

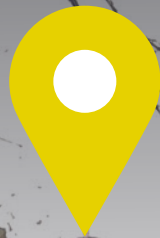
750+
people

206
sessions
(4 per week)



Our neighbourhoods





Stirchley

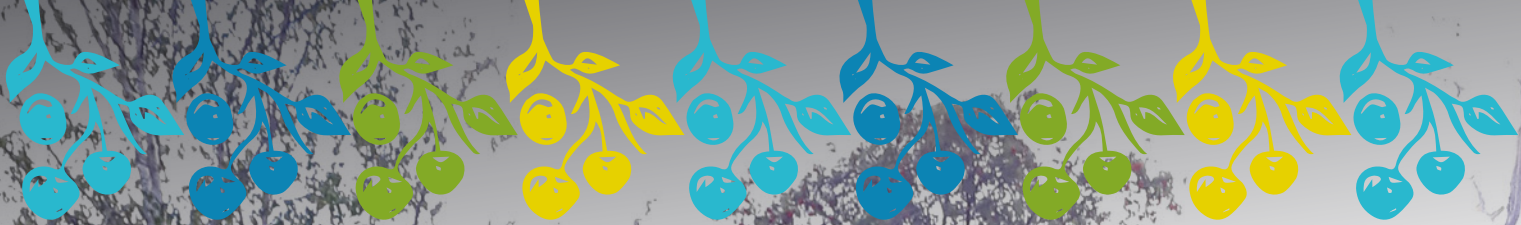


Our oldest, and original, Fruit & Nut Village is based in and around Stirchley.

The growing sites stretch from the extreme south of Cannon Hill Park to the edge of Cotteridge where the River Rea meets the Worcester Mainline Canal; and from The People's Plot at Dads Lane Allotments, bordering on Moseley, to the edge of Bournville, where The New Old Orchard is situated in Stirchley Park. Fruit & Nut Village Stirchley originated in 2018 and has grown in more ways than one since then. Almost five years since the work began, we now operate from 18 orchards and forest gardens across the neighbourhood.

Our Stirchley sites comprise...

4 Forest gardens	3 Linear orchards	3 Micro orchards	2 Mixed orchards
2 Trained orchards	2 Foraging hedges	2 Allotment demonstration sites	
1 Heritage orchard	1 Nut grove	1 Grafted 'family' tree	



Stirchley





Significant steps within the 'Village' have included the successful Crowdfunding of two of our orchards to secure funds to purchase additional plants to begin the completion of the planting work in some of the growing spaces. We were supported by the local community with a total of £2,007, with these funds being matched by additional Birmingham City Council support.

Pebble Mill Playing Fields Forest Garden received huge amounts of support over the year with **over 150 volunteers** attending a work day here, making it our most popular site. The development of this site has been significant, with the third lobe of the layout completed and almost all of the final lobe completed over the year. Additional planting work took place throughout the period, with plants responding to the high light levels and large quantities of compost added to the soil boosting growth.

In late January 2023 Kingdom Forest Garden was expanded to fill spaces where new trees could be added alongside paths; the work day involved the planting of almost **50 new trees and bushes**, with new species added to the existing collection. We had **25 people** attend the work day, and everyone worked hard for the entire period, except to enjoy a delicious hot meal mid-session.

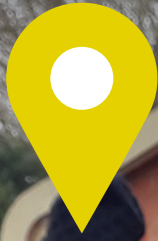
Local people had been upset to lose some large willow trees growing alongside the River Rea in Stirchley and we were able to add a small number of new fruit trees to this space in mid-January. Some of these trees had been grafted and cared for by our volunteers and some were supplied by The National Trust as part of their Blossom Together project; we planted **20 trees** from them in total – a big thank you was given for these additional beautiful and productive new specimens.

Our Halloween story-telling attracted **50 people** to a dark Kingdom Forest Garden, with **70 people** having attended the summer solstice story-telling at Newlands Run in the preceding summer.

Selly Park Forum invited us to create two forest garden beds at the end of Cecil Road to act as a welcome to Pebble Mill Playing Fields; the day of the bed build was very popular and there was a powerful buzz of community energy throughout as we raced to complete the project before dark.

We were gifted a series of six beautiful artworks by Stirchley Happenings in September. The artworks all depict a bird that has been spotted in the local area, and each bird, painted on a wooden post, represents the specific site into which it has been located.

In total we delivered 137 planting days, care days, pruning workshops and community celebration events!



Balsall Heath

Calthorpe
Wellbeing Hub





Our youngest Fruit & Nut Village is based in and around Balsall Heath, including both Balsall Heath East and Balsall Heath West. Some of our work events spill over into Moseley and Highgate at the borders of the neighbourhood.

In early 2022 we held discussions with some likely key stakeholders across the area to judge how people felt about starting to create a Fruit & Nut Village here; from this meeting a proto-steering group began and the positivity of early conversations led to the commencement of activities in June 2022.

The first activity that we ran on 20 July took place on the first day after an extreme heatwave, and we were glad to be working in slightly cooler conditions as we began the process of creating an edible perennial food-plant nursery and propagation area. This area was completed a few months later and it is located at The Old Printworks, one of our partner organisations: the site acts as a base for us from which we can transport plants to orchard and forest garden sites across the area.

We ran regular sessions at both Sähëli Hub and Balsall Heath City Farm; these two organisations have been very welcoming hosts to us and instrumental in helping us to set up our project in the neighbourhood.

At Sähëli Hub, on 4 August, we ran our first plant propagation workshop in the area, creating bud-grafted fruit trees and welcoming 30 people to the event.

Our largest site, known as Reaside Forest Garden, lies alongside the River Rea, next to the Sustrans No. 5 cycle route between Balsall Heath and the south of Birmingham city centre. We began activities here with a site planning day on 28 September and since then we have worked regularly to plant fruit trees, begin soft fruit growing and to start planting a Sorbo-Crataegus foraging hedge.

In November we helped to launch a renewed Friends group for Seven Streets Park with a huge burst of enthusiasm. It was a high energy work day and 25 people attended, including two local councillors. The Park has been receiving regular positive attention since that day in November.



Balsall Heath



The winter was a very busy period, with **18 sites** having been initiated or developed since the start of the year.

These sites include...

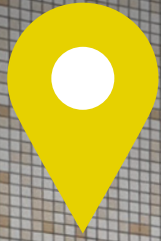
10 Mixed orchards	4 Micro orchards	2 Forest gardens
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2 Propagation nurseries	1 Foraging hedge
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Notably, in February we celebrated Tu B'Shvat, the birthday of fruit trees in the Jewish Calendar, with Nisa-Nashim and a wide range of other local people. It was a fun, engaging, work session and many participants learned a lot about each other and each other's beliefs.

Our propagation workshops across Balsall Heath have been very popular and they have included both summer and winter bench grafting work to grow new fruit trees, semi-ripe fruit bush cuttings, hard-wood cuttings and other plants by root division.

In total we ran **49 workshops**, planting days and other activities across the year – not forgetting the very wet and cold Wassail in January and the stowaway frog hidden amongst our propagation materials one afternoon!



Druids Heath





At the end of 2021 we began to develop a Fruit & Nut Village in Druids Heath and Monyhull.

Work involved some planting activities as the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns had caused disruption to the lives of everyone. We were successful in planting trees on a number of sites, and our work continued into the following year, when we were awarded a grant by Severn Trent Water to create a thriving community of people and orchard spaces.

By the end of winter 2021/2022 we had set up and were working in nine separate spaces across the neighbourhood.

We created four of these growing spaces from scratch and we now manage...

5	2	1	1
Mixed orchards	Forest gardens	Micro orchard	Soft fruit collection

We worked alongside Harts Community Adventure and Spearhead Trust to create a soft fruit collection and a small, new mixed orchard in Walkers Heath Park close to the 'Base Camp' site they have used for Forest School activities.

We very much welcomed the support of University of Birmingham Conservation Volunteers in helping us to strip turf at Southern Drive Forest Garden in February, allowing bed areas to be developed around some of our newly-planted trees, and making spaces for edible berry bushes and other perennials to be introduced.



Our volunteers



Maureen



“My experience is that we get to meet other like-minded people in the outdoors and that’s good for our mental health and we are learning how to grow different things along the journey in a group. Blessings to you all for getting us together.”

Rob

“Working with Fruit & Nut village has given us a massive boost in greening some of our communal spaces with edible plants. It’s been getting people talking to each other while we are outdoors.

“We’ve done some planning and turned a lot of the ideas into reality and it really is wonderful to see the results growing in front of our eyes.

“We can look forward to doing more community work with greening outdoor spaces for people and nature and in sharing our harvests.”

Shamim



“My experience with Fruit & Nut Village has been very beautiful and memorable. I was thinking over the idea of growing fruit and veggies on a community level; projects that can give people living in urbanised culture a positive feeling. Then I found out about Fruit & Nut Village.

“Honestly, it was a very natural and good experience to be with all the people in the places I volunteer at. It’s very soothing to see how those empty pieces of land are transforming into orchards and edible berries and veggies.

“I feel happy to work with Fruit & Nut Village, especially Rob, Dan, and the others. It’s a very well organised, open, and friendly, welcoming environment.”



Alfie



“For me, volunteering on the Southern Drive project was amazing. I walk past the project nearly every day and even though it is in its early stage I can see the benefits for the community.

“It was down to my neighbour, Matt, why I got involved and I’ll keep doing my bit. It would be nice to see all of the other neighbours get involved. If we all do a little bit I know we will make and grow a fantastic place.”

Karrina

“My name is Karrina and I live in Druids Heath. I have been involved with Fruit & Nut Village work that was held in my local community.

Over the last year I have helped to clear spaces, dig holes and plant trees; my four-year-old son loves getting involved when he can. I do work full-time and it is hard for me to attend all of the sessions but I really do like to talk with others about it, walk through and sit in the areas that are being developed.

“I hope this project continues in the future as it’s really developing beautiful little pocket areas within the community where people can get together and join in with activities.”

Anne



“Gardening, especially plant propagation, is something I’ve always loved doing, even more so now that I am retired. Having been office-based during my career I have enjoyed working outdoors so much.

“I raise edible plants from seeds and cuttings for Fruit & Nut Village, for example African Kale, Magic Cabbage and primroses. These are planted in several community spaces.

“Over summer 2022 I grew thymes, sweet violets and yarrow at home for an edible lawn at Pebble Mill Forest Garden. I regularly ride my bicycle round to Fruit & Nut Village sites and observe how things are growing.”



Ruth



“I’ve been volunteering with Fruit & Nut Village in Stirchley since summer 2021. I got involved after quitting my job last year due to personal and political stresses including adjusting to physical impairment to my hand after being hit by a car at the end of 2020 and discovering I had ADHD and autism.

“I’ve found working with Fruit & Nut Village has been brilliant for my mental health and has helped me deal with social anxiety and isolation. My impairment limits what I can do but Rob has been great at finding tasks that do fit my skills and capabilities; my favourite is probably bindweed removal.”

Grace

“I first met Rob and his team when I moved to Druids Heath. They are making such a difference to the area. They are dedicated to giving people a purpose in life to do positive things.

“Amazing to see that the trees and all the work they do are untouched and not vandalised. You also make new friends and have fun as well as keeping healthy. Keep up the good work we all appreciate all you do for us.”

Cliff



“Fruit & Nut Village provides a great opportunity to meet people of all ages and to get out into the fresh air and make a positive contribution to the urban environment.

“Meeting other volunteers and learning new skills such as tree planting, maintenance and pruning has given me a sense of involvement and I’m sure has helped my general well-being.

“Every activity from enhancing the local growing spaces with more fruit trees to picking litter provides a real sense of achievement and, of course, the older you get the more important contact and social connectivity becomes.”



Our future



As we leave the busy winter tree planting and pruning period, we near completion of our ambitious 2040 plan.

We will work towards delivering this once it is fully-developed and adopted. Our start, in having created three 'Fruit & Nut Villages', will be built upon. New 'Villages' are planned and we aim to develop our existing 'Villages' with expanded plantings, adoption of new areas, development of new partnerships and engagement with new participants.

Securing increasing, and reliable, funding to ensure our work grows will be a key part of our development in the year ahead, with existing funders anticipated to be supportive of re-funding the work of the CIO. In addition we will seek larger-scale pieces of funding with the intention of bringing stability and long-term reliability to our work delivery.

We are excited to have reached the position that we are now in and we are driven to see this work grow and to continue to allow communities across the West Midlands region to come together over a shared appreciation of nature, biodiversity, wooded landscapes, food for all and community.





Our partners



A big thank you to our partners...

Selly Oak Neighbourhood Network Scheme

Thank you for continuing to support us and for championing our work.

Hall Green Neighbourhood Network Scheme

We were able to work with older people across the Balsall Heath neighbourhoods through funding from Hall Green NNS.

Groundwork

Support from Groundwork allowed us to operate through the summer at The People's Plot.

The National Lottery

Fantastic support and an offer of ongoing support to develop our work.

Severn Trent Water

We are very grateful for the support that has allowed us to work in Druids Heath and Monyhull.

The Cole Foundation

A great little organisation who funded us to purchase caging to protect many of our fruit trees.

Loaf

Thank you for keeping our volunteers well-fed during cold, winter tree planting days.

Incredible Surplus

A very supportive partner, offering us space to work upon, regular positivity and offers of electric van transportation.

Selly Park South Forum

Support from the Forum has led to us creating a new growing space on Cecil Road, and also boosted our connection to the local area.

Hazelwell Farm Allotments

We have enjoyed regularly working here to care for the small on-site mixed orchard.

Dads Lane Allotments

The committee here have always been supportive of our activities on-site.

Dads Lane Community Association

A small partnership but one that we cherish. We only have 10 cordon trees planted with you but our shared aims have much overlap.

Birmingham City Council Parks and Rangers

The support of officers here has allowed our work to begin and continue – without this support we wouldn't exist.

Friends of Stirchley Park

Thank you for supporting our project in your park.

Retrofit Balsall Heath

We have enjoyed sharing visions of the future with you – changes are taking place in our world.

Säheli Hub

A fantastic organisation that we are very proud to be connected with.



Balsall Heath City Farm

A long-established and much loved institution – we are grateful that Fruit & Nut Village is accepted into your sphere.

The Old Printworks

Many thanks for allowing us to set up a nursery space in your premises.

The TenBags

A great performance at our Balsall Heath Wassail despite the miserable weather conditions – hearty and heart-felt.

Ragged Oak

Fantastic costumes, a fantastic team and some great dances – we really welcome your support of our Stirchley Wassail.

Juliet Fry

Your determination to tell tales despite cold and rain is much admired.

Sharon Wu

Beautiful tales told in support of bringing people together for fun evenings with their community.

Nisa-Nashim

A very able and willing team bringing vital volunteer labour.

University of Birmingham, School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences

A thorough, eager and enthusiastic student placement.

University of Birmingham Conservation Volunteers

Thank you for lending a hand on several occasions to tackle some rather large orchard care and creation jobs.

Harts Community Adventure

We enjoyed starting off a new orchard in Walkers Heath Park with you.

Spearhead Trust

Thank you for hosting a small fruit bush growing space in Druids Heath.

Stirchley Happenings

Your fantastic 'bird artworks' are admired by 100s of people every week.

National Trust

20 new trees from your Ring of Blossom came to orchards in Stirchley.

Fovea Creative

A special thank you for making our Annual Report into the visual spectacle that it is.



Statement of financial activities

for the period ended 30 September 2022

	Unrestricted funds 2022	Restricted funds 2022	Total 2022
	£	£	£
Income from:			
Charitable activities			
Grants and donations	33,966	-	33,966
Total income	33,966	-	33,966
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities			
Charitable expenditure	10,566		10,566
Total charitable expenditure	10,566	-	10,566
Net income for the period/ Net movement in funds	23,430	-	23,430
Opening fund balance	-	-	-
Closing fund balances	23,430	-	23,430



Balance sheet

as at 30 September 2022

	2022
	£
Current assets	
Debtors	-
Cash at bank and in hand	24,494
	24,494
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(1,064)
Net current assets	23,430
Total assets less current liabilities	23,430
Funds	
Unrestricted funds	23,430
Restricted funds	-
Total funds	23,430

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 6 December 2022 and were signed on its behalf by:

D. Edmonds

D Edmonds
Chair





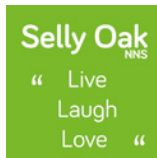
Fruit & Nut Village



St. Paul's Community Development Trust



Hall Green Neighbourhood Network Scheme



LEAF CREATIVE ARTS



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#GrowTheVillage

#TreesNeedPeopleNeedTrees

Fruit & Nut Village CIO is a charity, registered no. 1196372