



Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature – a media briefing

Why have The Wildlife Trusts, Incredible Edible, Garden Organic and National Federation of Women's Institutes started this project?

The partnership is celebrating The King's vision for treasuring nature and living sustainably through local food growing – and bringing partners' collective expertise and experience to engage people with this subject. Together, we want to encourage people to grow food in a way that also helps nature thrive – and to do this we'll provide wildlife-friendly growing advice, as well as a mechanism for people to pledge their garden on a map so that they feel connected to a wider network of people. Nature is in crisis and needs our help – we want to make the links between healthier communities, creating habitat for wildlife, food growing and improved wellbeing.

The initiative is kick-started with support of £247,834 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The opportunity

With nearly 5% of England* alone covered by residential gardens, transforming them into wildlife-friendly spaces would make a significant contribution to the UK's commitment of protecting 30% of land for nature's recovery while also encouraging action for nature and awareness of natural heritage issues more broadly. Gardens, balconies, window boxes and small, shared green spaces all count! Through our partnership we will begin to mobilise groups, volunteers, members, supporters and the communities that we work with to create and map Coronation Gardens – whether urban, rural, high rise or suburban. Little is known about the quality of habitat in people's gardens – for example, a garden could comprise grass and hedgerows or could be paved with a fence. Coronation Gardens will develop methodologies to provide richer data in terms of people's actions to create wildlife habitat within their gardens and community greenspaces.

The benefits of growing your own – for nature, the environment, health and community

Research shows that many people lack access to nearby natural green space. That is why this project has a focus on developing partnership work to engage new communities in growing together for nature. The research and findings of this project, and new partnerships forged should help to build on the legacy of The Wildlife Trusts' flagship community project, [Nextdoor Nature](#), which is also funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and expand the reach of Incredible Edible groups.

Growing your own fruit, vegetables and herbs brings lots of benefits:

- Enjoying healthy, chemical-free, homegrown food, with the proven wellbeing benefits of growing your own
- Plant-based food without the food miles – helping to reduce personal carbon footprints
- Plants and flowers providing nectar for declining pollinating insects (and in turn supporting the wider food web including birds and small mammals)
- Natural features such as ponds and hedges help wildlife flourish and establish a natural balance in gardens
- Establishing and strengthening relationships between neighbours/community members as they grow together.

[Evidence shows](#) that people who connect to nature and who garden are more active, mentally resilient and have better all-round health. Read how charities such as Thrive describe the benefits of gardening [here](#).

But at the same time, many people have little access to natural greenspaces. For example** in more than 1 in 10 neighbourhoods, 90%-100% of the population have no access to nature within 15 minutes' walk – and the most deprived communities are more than twice as likely to live in areas with a small amount of natural space per person. As one in eight households has no garden, Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature will provide advice on how to connect with community schemes and use window boxes and balconies.

Who are Incredible Edible, Garden Organic, the Women's Institutes and The Wildlife Trusts and why are they working together?

The partnership behind Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature share similar values and a common cause. **The Women's Institutes** have over a hundred years of proud history of protecting the natural environment, playing an active role in communities, and promoting sustainability. **Incredible Edible's** mission is to create kind, confident and connected communities, with raised awareness of the ways we can live more sustainably, through the power of food. **Garden Organic** promotes organic growing and composting, citizen science and research, and seed conservation through their Heritage Seed Library. Their aim is to help people grow 'the organic way', using natural methods to promote healthy, biodiverse, sustainable gardens. **The Wildlife Trusts** are grassroots charities committed to inspiring people and saving, protecting and standing up for the natural world. They work with people across Britain through schemes such as Nextdoor Nature which brings communities together to help nature thrive where they live and work. All the partners share a vision of people taking action for the environment and are excited to bring our different knowledge and skills in community organising together.

What are we asking people to do?

In pledging to take part in Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature, people would be encouraged to:

- **Grow healthy food to eat** – this could range from herbs and salads, through to vegetables and fruit trees depending on the space you have
- **Plant pollinator-friendly blooms** – butterflies, moths, bees and hoverflies all need sources of nectar and pollen to thrive. As they travel from flower to flower, they also pollinate them, enabling plants to set seed or bear fruit
- **Create a water feature**, which could be as simple as a submerged dish or as involved as digging a pond, lining it and oxygenating it using native plants such as hornwort
- **Leave a patch of long grass or pile of logs** to create shelter for wildlife and natural predators such as hedgehogs and frogs

- **Go chemical and peat-free** – avoid using pesticides, weedkillers and peat!
- **Sign up for regular ideas and tips** - we want to encourage people to share their efforts and inspire others to take part, in turn helping the initiative grow. Through the pledge mechanism, individuals put their garden on a collective map, and can sign up to receive regular advice through emails, helping to build confidence and knowledge in food growing and wildlife-friendly gardening.
- **Share efforts on social media to inspire others to take action** – participants are encouraged to share their activity on social media using #MyCoronationGarden. We'd like people to encourage others to get involved and become part of a group or community of people acting for nature and growing food.

Who can take part?

Everyone can take part – whether you have your own garden, a balcony, or want to create a shared gardening plot in a community greenspace. Even a pot on a window ledge can grow salad, herbs or pollinator-friendly wildflowers! A big focus for this project is to encourage people to grow in shared spaces. We will encourage people to get together to ask if they can grow on community-owned land or to share gardens. As partner Pamela Warhurst says: “Incredible Edible’s experience demonstrates we have places close to our homes that can be transformed into edible, nature-friendly spaces that reconnect people to each other, to healthier futures and to our environment. Through the power of small actions, in these Coronation Gardens and community beds, each of us can be a part of building a more sustainable future by simply coming together to grow food.”

What are the stages of the Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature initiative?

The initiative is in the early stages of development. We have a website which provides inspiration and advice here: www.mycoronationgarden.org. Over the coming months, new information and advice will be added to this resource.

Phase 1 – individuals and families: Our initial focus will be on individuals and families, and we'd like to mobilise people to get started from June 2023. We will include useful advice on ways to grow food in harmony with nature, including through companion planting and encouraging predators to your garden instead of using pesticides. The Wildlife Trusts are delighted to have funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to help grow the programme to reach as many people as possible.

Phase 2 – bringing people together: We will build on existing networks of school and community groups, and work with local authorities, businesses and civil society partners, including community organisers. This phase will incorporate a focus on people getting together to share successes and celebrate the fruits of their labour. We will also encourage fruit and tree planting in the autumn of Year 1 and seed and plant swaps between growers. Partners will inspire the communities in which they work with their initiative. We will develop a set of resources to encourage businesses and their customers – as well as Women’s Institutes’ groups, to join in the Coronation Gardens programme. We hope to engage the public sector to engage with the initiative in Year 2.

Phase 3 – sharing lessons, successes and examples: We will evaluate the success of the initiative in terms of scope and scale of engagement by individuals and organisations, create an accessible archive of lessons learned and develop a rewards programme for outstanding examples of participation.

Why is The National Lottery Heritage Fund giving money towards the initiative?

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded the initiative £247,834 to lay the foundations. The funding will enable The Wildlife Trusts and partners to produce resources so that people can learn how they can help nature and grow food in their own and community outdoor spaces.

Investing through partnerships to help halt and reverse the loss and decline of habitats and species is one of the Heritage Fund's key priorities. Collectively, gardens represent a vast area of potential habitat for wildlife and have the potential to support nature's recovery in our towns and cities as well as more rural areas. The Heritage Fund already supports The Wildlife Trusts through projects including Nextdoor Nature, a flagship, UK-wide programme bringing communities together to help nature flourish where they live and work and Coronation Gardens builds on this idea. It will involve a wide range of people in connecting with nature and gardening for wildlife, through growing food in a nature-friendly way. People will make their area a better place to live, both visually – through welcoming nature to outdoor spaces – and developing friendships with neighbours as they take part together.

How did the project come about?

The initiative was developed by a group of people who have worked with the King on a number of issues over the years, and who believe there is great passion for nature among the public in Britain – a passion they know to be shared by His Majesty, King Charles. They saw the Coronation as an opportunity for people to give tangible expression to that passion by creating a lasting legacy in their gardens. They are: [Tom Burke](#) (Chair), [Dame Polly Courtice DBE, LVO](#), [Dr Tony Juniper CBE](#), [Elizabeth Buchanan](#), [Craig Bennett](#) (the proposers), and [Geraint Richards](#) (advisor). The Wildlife Trusts are the lead delivery partner.

Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature comes at a time when we most need nature to play its full and proper role in tackling the many challenges society faces – among them, increasing isolation and mental health problems, exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, and impacts of climate change including extreme heat, drought and flooding.

We will look to promote shared endeavour where resources are limited – research shows this is also motivating in terms of people taking action for nature. Seed swaps, community composting, sharing of growing space, knowledge and skills will help to optimise success. When communities can grow healthy food together it can help to address some of the problems presented by rising costs.

The partners are already reaching hundreds of thousands of people across the UK, helping them to come together and improve their communities. Reaching more people through Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature, particularly through the lens of home-grown food and helping nature, is something that all partners aspire to. Importantly, the programme will help to make the connection between a healthy natural world and the food we eat.

ENDS

Notes

Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature – www.mycoronationgarden.org

For all enquiries, please contact press@wildlifetrusts.org

Partners:

The Wildlife Trusts – www.wildlifetrusts.org

Incredible Edible – www.incredibleedible.org.uk

National Federation of Women's Institutes – www.thewi.org.uk
Garden Organic – www.gardenorganic.org.uk/

References:

*Source: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/land-use-in-england-2022/land-use-statistics-england-2022

**Health and access to nature references:

- Health and wellbeing benefits to people from regular contact with nature – see [Nature for health and wellbeing | The Wildlife Trusts](#) and [How nature benefits mental health - Mind](#)
- Many people have little access to natural greenspaces – see [Huge nature access gap must be bridged to meet Government's 15-minute nature promise \(wcl.org.uk\)](#)
- One in 8 households has no garden – see [One in eight British households has no garden - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)
- Evidence shows that people are concerned about the environment. [Worries about climate change, Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) found that 74% of adults were worried about climate change, which was the second biggest concern, behind the rising cost of living (79%).