

Maudsley Hospital Community Gardens Camberwell, London, England

Trees for Cities and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Small Scale Permanent Award

Project overview

Trees for Cities and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) collaborated to transform the Maudsley Hospital's outdoor spaces into high-quality destinations for service users, staff and the local community to relax, socialise, engage with nature and enjoy a variety of health and well-being activities.

During the project we planted fruit trees, river birch trees and a diverse mix of over 1,000 plants and shrubs throughout the hospital to create beautiful community gardens within the heart of this busy, urban area. We engaged over 100 people through community consultation and planting activities, including running four planting days for the local hospital community to help transform the spaces. The project cost a total of £61,000 (+VAT) which includes costs for all project development, fundraising and management, community consultation and engagement, design, delivery, tree and plant stock and accessories, community planting workshops, publicity and maintenance (3 years).

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

The hospital's outdoor spaces mainly consisted of bare open amenity grass with a few large trees and shrubs. There was a severe lack of biodiversity, colour and visual interest making the spaces feel bland, uninspiring and, as a result, underused.



The hospital's bare and open green spaces prior to the project

Were there any specific reasons that led to this project?

(Maudsley Hospital is undergoing large redevelopment across the site so the Trust was keen to ensure that the remaining outdoor spaces provide a natural, peaceful haven in recognition of the wide ranging mental health and wellbeing benefits of engaging with nature. The project was also designed to encourage people to travel through and spend time in the public hospital grounds, such as local commuters, workers and students, supporting SLaM's objective to integrate the hospital with the local community to help reduce stigma associated with mental illness.

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

The project involved the following activities:

- Planted 17 large river birch trees throughout the central courtyard of the hospital. As well as providing shade and a nice sound as they blow in the wind, the trees will provide shelter and habitat for local wildlife such as birds and insects.
- Created a community orchard, planting 12 mixed fruit trees including apple, pear and medlar. The trees will attract and support pollinators and, as they age, provide valuable habitat for wildlife including insects and beetles.
- Planted 1,118 flowers, plants and shrubs through the hospital, chosen for their ability to attract pollinators including butterflies, moths and other insects (e.g. Mahonia eurybracteata, Bergenia 'Overture', Bergenia 'Silverlight', Echinacea purpurea, Viburnum x juddii).

We ran a comprehensive programme of consultation where the hospital community was able to feedback ideas for the gardens, input on design, select fruit and plant species, etc. We then ran a number of community planting days to create the gardens, including a weekend event with a mix of 49 volunteers from the hospital community, including residents, service users, Occupational Therapists and regular Trees for Cities volunteers, as well as two planting workshops with nearly 50 pupils from a local primary school.

Tree for Cities will maintain the gardens throughout their first summer, with fortnightly visits from April to September. All standard trees will be maintained for an additional



Photo Description: The hospital's transformed green spaces

two summers, managed with our horticultural trainees and volunteers, before handing maintenance back to the Trust as landowner.

The special mix of trees and plants not only support biodiversity but provide an array of interesting smells, colours and textures to create a calming, sensory space for people to enjoy. This project demonstrates an effective, replicable approach to engaging local communities in increasing biodiversity to support mental health and wellbeing in the hospital setting.



How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

In addition to the community planting days, we worked with a number of corporate volunteers, including volunteers from Bloomberg, Clear Channel and Investec to help prepare the sites for community planting. Activities involved pit marking, digging, clearance, etc.

We will continue to work with Maudsley Hospital to ensure the gardens are fully enjoyed by all, for horticultural therapy, art, meditation, food harvesting and more. Working with the senior leadership team, we will nominate lead members of staff from various departments, who will engage their wider teams in running activities in the gardens. Trees for Cities will engage the hospital and local community throughout our maintenance period, and work with the hospital to develop a seasonal management plan for the new green spaces on campus. By having the strong support and backing of all the staff at the hospital, service users and the local community will be able to reap the benefits of the hospital gardens for years to come.

Examples of feedback from the hospital community:

"Peaceful, relaxing space for patients. Green space is much more preferable to grey"

"It will bring people outdoors, encourage activities and socialising"

"A beautiful space for quiet reflection and connecting with nature"

"How fabulous the planting project is happening! As Head of Occupational Therapy for the Trust this project is a great way to create environments on the site that people would like to be in. The interaction between an individual, their environment and their meaningful occupation is all important in facilitating health and wellbeing." – Gabrielle Richards



Photo Description: Patients, staff and community volunteers helping with planting

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

Trees for Cities has over 20 years experience delivering community tree planting and greening projects to improve biodiversity. We were keen to collaborate to increase our knowledge and understanding of how to bring this into a hospital setting in the most appropriate and impactful way for people and the environment.