

Winner of the RE:LEAF Acorn Award: Annie Chipchase

The RE:LEAF Acorn award is given for an individual member of the public who has made a particular contribution to promoting or conserving trees

The award was given for 25 years of dedication to increasing and improving Hackneys treescape. Annie is the linchpin of the community tree nursery, teaching volunteers and changing people's views of trees.



Annie Chipchase receiving her award from Ian Gambles (Forestry Commission England Director) and Matthew Pencharz (Mayor of London's Senior Environment Advisor)

Annie said "I see this award as a resounding thank you to all the volunteers who have contributed over the years to the running of the Tree Nursery and creating a place that is attractive for wildlife and people".

The Hackney Community Tree Nursery

The Hackney Community Tree Nursery (HMUG) was set up in 2000 as a joint venture between the Hackney Marshes User Group and Groundwork. The site, formerly a council putting green, but long disused, was vested to the User Group by LB Hackney to be run as a Community Tree nursery.

Millennium and Seed funding enabled the necessary work to build two polytunnels, create a holding bed and planting area, as well as structures to support larger trees. It also financed the purchase of two containers for storage and tools.



Hackney Tree Nursery

Tree Nursery trees have been planted on Hackney Marshes to create Friends', Jubilee and Kingfisher Woods and Hackney parks that have been planted with stock include, Shoreditch, Haggerston, Hackney Downs, London Fields, Clissold, Millfields, Springfield, Mabley Green, Well St. Common, Butterfield Green and Abney Cemetery Park, Daubeney Green and Stoke Newington Common. Many of the trees were, and are, planted by local volunteers from the various User Groups and many tree planting days are organised and run by the Tree Musketeers, who play an important role in raising trees at the nursery.

Over the years, our stock of trees and shrubs has grown and diversified, as we acquired 'waifs and strays' from people who did not have a place in their garden for self-seeders, or had been surplus to requirements (that's how we came to host 40 Giant Redwoods!). We have continued to grow some trees from seed and cuttings and are very proud of our native Black Poplars, sourced from local trees, many of which are now growing in Hackney's Parks and elsewhere. This year four Black Poplars were provided for a planting day in Poplar Park in Tower Hamlets. Our stock now includes various exotic trees that have become a familiar part of our urban environment.

As our trees have matured, the work of caring from them has increased, with potting on, pruning, mulching, weeding, fertilising etc. which has substantially increased our workload. This and the maintenance of the site, which has been planted with numerous trees,



From the beginning, HMUG worked with the local community and schools in the development of the Tree Nursery's work of raising native trees and shrubs from seed and whips. Ultimately these were to be available for planting out in Hackneys' Parks and open spaces.

The regular work involved with the raising and care of the young trees has, over the years, been undertaken by numerous volunteers, some of whom have been making their valuable contribution since the creation of the Tree Nursery.

including fruit trees and shrubs -apples, pears, plums, damsons, greengage, medlar, walnut, almond, apricot.

A key part of the work of the tree nursery is managing the site for wildlife, and we are blessed with numerous birds which nest on and around the site, attracted by the invertebrates and fruit on offer.

The tree nursery has run numerous courses and workshops over the years to educate local people about all aspects of the natural world and to give people the opportunity to learn practical conservation skills, including tree planting. Hackney Marshes User Group also participates in the management of Wick Woodland, an 18-year old woodland planted on former football pitches, which now emanates a sense of maturity which belies its age. We have helped run woodland management workshops for many years in the woodland and wrote a management plan for the site.

Annie's involvement

I have been involved with the tree nursery since around 2002, and have been organising the management of the tree nursery and volunteers for about 6 years. I am an ecologist and am most happy working outside in the natural environment (even if it is urban) doing practical work and teaching others. Over the years, I have led wildlife walks around the Marshes and Wick Woodland, looking particularly at the plants and have run wildflower identification days for volunteers and local people.

I am a volunteer with the Tree Musketeers, helping with their planting days (and raising the trees to be planted!). I helped with a successful funding application to Awards for All to run a tree care course one day a month for a whole year starting in May this year. The aim of the course is to provide volunteers with the knowledge and skills and, therefore, confidence, to play a greater part in tree planting activities and/or to take a more active role.

The tree nursery has benefitted from good relationships with the Parks Department of LB Hackney and over the years the parks' staff have provided the Tree Nursery and Tree Musketeers with practical and logistical help.

The Tree Nursery has built up a lot of resources in terms of tools and reference materials, which are available for the use of other groups in the Borough.

Further information

- The [RE:LEAF Partnership](#)
- The 2014 Awards were organised by the Forestry Commission and Mayor of London, with support from a range of RE:LEAF partners
- We are grateful to the following organisations who provided financial support for the 2014 awards:

