



PERMACULTURE
ASSOCIATION

CASE STUDY

Creating Thriving Communities

A Permaculture Approach

Permaculture is an ethical framework used to design regenerative systems at all scales – from home and garden to community, farm and bioregions.

We live in a time of great uncertainty and unfolding crises with the social, environmental and economic failures of the current system being cruelly exposed by rising inequality, social division, increasingly precarious and insecure employment, loss of biodiversity, accelerating climate change and the inability of an increasing number of people to meet their basic needs for good food and housing.

In this project we are exploring how people across Britain are working to create thriving communities!

www.permaculture.org.uk



**NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDED**

Hulme Community Garden Centre

Community: Wide range of groups from the local area

www.hulmegardencentre.org.uk

Overview

Hulme Community Garden Centre (HCGC) was established in Hulme, Manchester in 2002 as part of a response from the local community to the demolition of public housing. In 2012 the centre nearly doubled in size when it incorporated an adjacent car park after extensive community consultation.

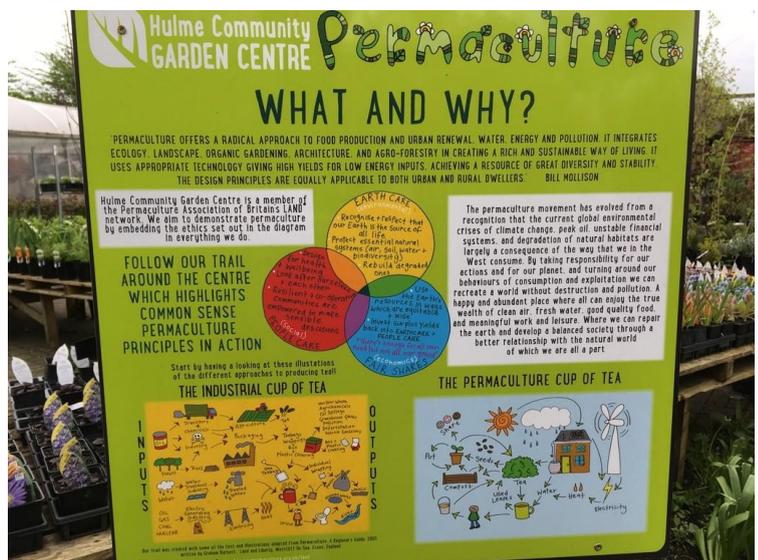
The projects operates as a thriving garden centre, as well as offering more structured opportunities for people with learning difficulties, disabilities, mental health challenges, toddlers, home educators and many others. They also work with local primary schools, colleges, the University and other organisations to offer training and education on their own site, as well as going out and providing training externally.

Training at the Garden Centre happens in their straw bale classroom and polytunnels and in the community gardens which includes a forest garden, wildlife pond, outdoor cooking area and food growing spaces.

Permaculture

The Centre is explicit about how it uses permaculture and the ethics are at the heart of much of what happens there.

Holmgren's principles of permaculture are clearly in evidence, including on signboards that are placed around the garden centre. These boards provide a great way to educate the public about permaculture and to show how the principles can be applied at many different scales.



Some members of staff have permaculture training including one who has done teacher training and uses permaculture in teaching for children, businesses, adults with additional needs and others.

People Care

One of the main focuses of HCGC is on health and wellbeing for the local community. The Centre works with lots of local schools, businesses and community groups who come to the garden for workshops and to volunteer.



Centre staff also go out to these groups and help them design and implement gardens in their own spaces.

People Care runs throughout HCGC's programmes. For examples, businesses come to the garden for team building activities which might include workshops on planting and propagating medicinal plants which can be taken back to their offices and used to make herbal teas. The Centre is now also working with a local GP surgery to create a small garden growing medicinal plants, to encourage patients to think about their own diet and nutrition.

A lot of people in the local area use the garden to meet and spend time in. It is completely free to access and an important principles of the Centre is that there are no financial barriers to people using it.

Earth Care

The Garden Centre is a green oasis in the middle of a heavily developed area close to central Manchester. It has been a huge community effort over more than a decade to protect the land as a green space, and to expand the space when the neighbouring council car park became available.

The Centre has always been organic and for the last 10 years has been stock free and follows the principles of the vegan organic network. There is a real focus on providing habitats for wildlife with a great diversity of plants and lots of native species. The Centre is currently running a pollinator project focusing on attracting invertebrates and has introduced a top bar bee hive.

A forest garden was planted in 2013 and is now starting to mature. The forest garden is a fantastic educational resource for visitors to the garden as well as providing soil fertility and showing off species that can be bought in the garden centre.

Fair Shares

HCGC has an ethical procurement policy incorporating fair trade, sourcing locally and avoiding companies whose practices are detrimental to the environment or to human rights. This policy extends to who the Centre banks with, gets insurance from and more.

An important principles of the Centre is to be open to all, seven days a week. There are also at least 6 open days and events every year, which are open to anyone to attend.

Outcomes and monitoring

The Centre asks all volunteers and course participants to complete questionnaires when they first come, after several months, and if possible when they finish a course or end their time as a volunteer. The questionnaire enables the Centre to measure the Social Return on Investment and was put together with support from an academic at Bristol University.

Through these questionnaires, the Centre has been able to identify significant short, medium and long-term benefits for all users of the garden. Some of the key benefits identified include improved health, happiness and confidence; improved access to training and employment; increased social Interaction and an increased sense of trust and belonging.

Case Study

Deborah

Deborah (not her real name) lives near HCGC and struggled for many years with alcohol addiction. She had a long-term interest in horticulture and began to spend time in the garden to enjoy the natural surroundings. Gradually, Deborah was encouraged and supported to volunteer in the garden which she did and became a really important member of the community.

At times, Deborah would access the structured opportunities for people with health problems, and at other times would feel well enough to come and volunteer independently, usually coming to the garden once or twice per week.

Her time at HCGC hugely improved Deborah's confidence and wellbeing and has enabled her to significantly reduce her alcohol consumption. She is now overseeing an allotment project in Manchester for adults with mental health problems.

