



**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](http://www.permaculture.org.uk)



**NATIONAL  
LOTTERY FUNDED**

# May Project Gardens

Community: Working with urban communities to address poverty, disempowerment and access to resources and influence.

[www.mayproject.org](http://www.mayproject.org)

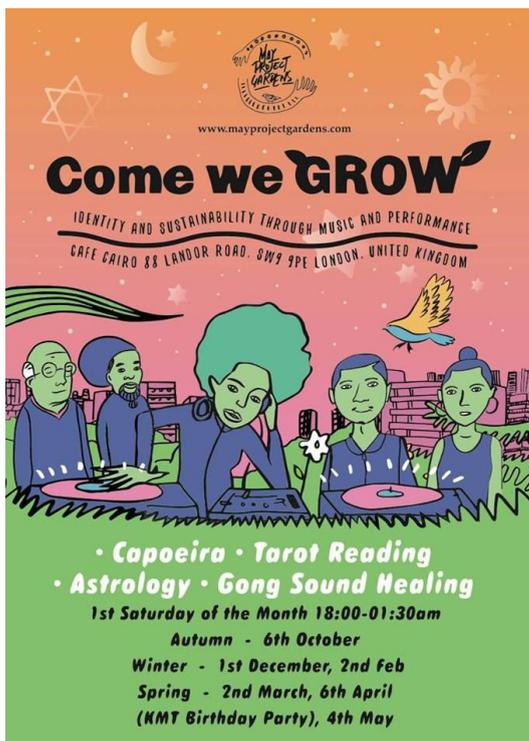
## Overview

May Project Gardens (MPG) provides practical, affordable and collective solutions for people to live sustainably and disengage with power structures that don't serve their interests.

MPG was founded in 2007 by Ian Solomon-Kawall and Randy Mayers. Ian spent his youth as a carer for his mum who suffered from mental illness. When she died he wanted to do something positive in her memory and set an example for others facing similar social and economic hardships. MPG strives for an alternative system and lifestyle based on nature, community, biodiversity and creativity.

The current Directors of the project are Zaira Rasool and Mouna Bani, who helped Ian to develop the Hip Hop Garden model and apply successfully for funding over the last few years, each respectively, as well as helping the project grow.

## Permaculture



May Project Gardens builds on the skills and knowledge of Ian who brought the hip-hop and Randy who introduced him to permaculture. Bringing the two together, May Project Gardens is a memorial garden, which demonstrates the possibilities for gardening with nature using permaculture techniques. It is also a project that offers programs for youths and others in the city looking for alternatives.

Mixing the ethics and principles of permaculture with hip-hop Ian and his crew bring consciousness and creativity to getting the message of permaculture out there through a mix of hip hop and forest gardening (amongst other techniques!).

## People Care

May Project Gardens approaches people (young people in particular) through creativity, addressing people where they're at, encouraging people to join in through music and creative expression, showcasing alternatives for living in harmony with each other and the planet without preaching from an environmental perspective.

## Earth Care

Ian started out in the garden as a tribute to his Mum when Randy joined him with knowledge of permaculture. He began showing him how the garden could be a place of sanctuary and creative expression, working with nature, rather than against her. The project shares solutions for sustainable living in the city through events and workshops as well as in the garden.



## Fair Shares

The project intrinsically acknowledges and works with those who are living with disadvantage, those from ethnic minority groups, those who are struggling economically and young people, and seeks to share tools with which people can empower themselves. Ian wants to demonstrate hopeful examples and pathways through leading by example and helping people to reconnect with nature for personal, social and economic transformation.

It's an assumption that everyone has access to the same resources and opportunities and May Project Gardens is aware that there needs to be real acknowledgement that there is a debate to be had around the cultural legacy of colonialism and how the UK came into being.

## Outcomes and monitoring

We aim to see people reach their full potential (from a people care perspective, getting the best out of people). We see people's strengths and it's a space where we can help develop their potential. We use the edges and value the marginal. We work at the fertile edges. We see people at the edges of society on the basis of race and disability and we see the edge as a place full of potential. We are all about people developing their full potential, coming back into society, fully expressing themselves, eating healthily, eating more plant-based food and creating a sense of community.

As a society there is a conversation around edges, but in our experience there is not always a true integration of people who are at the edge. We monitor our work through the use of questionnaires and surveys, as well as using case studies & other qualitative methods. We also use progressions & evaluations so we can monitor changes for the young people. These we can do at 3, 6 or 12 months depending on the program. We also document and share what we do through videos and radio interviews.

## Case Study

### Hip Hop Garden



Hip Hop Garden is an alternative education model which started after the garden was set up and Ian bridged the permaculture world bringing hip hop to it. Obesity and other illnesses can stem from unhealthy urban lifestyles and so the hip hop garden can be a place to offer alternative ways to accessing healthy lifestyles.

Young people are the fastest growing group of vegans and the hip hop garden works with young people on healthy living through the way they eat, live and express themselves and harnesses young people's energy for being entrepreneurs.

The model supports young people to learn, have artistic expression through hip hop (as well as other forms of creativity) and create enterprises. The options the young people we work with traditionally have are often limited and so we aim to provide them different pathways to become entrepreneurs. Social permaculture is really at heart of what we do.