



EVALUATION REPORT

SOWING ROOTS:
CARIBBEAN GARDEN
HERITAGE IN
SOUTH LONDON

2020-2022



FORWARD

This project was first proposed during the year that the Windrush Scandal was exposed in 2018. For me the project was very much about the re-telling of the Breadfruit story (and of Captain Bligh who's tomb is in our garden) from the viewpoint of the Caribbean population of south London. It became more pertinent and personal when I realised that I fell under the definition of being of the Windrush generation - people who came to the UK between 1948 and 1971. I became a participant in the project at the suggestion of the Oral Historian which then made it even more personal. The project and exhibition have opened up so many new conversations and created new relationships. It's legacy will continue at the Garden Museum in our Learning programme but also in many other ways.

-Janine Nelson,
Head of Learning, Garden Museum
Co-ordinator, Sowing Roots

People are often surprised that the only Museum in Britain to be dedicated to gardens is located not in a rural country house but in a corner of London – and in Lambeth, a Borough whose population is exceptionally diverse, including the second largest population of Black Caribbean residents in the UK (Lambeth Council). This has opened us up to so many stories; the icon of our collection is Harold Gilman's 'The Black Gardener' (1905), acquired in 2014 with funds including from the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF). Now with continued support from NHLF, 'Sowing Roots' is the first project to explore the experience of gardeners and growers of Caribbean heritage. These stories had never been researched and of course, make the most sense when they are told by participants who can share the horticultural sophistication and potency of childhood places in the Caribbean. Speaking personally, the opening night of this exhibition was one of my favourite evenings ever at the Garden Museum. There was something special in the air. Through Sowing Roots we have made many new friends, learned a lot – and a lot which is challenging – and have sketched out many possible collaborations for the future.

-Christopher Woodward
Museum Director, Garden Museum

Rudi

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an evaluation of the SOWING ROOTS project, which includes an intergenerational process for collecting oral histories of local south London gardeners of Caribbean heritage, a public in-person and online exhibition informed by their stories, and an accompanying learning programme of workshops, talks, events and trainings carried out at the Garden Museum and in local communities from summer 2021- spring 2022. The Garden Museum and community partners from across south London involved people of all ages in multi-layered learning, participation and engagement opportunities inspired by Caribbean heritage and horticulture.

SOWING ROOTS was an urgent response to the risk of losing local heritage and horticultural histories from an ageing generation of food growers who are part of or descendants of the Windrush generation. With the borough of Lambeth being home to both the Garden Museum and one of London's largest Black Caribbean populations (many of whom grow their own food and garden at home), the project also aimed to address the gap in representation of Black local gardening culture at the museum.

PROJECT AIMS

In line with the Heritage Lottery Fund aims, SOWING ROOTS set out to:

- Identify and better explain Caribbean heritage
- Engage a wider range of people with Caribbean heritage
- Develop skills for young people in oral history collection
- Build a more resilient organisation

PROJECT STRANDS

There are four main strands to the SOWING ROOTS project:

1. Oral history collection and photographic portraiture with local, intergenerational Afro-Caribbean communities
2. In-person Public Exhibition
3. Learning Programme
 - Talks
 - Workshops
 - Events
 - Diversity Training
4. Online exhibition

The project offered the following opportunities for engagement:

- 3 training days for 9 young people to build skills in oral history collection and interview techniques
- 15 interview days for 15 people of Caribbean descent to share stories about their Caribbean heritage through their gardening practices. These stories form the basis for the exhibition and their audio recorded interviews and transcripts will enter the Museum's archive
- 15 exhibition weeks reaching 3,345 visitors
- 13 in-person and online workshops, talks and events reaching 600 people
- 2 days of diversity training, attended by 19 museum staff and 18 volunteers.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Projected descriptions were written by The Garden Museum's Development Manager, Christina McMahon, for the National Heritage Lottery Fund application.

HERITAGE OUTCOMES	PROJECTED	ACTUAL
<p>ENGAGE A WIDER RANGE OF PEOPLE WITH HERITAGE</p>	<p>"Members of the Afro-Caribbean community of south London – from the Windrush generation to today's school students contributed a new chapter to record and share Caribbean horticultural heritage, contributing to an exhibition and to a newly recorded chapter in the story of British garden history. The project exhibition and activities will attract members of the community to engage with horticultural heritage in a fun, thought-provoking way."</p>	<p>This outcome was met and demonstrated through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 ELDERS + 10 YOUNG PEOPLE participating in oral history sharing and collection that will be added to the museum's archives. • 3,345 VISITORS to the exhibition • 600 attendees at workshops, talks and events throughout the project. • 15 new relationships formed across local and national communities.
<p>HERITAGE WILL BE IDENTIFIED AND BETTER EXPLAINED</p>	<p>"This area has never before been recognised as a heritage to be preserved. Garden and food memories and traditions will be collected and transcribed through oral histories and photographs, explained in an exhibition (and later an online exhibition), and deposited in our archive of garden design."</p>	<p>15 stories collected from local elders and their family members about gardening practices and memories of home in the Caribbean shaped the public exhibition.</p> <p>A further learning programme expounded on Caribbean plants, birds, food and Carnival traditions.</p>
<p>PEOPLE WILL HAVE DEVELOPED SKILLS</p>	<p>"The student interviewers will be trained in collecting oral histories, and in creating an exhibition. The interview subjects will gain new skills in sharing experiences and working with others. Museum staff will receive diversity training."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 young people received training from a professional oral historian, with 6 leading interviews • 19 staff and 18 volunteers took part in diversity training • ~380 adults, children and families learnt new skills in drawing, crafting and cooking through the learning programme

PROJECT OUTCOMES (cont.)

HERITAGE OUTCOMES	PROJECTED	ACTUAL
<p>PEOPLE WILL HAVE LEARNT ABOUT HERITAGE, LEADING TO CHANGE & ACTION</p>	<p>“People will recognise the influence of Caribbean horticultural heritage on British garden history. Our traditional audience will have their perceptions changed, and the Afro-Caribbean community will share their experiences and have their place in our shared national gardening history better explained.”</p>	<p>Audiences expressed a deep appreciation for an exhibition that reflected local, under-represented communities and noted a desire to see more exhibitions about Caribbean heritage at the museum.</p> <p>Additionally this project has sparked many new ideas and led to action and change across the organisation.</p>
<p>THE FUNDED ORGANISATION WILL BE MORE RESILIENT</p>	<p>“The Museum will strengthen relationships with political and community networks and influencers within Lambeth and extend awareness of the value of what we do into the south of the Borough; we will also attract new volunteers and audiences.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 (and counting) new relationships developed • Significant change in audience demographics • Staff express moving from apprehension to confidence in new programming • Audiences, staff and volunteers express a yearning to continue such growth
<p>PEOPLE WILL HAVE GREATER WELL BEING</p>	<p>This was not a projected outcome, but was an outcome noted by participants, staff and visitors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed by the collected oral histories, the exhibition focused on the relationships between gardening and mental health. Visitors connected strongly with this aspect as did the young participants in reflecting on the value of the project.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Identifying and sharing Caribbean heritage through multiple lenses

Guided by the voices of the 15 local south London gardeners, Caribbean heritage was identified and shared through memories of home, gardening practices, types of foods and plants that are still grown today in the UK, and the holistic relationships between gardening and well-being. An additional programme of hands-on activities illuminated aspects of the culture from tropical flower arranging, to botanical Caribbean bird illustration and Carnival costume workshops. Talks and events expounded upon the movement of people and the movement of plants, including the complex colonial routes entangled within Caribbean roots. Finally and critically, key knowledge was exchanged as numerous new relationships were formed with community groups ranging from Black grower groups to local farms, academic institutions and fellow cultural institutions.

Centring Diverse and Missing Heritage

With a free exhibition accessible to all in the Garden Museum's main exhibition space, SOWING ROOTS took centre stage from November 2021-March 2022. This physical centring was reflected across the entire project, with staff and volunteer diversity trainings, and organisation-wide reflection and acknowledgement for the ways in which local Caribbean heritage has been missing from the archives up until now. From the sample of visitor feedback forms, 48% of visitors to SOWING ROOTS were of Black, Caribbean, mixed or Asian heritage, 54% were under the age of 55 and 59% were first-time visitors to the Garden Museum. This was a significant step change in audience demographics- which often attracts diverse participation in the learning programme, but hardly ever in the museum exhibition space. Across staff, project participants and visitors, there is a resounding call to create more programming about Caribbean and other local, under-represented horticultural heritage.

Working in New Ways

From engagement with young people to the creation of an exhibition made in response to oral histories collected from local growers, SOWING ROOTS opened up new ways of working for the museum.

Learning took place across the entire organisation from the communication required, to the sharing of processes amongst a range of stakeholders, to the adaptation needed in an unfolding methodology where accepting a certain amount of 'not knowing' was key. Specifically, the Museum gained new experience in:

- Working with young people and what is required in terms of partnership building, scheduling, care and support.
- Working with oral histories and the curatorial process that accompanies that journey of design in response
- Working with local people from under-represented backgrounds and developing the care and support needed for these relationships

Relationships

The museum developed (and continues to develop) several new relationships from the project. From local farms and teaching artists, to community group visits, academic and media connections, these relationships have been noted as key to sustaining a wider reach, inclusion and dissemination of diverse heritage and horticultural practices.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

A mixed methodology was used to evaluate the SOWING ROOTS project including:

- Interviews with key project leaders, staff and community partners
- Observation of the exhibition and select events
- An evaluative lunch which brought participants together towards the end of the exhibition to reflect on the process and outcomes, and offer recommendations
- Feedback forms from visitors to the exhibition, learning programme of events, workshops and trainings

Beneficiaries in this report refer to anyone who was impacted by the SOWING ROOTS Project. This includes the elder and young people who participated in sharing and collecting oral histories (referred to as the participants), the project leaders, staff, visitors, volunteers and community partners.

Quotations in this report are attributed to individuals with their approval. Additionally some quotations are anonymous identified by respondent category only. None of the quotations used represent the opinion of the external evaluator.

The total sample achieved during public consultation comprises:

- Formative and summative meetings with the project's key coordinator and Head of Learning
- Semi-structured Interviews over Zoom with Garden Museum staff including the Museum Director, Development Manager, Head of Visitor Experience, and Archivist.
- Interviews with the Project's key leaders including: Three co-curators, Photographer, Oral Historian
- Written communication with a key partner at Loughborough Farm who helped recruit elder participants
- 16 feedback forms from staff diversity training
- 6 feedback forms from volunteer diversity training
- 114 feedback forms from visitors about the exhibition
- In-person evaluation lunch with 10 participants, 3 project leaders, 1 partner, 3 extended family members of participants
- Written questionnaires collected from evaluative lunch
- Observation through attendance at the following events since hiring in November 2021:
 - Opening launch of the exhibition
 - Talk: Stories of Plants
 - Talk: UCL Seminar Institute of the Americas
 - Diversity training
 - Online cooking class
- Media coverage (including blogs and social media)
- Project data and documentation, including film and video sourced from the Garden Museum
- Successful application to NHLF
- Garden Museum Learning Policy
- Demographic profiling of other Garden Museum exhibitions/programming



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PLANTING SEEDS:
IDENTIFYING & EXPLAINING
CARIBBEAN HERITAGE

This section gives an overview of all aspects of the SOWING ROOTS project, evaluating the ways in which Caribbean heritage was revealed through:

- Project Process: Oral histories, Intergenerational connection and photographic portraiture Summer 2021
- Exhibition: 15 November- 6 March, 2021-22
- Learning Programme: Fall 2021-Spring 2022

THE PROCESS

REVEALING HERITAGE THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION,
INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION AND COLLABORATIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAITURE

With the goal of ensuring Caribbean horticulture and heritage stemmed from the lived experience of local, south London gardeners, the project began with a process of oral history collection. This was designed to be intergenerational- whereby local young people would train in oral history techniques and then carry out interviews with elders. Due to the pandemic, the project started a year later than planned. But during that time, Janine Nelson, the Museum's Head of Learning, piloted the project in July and August, 2020, with local elder gardener Hilda Castillo Binger. They had known each other since 2013, when they jointly ran gardening sessions at Lambeth GP Surgery. Together they discussed their Caribbean roots, with Nelson audio-recording and writing up the story afterwards. Ingrid Guyon of Fotosynthesis took photographs of Hilda in her garden with her son Peter. This pilot allowed for an understanding of the project's key ingredients: oral storytelling, intergenerational connection and collaborative photographic portraiture.

The project officially began in April of 2021, recruiting elders and youth through local Loughborough Farm, Lambeth Young Carers, and connections within the project's curatorial team. While recruitment of young people was challenging due to Covid restrictions and some lacking recruitment experience in the curatorial team (a change in hire impacted this), one of SOWING ROOTS' main legacies is the participation of one young participant: Edward Adonteng (pictured below).

With an initial ambition to reach 12 elders and young people, the project ultimately engaged 15 elders and 10 young people.

Youth participants- 9 youth took part in oral history and interview training. 5 of these young people went on to conduct interviews at the Garden Museum, or online. An additional participant (the god daughter of one of the elder participants) also participated in leading the interviews.

Elder participants- 15 south London gardeners took part, sharing stories of growing practices and memories of home or their parents' homes in the Caribbean.



Photo by Federico Rivas of young participant Edward Adonteng interviewing elder participant Morgan Joseph.

REVEALING HERITAGE THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Three trainings were provided online over consecutive evenings to nine young people. In each of these one-hour sessions, participants learned about the value of oral history as well as techniques for conducting interviews.

"In the first session we covered an overview of the project, then I introduced what oral history is, why it's important and how it can be used, giving examples from other projects I have delivered. In the second session we looked at how you prepare for an oral history including how you write and ask questions, and we workshopped ideas for what we could ask one of the participants as a case study. The third session was about the equipment we'd be using, how the online interviews would work, an explanation of the recording agreements and a discussion of next steps."

-Jen Kavanagh, Oral Historian

Following these sessions, five of these young people were able to take part in leading the interviews with the elders either online, or in-person at The Garden Museum. Working with the young people, Kavanagh "used the outcomes of the training to draft a discussion guide template, which [she] then shared with the project team for their input. The general format was the same across all of the interviews, with some tweaks being made dependent on who we were interviewing and if we had information about them in advance." (Kavanagh)

For some of the young participants, this was their first introduction to Caribbean culture, for others who had links to Caribbean heritage, it offered a way to deepen and relate to certain aspects of culture and tradition while making connections with new people across generations.

"some commented on learning about food they hadn't heard of or wanting to travel to the places mentioned. There was a great energy after the interviews, with the young people clearly feeling engaged and that they had heard something that was of interest to them." -Jen Kavanagh



Photos by Federico Rivas, featuring Jen Kavanagh and young participant, Nazzar Amponsah-Afari

"I JUST MADE THE INTERVIEWEE FEEL COMFORTABLE...WITH A RESPECTFUL TONE...AND THAT MADE ME FEEL COMFORTABLE."

-Nazzar Amponsah-Afari

REVEALING HERITAGE THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION

To listen to an adult share their story with a young person is to witness a special way of transmitting culture and heritage. IAs Janine Nelson, Head of Learning, expressed, it's different to how a story might be told between two adults, or between two people from different cultural backgrounds. This intergenerational aspect of the project revealed Caribbean heritage and culture as a critical act of passing down history and growing practices to the next generation.



Photo by Federico Rivas; Edward Adonteng and Syreeta Levy

"Syreeta told me that Esiah would never throw anything away... now I drive my mum crazy making sure we don't get rid of anything"



Photo by Federico Rivas; Edward Adonteng and Ras Prince Morgan in Morgan's allotment.

"When you're in Ras Prince's garden, it's like you're in Jamaica..."



Photo by Federico Rivas; Edward Adonteng and Morgan Joseph at the Garden Museum. Joseph lives between London and St. Lucia.

"He's 70 But you think this guy's 30- So much energy, I asked him: "Grandpa, ... how do you have- it's the land, that's what gives him his energy, his power. And even you know, even in his old age, the efforts that he's doing back home right now. Because, you know, the Caribbean islands are facing that crisis, especially with environment and flooding. And he's leading the charge of it. And it's just inspiring to see."

REVEALING HERITAGE THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION

"I came in, I do the interview. And it was fun. And it was good. Knowing that our culture is not dead, dead dead! ... And we just need to build on this to bring it strong. You know, it's very nice...because nowadays our young people don't know enough 'bout growing things, but it's good. It's nutritious...grow your own things and have them ... go, pick, wash, cook or steam ...that's everything, straight from the ground there. That's what we use to do back home in Jamaica, so we don't want that to die. So we are very happy to see this project."

-Dorrel Bennet Creary



"A youth worker at my youth group said that they were doing a garden project ...and I thought it would be a good idea to get involved in the project...Just the idea of being in a project about people and history...the experience of getting to interview someone and getting to know about their history interested me..."

"I learnt that gardening is very relaxing and is really important. It brings the family together, it also can bring the community together..."

-Nazzar Amponsah-Afari

REVEALING HERITAGE THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION

Photographic portraits were taken of each elder by Federico Rivas of Fotosynthesis- whose ethical approach to photography is devoted to ensuring participants have a say in how they want to be represented. Taken in their home gardens, allotments, or at local farms where the participants had a working connection, the portraits were created collaboratively to reflect Caribbean heritage through specific plants, garden designs or communities. Each participant received physical copies of their portraits that were shown in the exhibition.



Photo of Lincoln Nurse by Federico Rivas

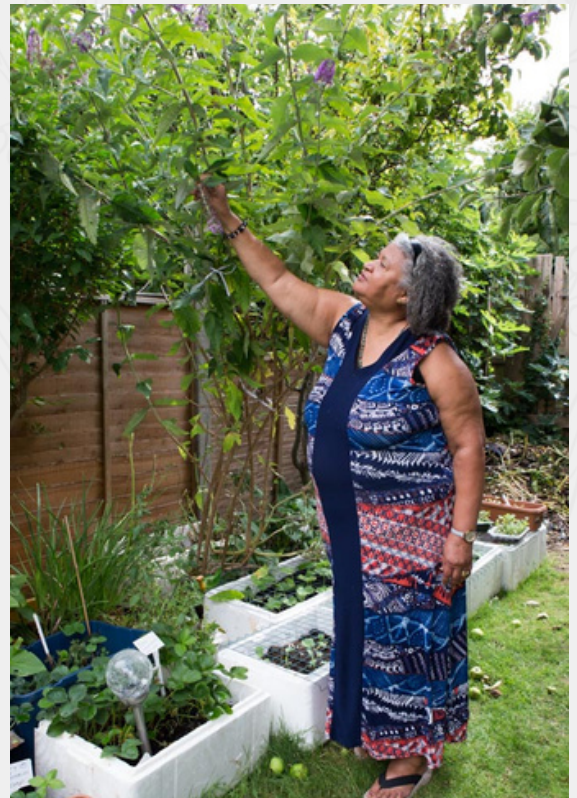


Photo of Hilda Castillo Binger by Ingrid Guyon



Photo of Syliva Halstead and Eloise Reid by Federico Rivas



Photo of Woodrow Phoenix by Federico Rivas

EXHIBITION

REVEALING CARIBBEAN HERITAGE AND HORTICULTURE THROUGH PERSONAL STORIES, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND OBJECTS

'SOWING ROOTS' was an exhibition created in response to the oral history collection described in the previous section. Centred in nave and magazine exhibition space and on the Community Wall by the Clore Learning Space, it was free to the public, reaching over 3,000 visitors from November 15- March 6, 2022 (1200 of whom had come specifically to see 'Sowing Roots'). The exhibition was co-curated by Dr. Ekoa Morris and Dr. Elizabeth Cooper in collaboration with the museum's Head of Learning, Janine Nelson. Together they worked with a design team and the Garden Museum's in-house curator, Emma House.

The curatorial team wanted the exhibition to not only reflect the voices from the oral histories, but to be significantly shaped by them. This meant that every aspect of the exhibition was designed with the participants' voices in mind- from a 3D installation of a grove of cardboard Calabash trees, to a wall of photographic portraits and oral history excerpts, to cases of heritage objects.



Photo by Graham Laddao



Photo by Graham Laddao

The curatorial team organised the personal stories around 5 central themes which appeared on the cardboard trees.

- Remembering
- Harvesting
- Healing
- Empowering
- Belonging

The three dimensional aspect of the trees was included as a way to bring to life the physical and emotional journeys of people who had travelled from the Caribbean to the UK-- including details of how and why they travelled and how their ideas of home have continued to impact where they live and call home in England today. The exhibition also included a wider contextual history of the Caribbean and its relationship with the United Kingdom.



Photo by Graham Laddao

"WE HOPE TO HAVE UNEARTHED THE INVENTIVENESS, CREATIVITY AND POWER AT THE HEART OF CARIBBEAN GARDENING THAT HAS SHAPED FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND EMPIRE ACROSS TIME AND SPACE."

REVEALING HERITAGE THROUGH PEOPLE: HONOURING THOSE WHO HAVE PASSED ON

One of SOWING ROOTS' main aims is to ensure the stories of Caribbean lives are not lost and that their critical contributions to horticulture in the United Kingdom is recognised and remembered. In addition to capturing the stories of living local growers, the exhibition also included recognition of two locals who had recently passed away, Mr. Brenton Pink and Esiah Levy. Mr. Pink moved to the UK from Jamaica in 1957 and passed away in 2017. His brightly coloured home and gardens reflected quintessential Caribbean heritage.

A previously created film by local filmmaker, Helena Appio, about Mr. Pink was loaned for use in the exhibition.

"When I just bought it, well, it was not beautiful. But since I take it over and added myself towards it, I developed it to have a lightness. My additions make a difference, brighten it up. I've created a part of Jamaica here. Some like this house and some may not like it, I don't know. But I know a lot of people like it and I like it myself." -Mr. Pink (Film excerpt)

Learning about Mr. Pink and enjoying the film were some of the most popular comments expressed by visitors to the exhibition. One visitor, a perfumier, has since been in touch about developing a scent inspired in part by Mr. Pink. This will be expounded upon in the legacy section of the report.

The film is available to view [here](#) and will be part of the online exhibition.

**"THE VIDEO ELEMENT HELPED BRING
THE WHOLE EXHIBITION TO LIFE...
I WANTED TO MAKE A CROWN AND
WEAR IT LIKE MR. PINK"**

-visitor



Screen shots from Appio's film.



Mr. Pink's 'crowns' were honored next to the film.

REVEALING HERITAGE THROUGH PEOPLE: HONOURING THOSE WHO HAVE PASSED ON (CONT.)

At the time of writing an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the urgency to capture local south London gardeners at risk of dying out increased. Sadly, the youngest participant scheduled to take part, Mr. Esiah Levy, had passed away. Levy had created a seed share programme sending seeds across the globe so people could grow their own food. His wife, Keeley and sister Syreeta agreed to take part in the interviews and photography sessions, and his mother attended the evaluation lunch held towards the end of the exhibition with the participants. At this lunch one of the younger participants, had a chance to express to Mr. Levy's mother how much of an inspiration Levy had been for him to take part in SOWING ROOTS:

"It was actually Esiah- and his story, and like his principles. Like when you introduced yourself earlier, I got a bit teary-eyed. I just wanted to say thank you. It was literally his story that kind of just propelled me into learning, into ...connecting to, you know, we have roots and understanding the part that we play with land. And, yeah... it's nice to be amongst you."

[Edward Adonteng to the Mrs. Levy]



Photo by Graham Lacdao

One section of the exhibition wall was dedicated to Levy with portraits and quotes from his wife and sister.



Esiah Levy's wife Keeley and their son, photograph by Federico Rivas



Objects honouring Levy and his seed share programme, photograph by Federico Rivas



Esiah Levy's sister, Syreeta, in her barbershop, which Esiah had encouraged her to open before his death. Photograph by Federico Rivas

REVEALING HERITAGE THROUGH PERSONAL OBJECTS

Several objects appeared throughout the exhibition. These objects were loaned to the museum by the 15 participants as well as by the West India Committee.

A deliberate choice was made to label these objects with quotations from the owners' oral histories, in an effort to emphasise the personal relationships, knowledge and histories carried within them.



Photo by Graham Lacadao

Carole Wright's gardening gloves appeared with this description excerpted from her oral history interview:

"gardening is political more than anything to me...working class estate-dwelling people have every right to a green space, and environmental concerns should concern us, and the price of food, and where in the world people have come from to be growing that food and expanding it and what their cultural connection to the food and the space is very important."

An example of Ras Prince Morgan's grandmother's lunar almanac that he uses as a growing guide appeared along with his description:

"I am a lunar gardener [...] I am just following an ancient age old system that I'm sure my grandparents used... Old Moore's Almanac was a little horoscope book and it would give you the forecast for the year coming, depending what birth sign you're under. And it used to give you high tide, low tide. It used to give you the moon rise time and the moon set times. Sunrise. Sunset. And I realised that even in Jamaica, Granny used to use these as when to plant. My mum used the same thing, 'cos I remember Granny had an Old Moore's Almanac. I remember Mum having an Old Moore's Almanac and it's still published today and I've come up using the Old Moore's Almanac as well."



Photo by Graham Lacadao

An example of Old Moore's Almanack has since been purchased by the museum to add to the permanent collection.

REVEALING HERITAGE THROUGH OBJECTS

The exhibition also debuted Rudi Patterson's painting *Calabash* which was recently acquired by the museum. Patterson was a Jamaican actor, potter and self-taught painter. The museum has previously held two exhibitions of his work and a conference on his life. With permission and generosity from the Rudi Patterson Estate- the Calabash painting was granted reproduction for the three-dimensional grove of trees created for the exhibition and as postcards for selling in the shop. .



Calabash additionally connects with another Patterson painting, *Arcadia*, which is part of the museum's permanent collection upstairs. (images courtesy of The Garden Museum)



Photo by Graham Laddao

The museum's art carts were adapted especially for the exhibition with relevant photographic imagery and graphics on the sides and books inside. Reference books about the Windrush generation were curated for children and adults.

REVEALING HERITAGE LEADING TO CHANGE

Three labels underwent changes as a result of input from project participants and museum staff.



Through conversations with project participants, Dorrel Bennet Creary and Morgan Joseph, plants and trees within Patterson's painting, *Arcadia*, (on view in the museum's permanent collection) were identified. A new label with an additional paragraph has since replaced the previous label.

Arcadia, 1992

Rudi Patterson (1933-2013)

Arcadia is influenced by Rudi Patterson's Jamaican background, depicting the tropical plants and landscape of his formative years before he moved to the UK in the 1950s.

A successful model and actor, Patterson developed his bold style of painting while recovering from a water-skiing accident and his work often engaged with the themes of landscape, nature and memory.

Depicted in the painting are the bright colourful leaves of Coleus, the yellow and orange flowers of Hibiscus trees and at the top right, *Delonix regia*, known as the Poinciana tree in Jamaica and the Cha Cha tree in St Lucia. It has vivid red flowers and the long seedpods are like musical rattles when shaken.

Views of Trinidad

Colonial horticultural practices and systems of racial classification developed together in the Caribbean. This late 19th century photobook features pictures of adults and children labelled "African" and "Coolie" side by side images of colonial buildings and pressed fern leaves. Derogatory and dehumanising racial classifications such as "Coolie" and "African" were used to justify economic exploitation and the denial of political rights.

Little is known about the creator of this book nor the identities of the people in the photographs. A fern "craze" swept Britain in the late Victorian era, also known as "pteridomania." Tropical ferns were particularly valued. Transported and cultivated in Wardian cases they comprised a major display at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 in South Kensington which also featured a "West Indian Gallery".

On loan from the West India Committee

A late 19th century photobook that was displayed in the exhibition (on loan from the West India Committee) had initially included the word 'coolie' in the label description. After museum staff fed back to the team about the offensiveness of this term, the curatorial team updated the label- acknowledging the problematic term.

The Garden Museum is home to the tomb of William Bligh, who transported breadfruit from Tahiti to Jamaica in the 18th century. Participants in the Sowing Roots project contributed additional meaning to this complex fruit associated with the slave trade, as they remembered seeing breadfruit for sale in Brixton market and how it connected them to home. A photograph of the breadfruit tree has also been added to the label, courtesy of participant, Eloise Reid.

Bligh's Breadfruit

This is the tomb of William Bligh who was commissioned to transport breadfruit to the Caribbean in 1791. Bligh delivered the plants from Tahiti to Jamaica and St. Vincent. Colonists and slave owners hoped the robust and starchy fruit tree would become a staple throughout the Caribbean - and in particular among the enslaved who were made to grow their own food on small plots of land called "provisions." Roasted, boiled or fried - breadfruit eventually became an icon of Caribbean cooking. Participants in the Sowing Roots exhibition remember that breadfruit on sale in Brixton market - or carried in a suitcase - was a taste of home for those arriving to London from the Caribbean after WWII.



Photo courtesy of Eloise Reid

LEARNING PROGRAMME

Alongside the exhibition, SOWING ROOTS identified and shared Caribbean horticulture and heritage through a programme of talks, workshops, events and trainings which reached nearly 600 people. Some activities were planned in advance, while others emerged organically in response to the project's process and developing relationships with wider communities.



Photo credits: 1. Ras Prince Morgan giving a talk at Loughborough Farm as part of Lambeth Heritage Festival 2. Wesley Kerr, Zakiya Mackenzie and David Gorder speak at 'The Stories of Plants' talk 3. participant in Carnival workshop 4. Federico Rivas and Dorrell Bennett Creary at the Private Viewing 5. Local communities and project participants learn about Sowing Roots at Ruskin Park 6. Tropical birds from workshop appear on Patterson's *Calabash* 7. Participant in clay birds workshop (photo by Federico Rivas) 8. Participants in tropical flower arranging 9. Families taking part in activities as part of visit with South London Refugee Association (photo by Federico Rivas) 10. Participants in the breadfruit storytelling workshop 11. participants in the tropical flower arranging workshop

FULL PROGRAMME: TALKS, WORKSHOPS, EVENTS

Talks	Details	Attendance
'The Stories of Plants'	Panel discussion about the movement of plants & people	40 in person 25 online
UCL Institute of the Americas panel series	Sowing Roots project leaders share about the process	40 online [81 booked]
British Association of Landscape Industries	panel discussion about inclusion and diversity	~150 (in person and online)
Workshops		
Family workshop: The Last Breadfruit	Storytelling & art	8 (4 children + 4 adults)
Tropical Flower Arranging	flower arranging/bouquet making	35 adults (over 3 sessions)
Half-term Family Workshop: Clay Birds	Clay making & firing	17 (9 children 8 adults)
Half-term Family Workshop: Hummingbirds	Painting & Collage	24 (15 children 9 adults)
Half-term Family Workshop: Carnival	Costume & Craft	27 (14 children 13 adults)
Caribbean Cooking Class	Online cooking workshop	22
Botanical Illustration: Birds of the Caribbean	Online Illustration	50
Caribbean themed cooking sessions for families in the Food Learning Programme	cooking sessions	50
Trainings	Details	Attendance
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging	Two, 3- hour online trainings for staff + volunteers	19 staff, 18 volunteers

Events		
Windrush Day	Project promotion and outreach	5: 2 young people, 2 freelancers, 1 staff
Lambeth Heritage: Ruskin Park	Project promotion and outreach	11: staff, elder participants + project leaders
Lambeth Heritage: Loughborough Farm	Project promotion and outreach, accompanied by food	42 (elder participants, project leaders, public)
Evaluation Lunch	Discussion & lunch	15 (participants, project leaders and extended family)
Group Visits	Museum tours + activities	50

The exhibition was also the setting for a special event inaugurating the new Eco-Parish of Lambeth, with guests including the Bishop of Kingston and many south London faith leaders who expressed a particular interest in SOWING ROOTS

LEARNING PROGRAMME: TALKS

SOWING ROOTS had intended to hold more evening talks at the museum throughout the exhibition, but the return of the pandemic and limited resources (due to needed expenditure elsewhere) contributed to reduced capacity. Two unplanned talks emerged however, online at University College of London and the British Association of Landscape Industries.

"the talks was a fantastic element to this show. I watched online. I think that this really helped the event to come alive." -visitor

23 November: The Stories of Plants at The Garden Museum

This talk in the main exhibition space identified Caribbean heritage through a panel discussion about the movement of plants in relation to the movement of people. Broadcaster Wesley Kerr, writer Zakiya Mackenzie and Kew Garden's Botanical Research Director, David Goyder discussed how plants themselves have stories and how their stories are lost, found, told and retold.

A reception in the Orangery continued to share Caribbean heritage through canapés created by Keshia Sakarah of Caribe. This was the first time a food reception had been integrated into such an event and many guests commented on how enjoyable the food was, and how this aspect facilitated genuine interactions between audience members.

"Thank you for the invite this evening as I thoroughly enjoyed and learnt a few new facts about the plant journey and the Europeans who were involved from the 1700s! But as ever it's their story and it's time for the voiceless to be heard" so I fully enjoyed the reading from Zakiya as she brought to life the voiceless! -participant

2 December: 'Landscaping- Access all Areas' -British Association of Landscape Industries

The British Association of Landscape Industries invited co-curator Dr. Ekoa McMorris to participate in this panel discussion about barriers faced within the landscaping industry. Dr. McMorris shared many aspects of the SOWING ROOTS exhibition, identifying the impacts of language and perceived expertise as barriers to inclusion within gardening contexts. This talk can be viewed online [here](#).

26 January: Caribbean Garden Heritage UCL Institute of the Americas Caribbean Seminar Series

In this free online talk co-curators Janine Nelson and Elizabeth Cooper, along with young participant, Edward Adonteng, expounded on Sowing Roots sharing:

- the project's origins and connections with the Windrush scandal in 2018
- the ways in which the elders' oral histories led the project from content to exhibition design
- the profound impact on Adonteng as a young South Londoner having been exposed to gardening practices from the elders


Additionally, audience members had a chance to dialogue about complex relationships with certain foods like sugar cane and bananas, as well as the concept of the 'provision ground system' and how those foods and ideas navigate lines of trauma and empowerment. (i.e.: does the growing of certain foods re-emphasise the pain of slavery, or offer a way to honour and reposition Caribbean expertise?)

New relationships with the following attendees may lead to future collaborations:

- Vikra, Tamboli, Mildred Botanica Gardens-I UCLA, USA plans to visit Garden Museum this summer
- Kromanti Rum Distillery
- University of Kent student carrying out research on: "Maroon ethnobotanical knowledge systems and medicinal plants, looking at knowledge loss and preservation coming" has since attended exhibition, bringing the Maroon Brothers with her.

LEARNING PROGRAMME: WORKSHOPS

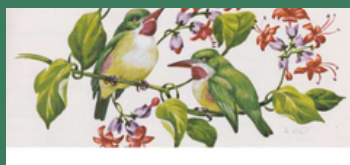
A range of workshops for children, families and adults took place online and onsite at the Garden Museum, revealing Caribbean heritage through the breadfruit tree, tropical flowers and birds, Carnival practices, specific food ingredients and cooking practices. Some workshops were inspired by objects/loans in the exhibition including Rudi Patterson's bird ceramics and Janine Nelson's childhood illustrated book *Birds and Flowers of the Caribbean*. Additionally, long-time teaching artists had a chance to adapt and experiment with new practices informed by Caribbean heritage. For example, the workshop on Caribbean floral arrangement was a new offering by a teacher who usually leads workshops on wreath arrangement.



<https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/events/online-c>

[Event - Sowing Roots: Online Caribbean Cooking Class - Garden Museum](#)


Join chef and nutritional therapist Annika Clinkett for a 3 hour cookery masterclass in our learning studio, as we discover the wonderful world of plant based Caribbean cuisine and how to create a mouth-watering three course lunch using



<https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/events/online-v>

[Event - Online Workshop | Illustrating Tropical Birds and Flowers - Garden Museum](#)

You'll learn how to compose your image on the page, the basics of observational drawing detailing birds and botany with advice on the application of colour to create a completed artwork. All abilities are welcome, no prior art experience is necessary. Technique tips and



<https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/events/sowing->

[Sowing Roots | Half Term Workshop: Carnival Time! - Garden Museum](#)

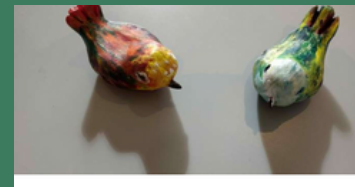
I come from an island where we are known as 'de people with ah carnival mentality' I grew up in the small village of Penal in South Trinidad, with a rich cultural background of Indo-Caribbean roots.



<https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/events/sowing->

[Event - Sowing Roots | Half Term Workshop: Colourful Birds of the Caribbean - Garden Museum](#)


Taking our Sowing Roots exhibition about the Caribbean as inspiration, and in particular a beautifully illustrated book in the exhibition about the birds and flowers of Jamaica, we will use paint and collage to create a colourful tropical bird to hang on our 3-D cardboard Hibiscus tree in the exhibition.



<https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/events/sowing->

[Event - Sowing Roots | Half Term Workshop: Clay birds of the Caribbean - Garden Museum](#)


Taking our Sowing Roots exhibition about the Caribbean as inspiration, and in particular some ceramic birds in the exhibition made by artist Rudi Patterson, we will make tropical birds out of clay in this one hour long workshop.



<https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/events/sowing->

[Sowing Roots Family Workshop | The First Breadfruit Tree - Garden Museum](#)

Exploring the story of Prince Lee Boo, which took place long long ago when a Prince from the Palau Islands traveled all the way to London and lived in Rotherhithe, we will learn that Breadfruit grew in Palau and that Prince Lee Boo would have eaten it.



<https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/events/sowing->

[Event - Sowing Roots: Tropical Flower Arranging Workshop - Garden Museum](#)

Bring some of the colour of the tropics into your home with our tropical flower arranging workshop with Elaine Fisher, florist and floristry lecturer teaching at Lewisham Southwark College and Roots & Shoots.

LEARNING PROGRAMME: EVENTS

The following events supported the project by facilitating participant recruitment, exhibition openings evaluation, and approaches to reaching new audiences through group visits.



Lambeth Heritage Festival

Two separate events held in Ruskin Park and at Loughborough Farm in Autumn, 2021 introduced local people to the 'Sowing Roots' project and offered a chance for elder participants to connect with each other, the project leaders and the wider local communities.



Private Viewing

The exhibition opened to the participants first- with a private viewing where over 70 people attended including the participants and their families as well as the project leaders, museum staff and wider interested communities including Blondel Cuff of the West India Committee.



Evaluation Lunch

Participants and project leaders evaluated the project towards the end of the exhibition in the Clore Learning space, accompanied by a freshly cooked Trinidadian lunch made by Ray of Sunshine International Arts.



Rootz into Food Growing

A network of 30 Black growers (created in collaboration across Ubele, Land in our Names, Black Rootz and OrganicLea) attended the exhibition intentionally on the same day as the participant evaluation lunch - having a chance to tour SOWING ROOTS with Dr. Ekua McMorris and network with the participants.



Museum Detox Visit

"a network for people of colour who work in museums, galleries, libraries, archives, and the heritage sector" brought a group of 8 people to the exhibition. The group met with Janine Nelson in the Clore Learning space over food and conversation.



South London Refugee Association Group Visit

Organised through Federico Rivas, who was the photographer on the project, approximately 25 adults and children visited the exhibition and then engaged in clay making activities and a photography session with costume.



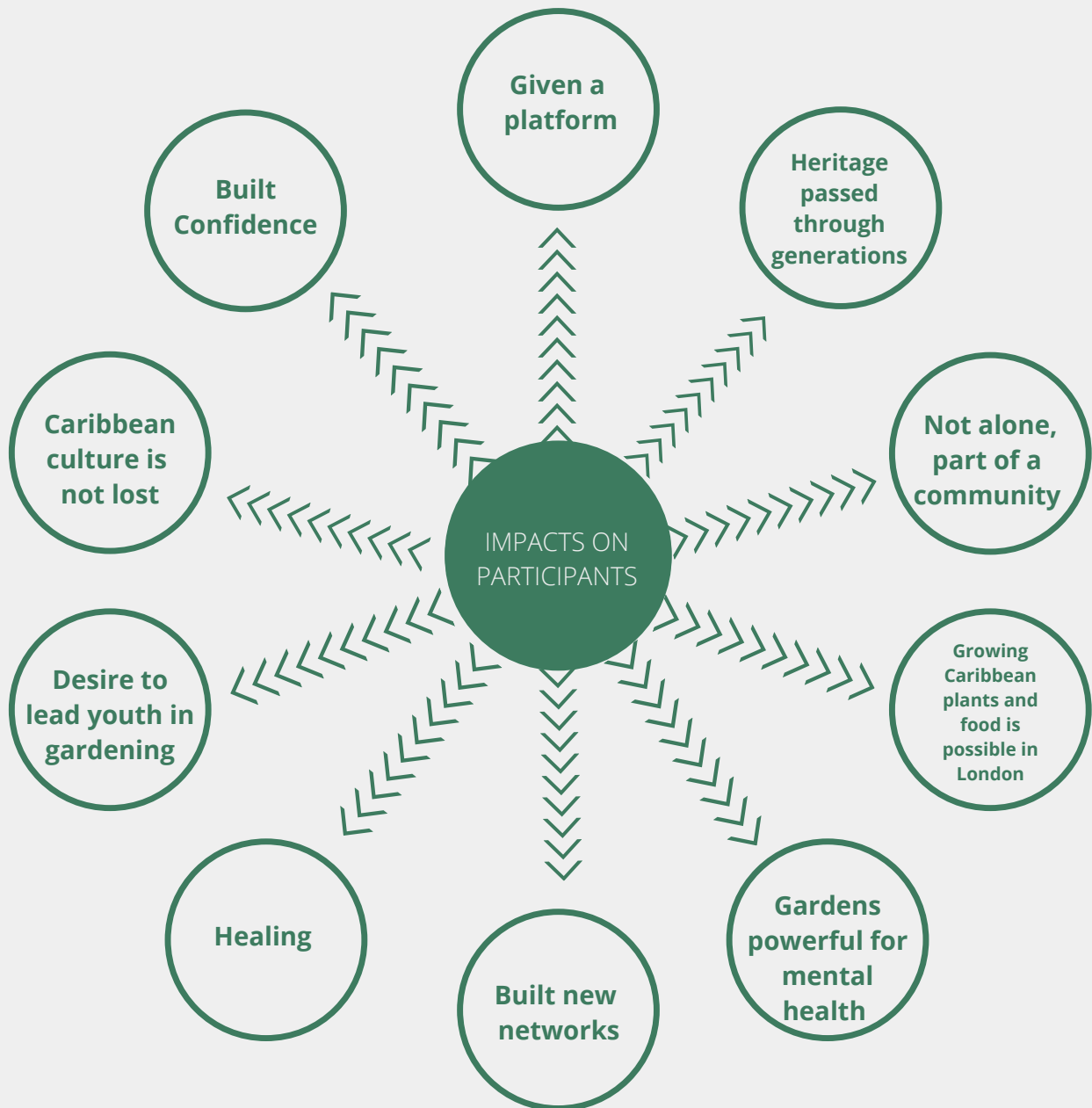
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BEARING FRUIT: ENGAGING A WIDE RANGE OF BENEFICIARIES

This section shares the impact of the SOWING ROOTS project on all stakeholders, including the participants, visitors, project leaders, staff, volunteers, learning programme beneficiaries, community partners and the organisation.

2.1 IMPACTS: PARTICIPANTS

At the centre of this project are 15 elder South London gardeners who are either direct descendants of the Windrush Generation, or connected to Caribbean culture in some way. This exhibition also critically involved 10 young people between the ages of 16-25, who were trained in oral history techniques, and participated in the transmission of the elder stories by interviewing them. The following impacts were named by the elder and younger participants in response to their participation in the collection of the oral histories and in seeing the resulting exhibition.



CONNECTION TO PEOPLE

"meeting new people as well has being really nice, that there isn't just Loughborough Farm that's involved in keeping that heritage going- which is I didn't realise how important it was actually."

"this project let me feel like Windrush Jamaican culture is not altogether gone. We just need to come together as one and build our family, friends and community. Teaching our farming/gardening which is very therapeutic in body, soul, mind and spirit."

TO HERITAGE

"I was a bit apprehensive at first because because it says Caribbean I thought maybe because I was born here, maybe that wouldn't really involve me... but I think about when I was a child and the experiences I had where like, we like used to go to Brockwell park and collect fruit from the trees. Kids don't do that anymore...."

My cousin, he had an allotment- so he would share some of the produce that came from the allotment...I don't know where he got the seeds from, but it was stuff that he would have grown, if he had grown it in the Caribbean—so Irish potato, Callaloo, pumpkin, corn...but then going back to the farm [Loughborough Farm]- it reminded me of my childhood as well, because things like tomatoes. Like, when the first year I went to the farm, we had different varieties of tomatoes and tasting them, and actually tasting the tomatoes as opposed to the watery taste you get in the supermarket... so that kind of, brought lots of lovely memories."

CONFIDENCE & A PLATFORM

"this has been great and ... it's just kind of lifted me up and kind of made me feel like I'm somebody."

"Just being interviewed and being asked.. Yeah, that made a big difference to me.. It gave me a voice. ... to be valued. That my roots have value."

"Sowing Roots has given me a platform and made me more confident in my self."

"We've been given an opportunity. In fact, we've been put on a platform in terms of what we do, so that the larger community can kind of get a view in on what black grow groups do...who knew that they were black growing groups? You know, we've been, you know, written out in the annals of history. Come day, God knows what because we're not right now: we're in history, we are now a little bit more. But it's nice to be acknowledged, have the platform to say."

MENTAL HEALTH & HEALING

"prior to the end of 2020 I was feeling very hopeless for a very long time, a lot went down. You know, and certainly a lot of pain and a lot of conflict internally... particularly for young black men. And yeah, it was a lot of confusion and I came onto this project. And like I said, I had the honour of meeting such amazing people. For me, obviously, it definitely signified my growing journey and horticulture and just understanding that there's a duty that we have now as younger people coming up to continue to come to learn how to, again, like I said, relate with the land. But also just like that kind of void that I felt in my heart for a very long time. This project and these experiences indirectly kind of healed that void that was in my heart.

I remember when I came to Auntie's farm I don't know how many of you guys have been..I remember being in and feeling I'm not in London, no more. England no more, because it really feels at home, it doesn't feel like out here. And I know what that does for me. And so every single opportunity that I get, I'm like people: "come with me, come with me, come with me". And I won't go on for too long. But I think for me, it just speaks to the sort of healing and restoration that I feel like our people everywhere need."

-young participant

"Younger people—you, talked about your mental health and how gardening and getting into touching the soil and the earth make you feel so much better. If you can see that, I can see that, maybe that's a link to get other people, my age, his age...Yeah... working together to make that link. Yeah, yeah. But that does help your, your mental health, physical health-- makes you more social, because you're actually talking to other people, making connections. And I think this is an important space. But how many of us knew about this place before this project? I didn't know it existed."

-elder participant

"I was diagnosed with depression and that feelings come and go, and sometimes I can't do anything at all, I'm lost. Sometimes I will ring Karen; if she's around, she will go down and open that farm gate for me ...and I tell you walking through that farm! Seeing a little flower there and the plants, everything...Right here I am here! So there is that miracle and ...And then I'm affected, my mind is affected. So straight away, it bring me right back to myself."

-elder participant

NEW SKILLS & WAYS OF THINKING

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

"Stay confident, keep eye contact...always let the person finish their sentence (don't cut them off) speak clearly."

-young participant

"A respectful tone and respect in your sentences- don't make the person feel like your attacking them with words."

-young participant

IDEAS FOR NEW PROJECTS

I'd like to interview people about things that give them nostalgia as a child and buy the things that do and ask them questions about their best childhood memories.,,the main goal [would be] to see if most races had similar experiences so that we can all come together...mainly people in London and aged 20-40...and hopefully move to different cities and countries. I would call it: What brings you nostalgia?"

-young participant

RELATIONSHIPS TO LAND

"having to unlearn the way I that I interact with land- gardening definitely did that- so the way that I may appreciate seeds now,...this project has allowed me to see alternative ways of growing, of consuming... a lot of times it's just "take take take take"

Now, if I use tomatoes, I take the seeds and I germinate it- I'm germinating some right now."

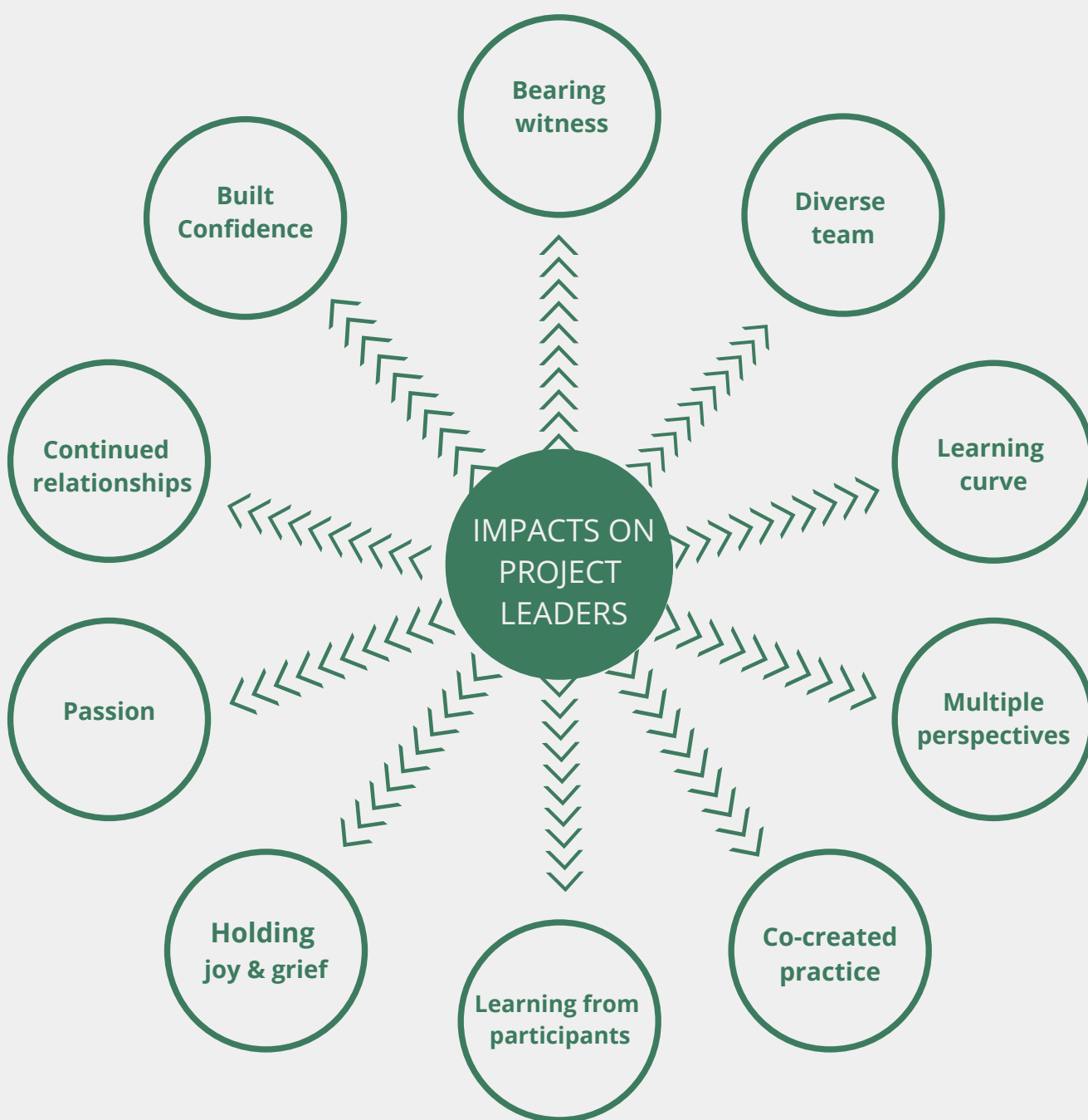
-young participant

"when I'm approaching political questions, I'm like, hold on, what's the alternative? How do we approach things from this lens, or this lens. Even my statements, I was convening a symposium yesterday and I was like "Guys, let's look at the ecological factors that play a part in this"

-young participant

2.2 IMPACTS: PROJECT LEADERS

A three-person curation team, an oral historian, and a photographer played key roles in the development and creation of this project. Liaising with participants, museum staff and an external design team, the project leaders navigated multiple moving parts. The following impacts were named by this team.



LEARNING FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

In speaking directly with the project leaders, they each shared how meaningful it was to bear witness to the connections and the exchange and transfer of knowledge from the elder participants to the youth interviewees. Many noted how much they learned from the project and the participants.

"The Sowing Roots project really opened up my understanding of the African Diasporic relationship to gardening, slavery, and colonialism and how that has been cultivated to create a permanence or sense of belonging both here in the UK and in the Caribbean, and that through that shared experience we have been able to expose the roots that connect us to the land in the different geographical locations. Before the project, I had not really thought of this."

-Ekua McMorris, Co-curator

"I think I learned the most from the participants - and curating a show that was driven by the arc of their stories. The project also re-affirmed my belief that transformative cultural/heritage work is a process, not an end."

-Elizabeth Cooper, Co-curator

"One of my favourite moments of the project, even though it was not actually to do with an interview is that we, Ekua, Edward and I, met at the museum, and we were due to do an interview, both in the morning and then in the afternoon. So Edward was going to be with us the whole day. And it was the Monday after the Euro 2020 final...when all of the horrendous, like, racist abuse towards the players was taking place. And so we kind of came into the space. And I was just asking Edward how he was feeling that morning, and how he was doing and, you know, we just had a kind of conversation about it, and then Ekua joined us and continued that conversation. And, and then our interviewee didn't show up. She wasn't able to make it in the end. But because Edward was doing another interview, we ... just sat in the room for about three hours, just sort of like putting the world to right. ...it was just such interesting conversations being had about all of our experiences and our careers, journeys, and Edward's education history, and like what he was hoping to do and ...he was just asking such interesting questions to us about our own views. And it just felt like such an amazing learning experience for all of us. ...just having that time to, like get to know these people in a really different way— where it isn't just getting a job done. But actually it's really quality time together...By the time we did the interview in the afternoon, I think all of us were like, just in a really kind of pumped frame of mind. Like we just had this really empowered conversation...And so by the time we did that interview, it just felt like it sort of added to the level of achievement ...it was such a great day."

-Jen Kavanagh, Oral Historian

HAVING A DIVERSE TEAM OF FREELANCERS

Many on the team noted the value of having a diverse cohort of freelancers who could reflect and relate to the participants' lived experiences. Whether that was through shared Caribbean heritage, relevant migrant experience or mutual understandings of the local area and its green spaces, the project leaders expressed the importance of this representation particularly in relation to the care and sensitivity it offers when creating work by and for people from under-represented backgrounds, but also in terms of how it facilitated partnership building within the community.

"I also am a migrant myself, so I kind of relate to certain things, you know, maybe also conscious about other sensitive topics. So... I guess I have a bit of experience to be mindful of any kind of triggers or people's sensitivities"

-Federico Rivas, photographer

"We lived in Loughborough junction at the time, so I was very active in the farm where we recruited over half of the gardeners from...I just kept reaching out to people and saying, we're doing this...I just knew various people who also lived here, and were famous for their banana trees and growing their own veg and cooking and sharing it with people every year...And we all kind of started that way, like Janine did her network and her contacts.

And then, really for me, it was a priority of making people feel respected, listened to, cared for, that they were acknowledged, that there was this process ...I felt, as a team, we were very focused on this being beneficial for the people who participated. And feeling that they're not just their contribution to the project, but that this was an important way that their lives were being recognised....

After the interviews, there was lots of follow up. There was caring for this detail, or that-- there were a couple of participants who wanted to have their transcript in paper, and they didn't have a printer. So I would print up stuff and bring it to their door. And I think there was just that level of attention ...you have to meet people where they're at.

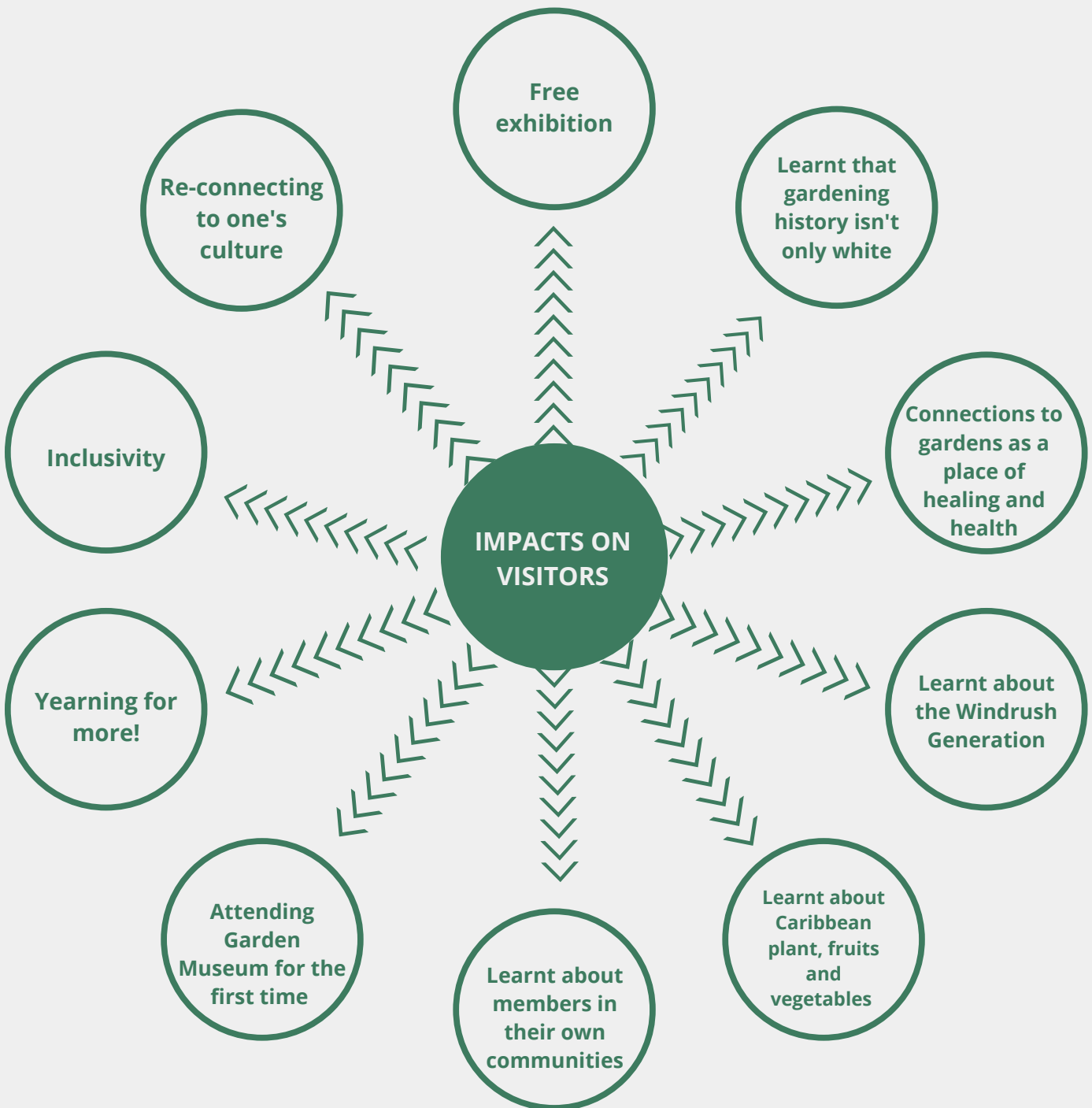
-Elizabeth Cooper, Co-Curator

Janine Nelson, who was in the unique position of both leading on the project and taking part as a participant noted that this dual position contributed an additional layer of care. In sharing her own stories connected to the Caribbean, she shared the sensitivities around how that story gets presented. From photography consent to approvals on the write up of the stories, Nelson took extra time to ensure participants had a say throughout the process.

"I felt less like an outsider on the project...It heightened my sense of being protective towards the participants...I wanted to check with participants about the content of the online exhibition too in terms of what I have written about them based on the oral history interviews...I felt that by being part of the exhibition as a participant- it put me on equal footing with the participants."

2.3 IMPACTS: VISITORS

1200 visitors came specifically to see SOWING ROOTS, with an additional 1276 visitors engaging who had come to the Garden Museum for another exhibition. Visitors shared an overwhelmingly positive response with the museum's Front of House staff. From the 114 feedback forms returned by visitors, the following impacts were identified.



HERITAGE CONNECTION

WITH LOCAL PEOPLE

"first hand experience and accounts/insights into how gardening can strengthen our bonds with heritage, culture and community"

"Getting to know my area better and how people from different backgrounds to me have grounded themselves through gardening"

"the existence of Loughborough Farm and the South London community involvement in gardening"

"learnt that that there is a huge amount of non-indigenous plants now growing in Caribbean and became essential part of culture for food and medicine"

"Displaying historical, colonial, slavery documents alongside contemporary testimony aof Windrush era was really effective"

"good balance between historical scene-setting and oral/contemporary material"

WITH ONE'S SELF

"How important being in touch with the earth and garden was to the generation that came before me. I must continue this tradition."

"Learnt the origins of terms commonly used by my parents"

"Ideas for my community garden and my master's topic"

"I am a black florist and [and a I learnt] it's important that I include my heritage in what I do"

"prompted us to think about growing different plants on our allotment"

"it makes me want to go to Jamaica to explore the culture and heritage and my own links through family."

"there are communities that I can get involved in"

GARDENING & WELL-BEING

"create a relationship with the land close to you"

"how memorable gardening is—the legacy of belonging of impact and pride"

"hard to put into words, but a sense that working this earth can potentially connect you to anywhere"

"Something positive has blossomed out of so much negativity"

"just such a thought provoking exhibition, felt especially important at the moment whilst the world is so crazy..."

"How gardening helps mental health"

"humans are made to be connected with the soil- their innate purpose is to cultivate and grow"

VISIBILITY & INCLUSIVITY

"Gardening isn't just a white people thing"

"Black gardeners!"

"Black heritage! It's important to show people they are part of this story."

"Visibility of BME communities"

"We need to get all or most of the stories possible to have wholistic narratives"

"I had not thought about the Windrush generation and their food/ food cultivation"

"Thank you for having an inclusive exhibition"

"There is a strong presence of Black culture in British green spaces, which is too often overlooked"

"good to think about the people and garden near the museum and under-represented people"

"felt so pleased this exhibition happened and these people were represented here"

"So much knowledge within Caribbean heritage, which isn't always acknowledged"

"It made me think about local communities and the value of working together, sharing knowledge and experience and expertise, inclusivity."

MORE, MORE MORE!

"keep in on display somewhere please in the museum so many Caribbean people who haven't seen it, can see it"

"please keep working on free exhibitions. There has been so much I want to see here but my low wages won't allow it."

"hope it inspires more diversity in gardening"

"hope this is just the start of a fuller exhibition of 'Sowing Roots'"

"I went upstairs to the find 'Arcadia' - do you have more art by Caribbean artists to link the connection with the exhibition?"

"would have liked more info on what crops/plants people are growing"

"more details on the objects in the cases- the seeds, plants, as well as objects from the peoples' homes"

"would have liked that the exhibition was a bit deeper and informative. Would have appreciated more videos and oral histories of people involved."

"Greater information about 'bushes' used in medicine"

"I'll be back. I would love to bring my students here to learn about their culture and gardening...I feel like they are disconnected from nature and things that grow, but would be open to learning more and building connections"

"this is a first visit here but it will not be the last."

2.4 IMPACTS: LEARNING PROGRAMME BENEFICIARIES

The learning programme of talks, workshops and events reached nearly 600 people offering access to numerous aspects of Caribbean heritage through lectures, special events and hands-on activities. The following impacts were identified from a sampling of 50 feedback forms received across the workshops, talks and events.



LEARNT NEW SKILLS

- Learnt tropical flowers native to the Caribbean, weaving, wrapping, how to create a bouquet, how to care for flowers
- Learnt the names of tropical birds native to the Caribbean
- Caribbean cooking including about specific ingredients and where to buy them, as well as how to prepare them and the differences between Trinidadian and Jamaican culture
- Painting
- Drawing
- Clay sculpting
- Dancing
- Costume & traditions of Carnival in Trinidad
- Working with new materials and textures
- Learnt about breadfruit and Captain Bligh
- Learnt about Rudi Patterson, his life and his art - paintings and ceramics

EXPERIENCED A SENSE OF CALM

"When I was making my bird it relaxed my mind, it calms my nerves and It really helped me to focus. This reminds me of my pre school days, even though my bird tail came out looking like a tail 😊, but the lady was very nice she appreciated my art work, this give me more confidence."

"Enjoyed the mindful nature of the activity, supportive atmosphere"

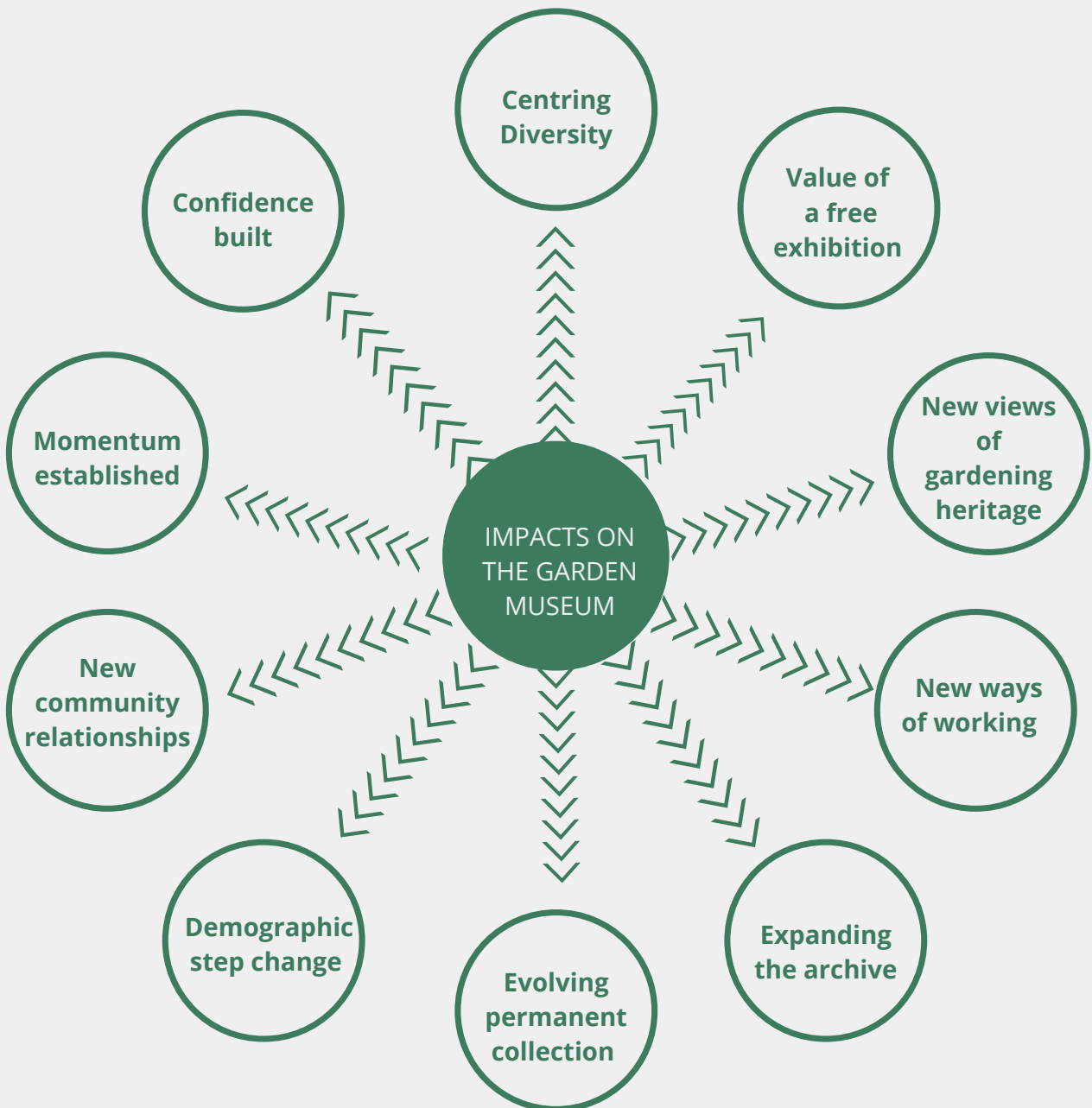
GIVEN A SPACE

Several groups who attended the exhibition took part in learning programme activities such as clay making, photography, costume and special tours with project leaders. One group, Rootz into Food Growing (a collaboration between several BPOC agricultural groups) brought 30 people to visit the exhibition- which coincided deliberately with the evaluation lunch for the project's elder and youth participants so they could all meet one another. Trip organiser, Pauline Shakespeare said of the group who were meeting for the time in-person:

For me, it was quite an emotional experience to finally meet many people in person that I had speaking with online for a year. It also marks a transition from the trauma and structural racism ...to a mood of positivity to start building a London-wide community, share skills and preserve knowledge. The intergenerational connections were also powerful to me. Seeing ourselves represented as BPOC growers in the very formal setting of the Museum - taking up space, making noise, being visible - was wonderful."

2.5 IMPACTS: ORGANISATION

SOWING ROOTS has been a step change for the organisation in its relationship with diverse audiences. From a significant shift in audience demographics to diversity training across staff and volunteers, to the development of new partnerships within the wider local communities- the entire project has introduced new directions for programming, inclusivity and outreach practices. The projected heritage outcome that the museum would become more resilient through the building of outward facing relationships was achieved, and this outward looking view simultaneously sparked attention towards building an inward resilience. The following impacts were named by staff and volunteers.



CENTRING DIVERSE HERITAGE

The SOWING ROOTS exhibition was initially planned for the museum's Orangery- a corridor space between the cafe and the central museum space where most other exhibitions take place. After recognising the limits of this space and the potential to marginalise the participants and their stories who already navigate marginalisation as an ethnic minority in Britain, Woodward and Nelson (Museum Director and Head of Learning) decided to move the exhibition into the main space.

"We'd imagined it being in The Orangery but Janine and I felt it did not do justice to the material emerging. Also, I was uncomfortable with it being something visitors glanced at on the way to the loo; the stories were too precious. So we moved it into the nave and then had to work out how to balance free admission with that. It went really well. "

-Christopher Woodward

Staff and volunteers working Front of House commented on the success of this choice:

"every single person who's coming to the museum has stopped to look at it, not a single person has walked through because it's on a main thoroughfare. And because it's so bright, because it's quite interactive. There are faces on the trees, you've got the Mr. Pink video, which is amazing. It really brings the museum to life. And it's everyone who's coming to Museum has seen it. I love the way it's transformed the space and the visitor interaction and the visitor demographic."

"having this exhibition front and centre made the museum as a whole feel very different, as the rest of the permanent collection generally reflects a White British, middle-upper class experience which may serve to alienate some visitors."

"it's made us realise that having something that's interactive and kind of noisy in the nave is fantastic..."



Photo of the Private Viewing by Federico Rivas

VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS

The content of the exhibition, the press garnered throughout, and the decision to make SOWING ROOTS free to the public played significant roles in shifting the usual demographic at the Garden Museum. To this last point, this was the first time the museum experimented with a free exhibition and was able to do so because of the funding support from the National Heritage Lottery Fund. (The museum is otherwise 100% self-funded.) While a recent survey carried out by the museum reflects past museum goer's recognition of good value for money in affordable ticket prices- the capacity to offer free entry to SOWING ROOTS, created an opportunity to invite new audiences for whom ticket prices can be a barrier, and for audiences to attend who wouldn't have come to the museum otherwise.

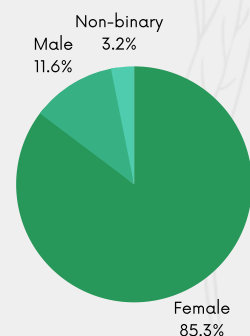
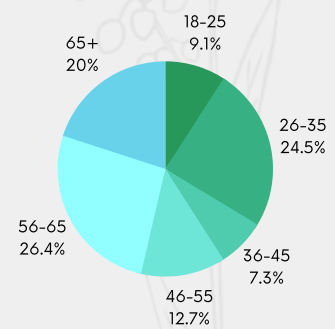
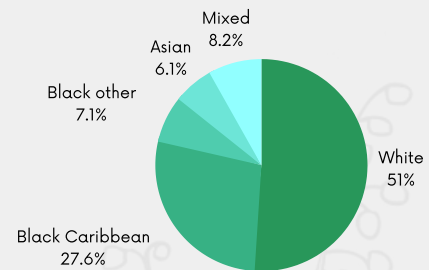
Based on a sample survey of approximately 10% of visitors to the exhibition, 49% percent were non-white, 54% percent were under the age of 55. And 59% were first time visitors.

"Having a free exhibition significantly increased the number of walk-ins, as many visitors who normally would have exited the museum upon realising there was a charge instead stayed for the free exhibition. This meant interactions with walk-in visitors were generally more positive as they were pleased to be able to enjoy visiting the museum space rather than feel disappointed at the barrier of the ticket price."

"Because people come in for free to the Museum, it's actually made the space a lot more lively. Because there's actually more people on the ground of the floor, when you walk into the museum"

"It appealed to a broader audience, drawing in a wider range of visitors, particularly of Black Caribbean backgrounds."

From the sample of 114 visitor submitted feedback forms, the following data revealed people who identified as:



NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Several new relationships developed throughout 'Sowing Roots'- through local communities and groups who helped with the recruitment of participants, and the many visitor groups who organised to see the exhibition. The staff expressed unanimous interest in exploring the ways in which these relationships can be deepened to cultivate new audiences and deeper collaborative community partnerships going forward.

"I'm very conscious for so many areas, areas of our learning work, the participants are learning participants. And that jump to being a museum visitor is so tricky. And it would be great if one legacy of this project could be that, you know, the Afro Caribbean Community of Lambeth didn't just take part in this one-off year long project. But that lots of those people felt the barriers have been broken down to come into the museum... the continuation of the project, the legacy of participation is what's mostly playing on my mind."

"Sowing Roots has been our first step into making race a key part of our exhibition programme. And the relationships we've established are key to that future."

**"YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH
IS MISSING
UNTIL YOU DO PROJECTS LIKE
THIS"**

BUILDING CONFIDENCE & MOMENTUM

Some staff noted apprehension in getting SOWING ROOTS wrong. Reflecting on their positions as a predominantly white staff presenting an exhibition about local Caribbean gardeners, they were aware of the lack of embedded diversity within the organisation and the challenges that might come with that dynamic. Carrying out the project delivered a profound learning curve that gave several staff the confidence and momentum for continuing to create more diverse programming in the future.

"I think seeing the success of the project and seeing how the people who were really involved in it seemed to have had such great time. And we've made so many great connections with new people that seeing how it's really worked made me think, Okay, well yeah, ... and also, it's about refamiliarising myself with this kind of language and with this world and this community that before [I was], not tremendously familiar with, but having been exposed to this kind of on this side of work for two years now -- has definitely helped me acclimatise and now I feel much more comfortable. "

"we work in a borough, which is 40% non white, ...And [the private launch of the exhibit] was the first time I can remember that we had the majority of faces not be white. And that felt ridiculous. The only time I think we really have seen, you know, hugely diverse groups come in is like I say, like community projects and schools. And yeah, it's just about we need to find a way to transcribe that into offices."

"there's so much enthusiasm and appetite on the staff to improve our practices. But I do think a lot of that's come from the comfort we now feel having come out the other side of Sowing Roots and the things we've learned along the way...that alone has been great. "

DIVERSITY TRAININGS: EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) training was provided online for the museum staff and volunteers. 19 museum staff and 18 volunteers took part. The training was led by [Mel Larsen](#) and examined a range of aspects and case studies related to 'Unconscious Bias.' Each session was 3.5 hours: a combination of slides, small breakout group sessions where participants could share their experiences and all group reflections.

Larsen framed the training as an introduction to EDIB training and emphasised how this is long-term work that can move from 'unconscious bias' to 'conscious inclusion' to 'conscious connection'. The majority of staff and volunteers expressed how key this kind of training is and how much they would like to see it continue in the future.

An additional training was planned for cafe staff, but scheduling proved difficult between the pandemic and staff shortages.

KEY REFLECTIONS: MUSEUM STAFF

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

"really useful to learn about the specific different types of unconscious bias to understand how and when they occur, for example I hadn't really thought about how it can be a positive bias towards people "like you" (affinity bias)."

"making assumptions is easy to do but constantly needs checking...it is important to take time and not be stressed as these are times when we are most likely to make assumptions."

"Frankly I never thought I was biased in anyway, but I was probably warmer towards non-white people I encountered in the museum just because there were fewer of them, and I wanted to overcompensate for this fact I suppose by letting them see that I was there too...to make non-white people feel they too belonged in such a setting. When I say non-white, I refer to people of Caribbean, African, Asian, South Asian and East Asian heritage."

"I would have liked to talk longer about what bias is, how it makes us, and others feel."

AUDIENCE FIRST

"Relationships with the community need to be reciprocal and not one way. What can we do for you and what you can do for us... Genuine relationships."

"the 'audience first' learning point, and the nurturing networks. This is something I'd like to do more of, to open up to new audiences, and build relationships, doing the work to invite new audiences in rather than waiting for them to come to us"

"it would be good for us to develop more of an audience first focus and test out/explore with the public what there might be an interest and an appetite for that we might not be doing. Neighbour Days might be a way in which we could do this and offer a chance for a two-way conversation. Focus groups with the community groups might be useful too particularly with sounding out about the Neighbour Card scheme."

"Learning sessions for a more varied audience – actively seek out specific/defined audiences, being proactive."

KEY REFLECTIONS: MUSEUM STAFF (CONT.)

CROSS-
DEPARTMENT
KNOWLEDGE

"Discussing how it needs to be a museum-wide approach (from the top down!) was really helpful, as we often fall into the trap of leaving things to different departments and working separately. I hope it encourages us to think and work strategically across departments this coming year to have common goals, and share relationship development."

"it was really beneficial to talk across the team/departments about our visitors and share observations. Interesting to note that our audience varies so much according to exhibition and to events and also to whether a weekday or a weekend."

"We need to be able to call each other out if we notice unconscious bias behaviours."

"we may need to factor time for discussion, policies, working parties etc across the team."

FEARLESS
ATTITUDE

"A golden opportunity to really embolden us, to grab and take advantage of what we've learnt and implement in our forward plan. So much possibility."

"To not be scared of what and how this will lead us forward as an organisation with our audience."

MORE
MORE
MORE!

"I do think there is a lot more to learn, and it could only be skimmed over in this short training session."

"More time to discuss EDIB, and to reach out / be put in touch with the groups that can help the learning continue. A talk/seminar on accessible green spaces might be interesting – the landscape architecture of garden spaces, and how design and EDIB fits with it. How welcoming are our green spaces?"

"We only really looked into race/ethnicity in this training session. There's much more to learn, and some of them were not entirely clear."

"How will we take our learning forward – what's next?"

"having regular trainings of similar type or other such as how to deal with visually impaired people, deaf people."

"we have lots of ideas, and the training has really helped to spark those, but we need buy in from 'the top' in order to really implement these changes. We are a very small team, with incredibly busy workloads, but we all appreciate how important this work on diversity is. However, it needs time, ongoing commitment, and in some cases money and resources to really make a difference."

APPLYING THE LEARNINGS

Participants were asked on the feedback form for specific ways in which to apply the learning to individual departments and the overall organisation.

Marketing/
Publicity

"It definitely made me think about new ways of marketing to different people"

"How to make more awareness around Learning and our audiences – publicity, images, website, cross marketing with other organisations, newsletter, digital."

Programming

"Themes and topics in learning – how to approach them differently, to be more inclusive, innovative topics, decolonising for example"

"Opening up the museum to a wider audience – e.g., autistic young people, visually impaired (3D printed objects), unemployed, etc."

Exhibitions could be multisensory to appeal to a range of abilities, (i.e.: music in the Orangery)"

Community
Relationships

"outreach work to different communities, networks and groups. This might involve capitalising on some of the networks already established, for example in the Learning Team, as well as building up a wider database of people to contact."

"I am trying to move away from large faceless organisations who look at their profit margins and build up a group of contractors from within the local community."

Organisational
composition

"We need more diversity in our office and Board"

"Suppliers – e.g., caterers as well Freelance team in Learning must diversify"

Training/Policy

"Incorporate anti-racism and diversity training into handbooks. Secret shopping."

"having regular trainings of similar type or other such as Deal with visually impaired people, deaf people."

DIVERSITY TRAININGS: VOLUNTEERS

There are 75 volunteers at the Garden Museum, 45 who work Front of House, 70% of those 45 volunteered throughout 'Sowing Roots' and 18 were able to take part in the training. The following comments are based on 6 feedback forms that were received.

KEY REFLECTIONS: VOLUNTEERS

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

"The different types of bias, I had not heard these described in this way before. Also, the value of taking a pause and asking open ended questions."

"I need to put a bit more effort into empathising with visitors, and control my default setting of expecting something to go wrong."

"To think carefully before assessing or commenting on situations or questions raised by visitors to the museum."

"Despite its simplicity, it was really useful to have a reminder to take a pause before an interaction, particularly when hurried or stressed. It was also useful to be reminded to make use of basic questions such as "how can I help you today?" rather than trying to guess why a visitor might come to the museum or what might interest them in the shop, as inevitably our guess would be based on some kind of bias."

"I found it useful to think about breaking down different aspects of bias, and to do so in a way that doesn't condemn one for having the bias, just ask to recognise it and so act without letting it distort one's actions."

AUDIENCE FIRST

"Our building, our temporary exhibitions and permanent collection should be accessible to all parts of society and the museum should do all it can to appeal to as many parts/ sections of society as possible."

"All visitors are important and should be valued so that they enjoy their museum experience, return to the GM and recommend it to their friends."

The visitor journey and importance of the 'Audience First Focus' and thinking from the public 'inwards' rather than collections 'outwards'.

VALUE OF WELCOME

"We need to work at making everyone welcome and increasing the reach and the positive experiences of visitors to the GM. Take a pause to think before doing or saying anything. Try not to patronise people. Ask open-ended questions. Apologise to someone if you feel there has been a misunderstanding."

"volunteers may be visitors' first contact with museum when they arrive - so essential that assumptions are not made/acted on as a result of unconscious bias"

"Importance of friendly first inclusive welcome and being aware and mindful of potential unconscious bias in our response to all visitors"

KEY REFLECTIONS: VOLUNTEERS

COMMUNICATION
/INTEGRATION
WITH THE REST
OF THE MUSEUM

"Communication is very important. Whilst the GM is an inclusive and welcoming place there is always room for improvement."

"More opportunities to meet as a group to share/contribute ideas, get feedback on visitor surveys and more information on forthcoming events and exhibitions"

"Regular communication with staff so we understand the right language to describe the collection --this way we can communicate clearly with visitors"

"Volunteers have a key role in collecting informal feedback including any issues from visitors and passing this on to staff"

"I think it would be useful for the volunteers to have a meeting occasionally to pool ideas and address common issues with museum staff."

FUTURE
TRAININGS

"Communityengagement/ education and engagement in a museum context"

"Training focussed on disability awareness and inclusion would be extremely useful, as I realised during one of the group exercises that it was a big gap in my knowledge."

"It would be useful to have training in dealing with complaints or conflict – while thankfully this doesn't happen often, it would be great to look at the best ways to respond."

"this diversity training (while wonderful!) was only able to cover so much, it would be great to revisit this very broad area in further training sessions."

FINAL
THOUGHTS

Many volunteers remarked on how much they appreciated Mel Larsen as a facilitator - in particular her gentle approach and framing of the training as a long process of learning.

A point was made about the need to create bespoke training for volunteers in the future and to allow for more time to schedule, or multiple sessions so that a greater percentage can attend.

PRESS & MEDIA

Several press articles were written about SOWING ROOTS with Nelson and Woodward paying specific attention to ensure the participants were interviewed (rather than only project leaders.)

The scope of coverage included:

- Lambeth Life Newspaper 2020
- South West Londoner June 2021
- BBC Gardener's World Magazine October 2021
- Gardens Illustrated Magazine October 2021
- Telegraph Newspaper November 2021
- The Guardian, February 2022

Radio

- BBC Gardener's Question Time recorded December 2021, aired early 2022, interview with participant Ras Prince Morgan and Ekua McMorris

More media opportunities continue to develop and will be discussed in the final Legacy section of the report.





3

GROWING PAINS: IDENTIFYING AND LEARNING FROM CHALLENGES

This section identifies the challenges that arose throughout the scope of the project. From adopting new curatorial practices to direct engagement with issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, to the continuous presence of the pandemic, these challenges and their understanding inform recommendations for future practice.

3.1 CHALLENGES: WORKING IN NEW WAYS

This was the first time the Garden Museum has worked with local communities to create an exhibition based on their oral histories. As such, there were new processes to understand in terms of working with participants and the support needed for both youth and elders. There was a learning curve as well in terms of developing a methodology for co-curating an exhibition in response to living, breathing histories.

WORKING WITH YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

Working with young people was a big aim for the project, but recruitment was difficult. Partly due to school schedules and the pandemic, and partly due to a lack of experience on the curatorial team, it was hard to find young people to participate in the training and then to follow through with leading the interviews. One of the curators initially hired for the project had experience working with young people, so when she wasn't able to carry out the project when it restarted in year 2 of the pandemic, that experience remained a gap.

For the young people who were involved, there was also the issue of training online. Teaching oral history skills, which is all about eye contact and listening, was hard to relay when most of the student's cameras were off. Again- a circumstance of the pandemic; however, oral historian Jen Kavanagh, who led the trainings, recommended that future trainings should strive to be in-person or work to ensure cameras being on. This raises an access issue, as not all participants may have access to web cams, or reliable internet connections. This point should also be raised in the future with youth gatekeepers about how to ensure access.

Kavanagh also raised awareness around scheduling when working with young people. Initially the project only planned 3 days to carry out the interviews, which Kavanagh advocated be extended to 3 weeks in order to accommodate students' schedules with school and other activities.

ENSURING A "GIVE AND GET" FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

As one of the elders at the evaluation lunch shared, the participants all gave their time voluntarily to take part in the project. And while, of course, they made that choice and noted the beneficial impacts of being given a voice and a platform, of growing confidence and meeting new people, they noted it is important for the museum to consider what it is giving back. This is an ethical issue that is often raised in participatory arts projects- particularly when people from marginalised backgrounds are the focus of the project and they aren't being paid for their time. How does the institution ensure it is creating reciprocity? This will be discussed further in sections 4 + 5 of the report as some changes have already been made in this regard. But it is important to note that Janine Nelson made a case to the National Heritage Lottery Fund to fund vouchers for the young people who took part. Also all elder participants received physical copies of their photographic portraits that appeared in the exhibition, along with copies of press articles that had been written about the project (for those who did not have access to printers), posters of the exhibition and postcard reproductions of Rudi Patterson's *Calabash* painting.

CO-CREATING A METHODOLOGY FOR CURATION

The project was significant for its focus on local community stories, and for its centring of Caribbean heritage. The freelancers shared a vision for a collaborative curation process (both amongst themselves, but also critically with the participants' input), but this needed time. Time to understand each others' practices, time to clarify roles and expectations with the museum, and time to build a strategy for sensitivity in terms of how these stories would be presented.

Every member of the freelance team noted the success of this project in the end, but emphasised that stresses and miscommunications throughout could have been resolved with more planning and cross-stakeholder communication.

"I think if it wasn't for the pandemic, it probably would have been better if we had done some trainings with the volunteers and permanent staff earlier regarding conversations about decolonizing curation, but also just collaborative projects. Questions, you know, ethics and morals of using people's lived realities to do an exhibition ...what kind of issues come up with that? And who is accountable to the people that volunteer their time, and they're sharing their stories for it? If we were to improve on how it happened, I probably would have done that earlier in the project. So that we had a bit more of a common vocabulary, the team and the staff about what the project was about or what approach we were taking to the project."

"there were times where we wanted to have meetings, but everyone was just under so much pressure and pulled in so many directions. "

"I would suggest a little bit more time getting to know each other? I know time is money, but factoring time to understand, or work out the particulars of the project would be great... all parties need to be involved from the offset. For example, the director did not meet with us till a few months into the project and this created a bit of an issue, one that could have been avoided if we have all met at the start.

"If funding bodies wanted to support truly community collaborative work - both more time and money needed to be factored in for how that process works differently than hierarchical project management/programming. "

"WE WERE KIND OF RUNNING BEFORE WE COULD WALK
QUITE A LOT OF THE TIME."

3.2 CHALLENGES: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

It was important to the museum that SOWING ROOTS wasn't framed exclusively as reaction to the Black Lives Matter movement that rose prominently during the pandemic. As Christopher Woodward, the Museum Director, noted, the museum has been in process around the idea for this exhibition for several years. Acquiring the "Portrait of the Black Gardener" in 2014, which the museum purposefully places as one of the first paintings on view when visitors climb the stairs to the first floor, was an exciting step for the museum. The painting not only stands as a symbol for the museum in terms of opening up its canon to more diverse images of gardeners in Britain, but also offers a view of gardeners as heroic --rather than the more usual portrayals of gardeners as "weather beaten, battered and miserable...we liked it because it was a celebration image of the act of gardening" (Woodward). In the years since acquiring this painting, the Garden Museum has hosted a symposium about black gardens, developed an ongoing relationship with Brixton's Black Cultural Archives and recently acquired a second painting by Jamaican landscape painter Rudi Patterson, which debuted as part of 'Sowing Roots'. (The first painting *Arcadia* is part of the permanent collection.) 'Sowing Roots' emerged from this trajectory. Focusing on the living local gardening heroes of South London, it aimed to continue widening ideas of what gardening looks like in Britain. With an acknowledgement that the museum's archives are critically missing Caribbean heritage and horticulture, the exhibition also marks the inauguration of a more expansive archive.

'Sowing Roots' significantly shifted the demographics of the Museum's audience base. While exact data isn't available (out of a sensitivity for ensuring entrance to the exhibit wasn't met with demographic tick-boxing) of the 10% of visitors who filled out surveys, 48% were non-white. According to staff, the museum's usual demographic is white middle-aged and elder women. And from these surveys, the overwhelming positive comment was how wonderful it was to see black gardeners and black heritage represented. Additionally several new partnerships developed across the scope of the project. From the relationships built with the elder and youth participants to the groups who attended special events and the exhibition- there are many opportunities for the Museum to sustain and deepen representation in gardening heritage through diverse collaborations.

But equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) goes deeper than programming and audience demographics. Thanks to the Black Lives Matter movement and cultural institutions becoming more aware of a need to be more representative of the communities they serve in the years leading up to the pandemic, we are now experiencing a seismic shift in our local and global understanding of how deep organisational shifts must be in order to reach authentic ideas of inclusivity.

SOWING ROOTS offers a profound case study for parsing these out, identifying missteps and mindfulness around particular ways of working. The momentum that has been built informs the legacy hugely- therefore it is critical to name these challenges to help guide future practices.

REPRESENTATION

The Garden Museum is a predominantly white-led institution with a predominantly white volunteer and visitor base, presenting predominantly white British views of gardening heritage. The following points were made by staff in relation to how this impacts their capacity to reach audiences, and specifically in relation to SOWING ROOTS, to ensure the organisation reflects the work it is presenting.

- **Freelance artists-** As one of the only BPOC members of staff at the museum, Janine Nelson expressed the criticality of hiring a diverse team of freelance artists to lead Sowing Roots in order to represent local knowledge, lived Caribbean heritage, and an understanding of presenting black experiences within museums. After an initial curator hire had to drop out, Nelson took the time to find another curator of colour so that she wasn't the only one on the team. This extra time caused some delays in communication, but in the end was noted as a very important and successful hire.
- **Volunteers -** The Head of Visitor Experience, Lizzy Whirity, cited the challenge in recruitment of non-white volunteers and related this to a dilemma at other cultural institutions where she had worked previously. This is currently an area of focus.
- **Staff-** as Nelson is one of the only BPOC member of staff, other staff expressed deep concern that the project didn't fall entirely on her for that reason. Nelson responded that she would have benefited from more regular check-ins.
- **Events -** while the participants and artists reflected on the success and celebratory atmosphere of the private viewing, some noted there could have been more thought into who speaks at such an event. How are the voices of participants recognised as experts and heard within these public settings at the museum? Their voices were amplified in community settings such as at the two Lambeth Heritage events- so how might that carry over into the more formal setting of the museum?
- **Media-** No one exhibition will reflect all aspects of a culture; some noted a concern that some of the media portrayed a limited view of Caribbean culture.
- **The Archive-** archivist Rosie Vizor, noted how archives which are traditionally spaces of receiving information must become more activist in seeking out histories which have been omitted.
- **Audience outreach-** SOWING ROOTS reached a much wider demographic than the museum usually sees (especially in its main exhibition space). Nelson noted however, that more outreach can be developed to ensure that local people are aware of the programming taking place. This will be expounded upon in the recommendations section later in the report.
- **Training -** The EDIB trainings received a lot of positive feedback from staff and volunteers, but many noted that it would have been beneficial to happen earlier and across the whole organisation with follow up to meet targets and stay accountable. The pandemic deeply impacted scheduling and attendance. A third session planned with cafe staff is still in a process of rescheduling due to staff shortages and timings.

3.3 CHALLENGES: COVID 19

From the overall project timeline, to participant recruitment, scheduling and rescheduling of events and adaptation to online activities, the pandemic impacted all aspects of the project.

Challenges:

- Project Timeline: 'Sowing Roots' was initially supposed to begin in March 2020, but due to the pandemic it was postponed by a year in order to support the in-person nature of SOWING ROOTS and the way in which aspects of it aligned with the seasons. During that time one of the curators initially hired had to drop out which impacted building relationships with schools and recruitment of young people. It also impacted some communication across the curatorial team as it took time to find a replacement.
- Scheduling participants was difficult without being on the ground. As mentioned it was hard to recruit young people, With stressed teachers, busy schedules and the need for young people to be in school when it was back in session, it was challenging to find in-roads for their extra-curricular participation. Additionally, working with elders was a challenge at times due to Covid. Loughborough Farm was a key partner in recruiting the elder participants, but with Karen Hooper, the primary coordinator, moving North to look after her father throughout the pandemic, it was a lot harder to engage as she normally would have. *"Harder to get people involved when you can't get everyone together, easier over a cup of tea; and when you are not on the ground you have to respect /be aware of capacity of those who are, particularly given Covid."*
- Trainings for oral history (which relies heavily on qualities of being in-person), had to be led online- and most young people had their cameras off.
- Attendance at workshops and the exhibition was unreliable with Covid waves coming in and out of severity. Some workshops were cancelled and rescheduled, but costs were still incurred for example, with the tropical flower arranging workshop, as flowers had already been ordered.
- Trustee evaluation- The trustees were intended to take part in the evaluation of Sowing Roots, but due to the pandemic and most of them living outside of London, very few were able to attend in person. They will have the chance to view the online exhibition when it goes live and will be part of the evaluation of that element of the project in due time.

Despite all of these challenges, the project did go ahead and complete with numerous achievements and successes. The learnings that emerged from navigating the pandemic also helped to inform recommendations for future practice.



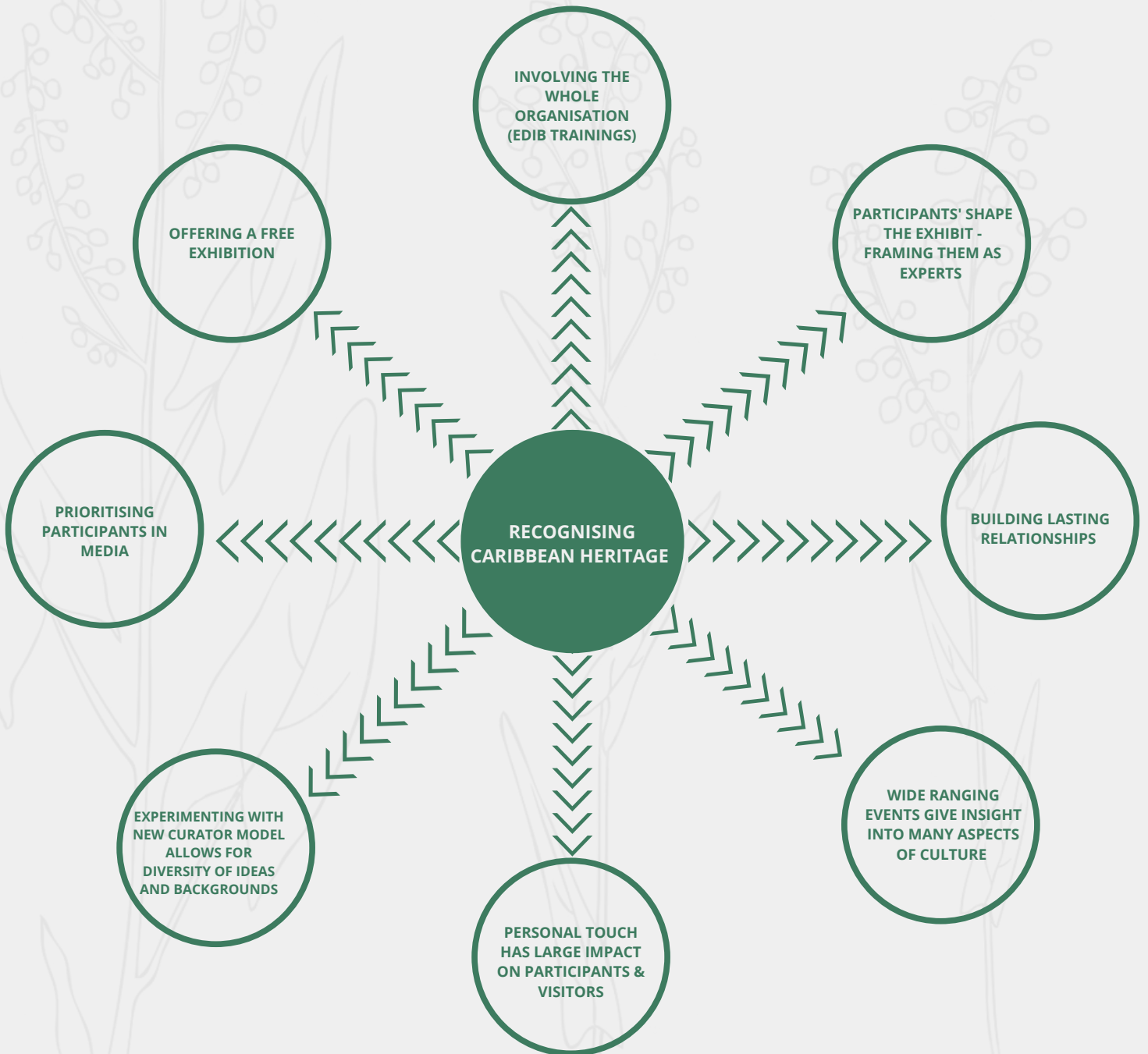
4

GRAFTING: INFORMING FUTURE PRACTICES

This section identifies key successes & learnings from all aspects of the project that can be taken forward into future practices.

4.1 CRITICAL SUCCESS

Interviews and surveys with staff, project leaders, participants and visitors identified a number of factors that they attributed to the success of SOWING ROOTS. A common theme was the value of centring local people from Caribbean heritage and the wide-spanning impact this had from curatorial practices and programming, to the development of community relationships, significant shifts in visitor demographics and reflections on the museum's internal organisational structure.



OPENNESS TO EXPERIMENT

SOWING ROOTS unfolded as it went. Working with local people to understand and identify Caribbean heritage and horticulture offered a living breathing process where 'one thing led to another.' One conversation with a participant or an interaction at a local farm opened up many other ideas, people and places.

"When you do an exhibition, like a painting exhibition, you've got your artefacts and spreadsheets and timings and stuff. And with this one, we realised that we couldn't- it was all about things happening in their own momentum. Word getting around... You can't push it... spending money was all about investing in people... because you're talking about very different structures of groups, friendships and so on.... It demanded a different frame of mind to make it work, which didn't always fit with ping, ping ping dates, deadlines.... and often, I would someone would say: what's happening with it? ...and I can sort of say that, "Actually, we don't kind of know what's happening, but it's all gonna be okay."

PRIORITISING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

SOWING ROOTS demonstrated a wider view of horticulture and heritage in Britain through the exhibition, but also through the ways in which different parts of the organisation engaged an ethics of care for the participants and visitors.

- An exhibition created by and for local Caribbean people
- The delivery of the exhibition in the museum's central nave space
- EDIB training offered to most parts of the organisation (staff, volunteers)
- Front of House focused on ensuring a space of welcome, implementing inclusive language when asking visitors which exhibition they had come to see.
- Prioritising the hiring of freelancers to lead the project who represented the project's participants (including those from BPOC and migrant backgrounds).
- Advocacy by staff for media to represent the participants, not only the project leaders (several pieces of press did include the participants, as did the talk given at UCL Institute of the Americas and the two Lambeth Heritage Festival events).
- Advocacy by the curatorial team to ensure the participants were involved in approving the use of their stories and photographs in the exhibit and in press.

VALUE OF THE PERSONAL

This value of the personal was noted by museum visitors, who enjoyed learning about individual people in their local community. This personal aspect infused the entire project- from the process of engaging participants through Loughborough Farm, to extra activities planned with visitor groups who saw the exhibition.

"Janine and Elizabeth were amazing and went the extra mile to support participants, even a bouquet for a participant's birthday on the night. Staff were lovely at the launch, ...Janine really supportive re delivering manuscripts etc understanding that not everyone digitally minded, very down to earth, sincere approach." - Karen Hooper, Loughborough Farm

"We absolutely loved our trip to the Garden Museum and the Sowing Roots exhibition was stunningly put together. We had a special tour with Federico, which was wonderful. He also took photos of our participants, which are absolutely delightful. What a talented photographer and hugely conscientious, kind person! He brought his personal stories of the photos with him, which was fascinating, and got really great conversations going about herbal remedies. We also did some clay bird making with Janine - just lovely - it was really engaging, meditative and fun - beautifully led by Janine." - Tamara Astor, South London Refugee Association

FOOD

The Garden Museum has an established food programme (the first of its kind in a British museum) which has introduced diverse cultures through a range of classes and hands-on workshops since its inception in 2017. Often reflecting exhibitions on view, the food programme continued to do so with SOWING ROOTS through a Caribbean themed set of workshops and classes for children and families led by Ceri Jones, the museum's Food Learning Officer. Additionally, several other events took place through the entire project both on and offsite. Many noted the success of this integration for the ways in which food becomes an additional way to learn about culture and heritage, but also as a way to break down barriers and encourage interaction between different people. The following events were organised in the lead up and throughout Sowing Roots:

- Caribbean themed food programme for children and families, led by Ceri Jones, the museum's Food Learning Officer (summer, autumn 2021)
- Lambeth Heritage Festival- Loughborough Farm Event- Ray Mahabir of Sunshine International Arts prepared a traditional Trinidadian lunch for attendees as part of the day's event introducing the Sowing Roots project in September 2021.
- Exhibition Supplements: Nelson wrote up two Caribbean recipes (from a participant & a caterer) and left out copies in the exhibition on an art/activity cart which were popular with the public.
- Talk: The Stories of Plants- Keshia Sakarah of Caribe prepared Caribbean canapés which facilitated mingling between audiences and the panelists after the talk. This took place in the Orangery space following the talk which had never been used in this way before and staff commented on what a success it was. (November, 2021)
- Evaluation Lunch- to evaluate the project, participants and the project leaders were invited to a Caribbean lunch, again catered by Ray Mahabir. This was held in the Clore Learning Centre. (February, 2022)
- Online Caribbean cooking course- 22 adults took part in this online live cooking class, preparing a three course Jamaican meal with Annika Clinkett of Nikas Kitchen (March, 2022)



screen shot from online Caribbean cooking class with Annika Clinkett

4.2 INFORMING FUTURE PRACTICE: WORKING WITH PEOPLE

SOWING ROOTS introduced the Museum to many new ways of working. As such there was a learning curve and through interviews and surveys conducted with staff, participants, project leaders and volunteers, the following recommendations have been made for future projects:

Working with young people

- Longer lead time so that relationships can be built with key gatekeepers
- Ensure someone on the team is an expert in working with youth- in terms of navigating their needs and the needs of organisations like school, care centres, etc.
- Meet young people where they are (ie: in terms of communication, a whatsapp group might be better than a doodle poll for scheduling sessions.)
- Consistent promotion in schools year round about the Garden Museum to reach younger audiences
- Consider events that can be held at the museum to reach young people and souvenir objects (like almanacs, seeds, half priced tickets to return with family members) that will keep them coming back
- Continue the relationship with the young participants on this project who are already enthusiastic

Working with Freelancers

- Longer lead in time to get to know each other, share practices and expectations
- Allow time for regular meetings with whole team throughout the project and with attention to sharing research earlier with the wider museum staff team

Working with Participants

- Ensure a two-way street of giving (participants give stories and the museum gives a programme of support such as skill building in grant-writing, network opportunities, etc.)
- Ask participants at the beginning of the project what they would like in terms of the above-mentioned support
- Develop funding to pay participants - even if it's a stipend, it's an effort towards achieving equity
- Integrate feedback along the journey of the project, not just at the end

Working with Volunteers

- Diversity training before exhibitions that is bespoke to their work
- Ideation needed to diversify pool of volunteers - build on relationships developed through this project and consider what the 'give' and 'get' are for those volunteers
- Greater communication between the staff and volunteers. I.e.: sharing of the volunteer newsletter with staff and staff communicating projects, exhibitions etc to the volunteers through the newsletter.

Working with Staff

- Regular EDIB training with targets/accountability set for each department
- Regular opportunities to connect and interact with each other as a way to better understand full scope of museum's work and individual departments

4.3 INFORMING FUTURE PRACTICE: EXHIBITIONS & PROGRAMMING

EXHIBITION DEPTH & SCOPE

Some visitors reflected on a desire for the exhibition to go more in depth in terms of

- More information about Caribbean plants, food and gardening practices
- More information about the Windrush
- More information about each participant's life story
- More information about how the curatorial team and the process for putting the exhibition together

"the exhibition missed the opportunity to present photographic material about the gardens and crops these people have- there are such important lessons about how to substitute for imported food ad take advantage of London's warming temperatures. Would like to know about how Caribbean people gain acces to land..."

"A little more clarity around the wind-rush element would have been useful too. I feel that there was an assumption that everyone knows about this and I don't feel this is the case."

"This exhibition felt more personal than what we normally show... I wanted it even more personal though. Recipes, photos of family gatherings around the table/kitchen with produce"

"Would be good to know who the curatorial staff were for context about how the interviews were sought"

"I would have loved to have seen video footage of some of the people growing and talking about their experiences especially as the show was essentially about giving a voice to these people and communities."

There was also a note to create a more expansive view of Caribbean heritage and horticulture:

"One other element that I think could have been explored more is food growing v's Ornamentals. There is an assumption that Black people only like to grow food and this is cited as a reason why there is a lack of diversity in the profession. In some cases this may be true but the reasons for this need exploration. I know that poverty can impact the choice of what one grows. Ornamentals being seen as for those who are privileged enough to have enough to eat. There is a legacy of colonialism that runs through as a thread here I am sure. It should be remembered and communicated that people from ethnically diverse backgrounds are often interested in growing more than food."

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ONLINE EXHIBITION

The current development of the online exhibition is offering an opportunity to input this feedback. It will include more details about each participant, excerpted audio from their oral histories and a more in-depth labelling system for the objects which many visitors said, that while they enjoyed the personal descriptions, yearned for more contextual information .

FUTURE EXHIBITIONS, TALKS, EVENTS

Participants and visitors were asked what kinds of exhibitions they would like to see in the future at the Garden Museum. Specifically, for the participants, they were asked what would keep them coming back to the museum--especially since for many of them, this was their first experience.

Exhibitions, events or talks about:

- medicinal herbs
- gardening communities around the world
- black gardening
- more African stories in horticulture brought to light
- the connections between Africa and Caribbean, culture + heritage
- the dangers of herbicides/pesticides,
- connections amongst black people everywhere,
- untold stories of our journey that is hidden in books
- specific projects happening locally and globally
- tropical and original fruits and vegetables
- meeting new farmers locally and internationally
- art therapy
- cultural heritage
- more events with Food! (specifically Caribbean food)

METHODS + STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAMMING

Through conversations with participants and staff, the following recommendations were made:

- An advisory committee made up of participants who are better connected to the local communities' needs (draw on their rich expertise (i.e.: Carole, Edward), but ensure they are getting something for this)
- Build upon relationships created during Sowing Roots with regular conversations, networking
- Cross-collaborate on mutually beneficial events at partner locations (there was some cross promoting of events with the Black Cultural Archives who concurrently were exhibiting Rudi Patterson's paintings. Additional opportunities are being pursued with relevant exhibitions at The Tate and William Morris Galleries alongside the online exhibition.)
- Build and continue to meet new freelance artists with a range of curatorial experience who can plan and implement robust and creative exhibits

EVOLVE METHODS FOR EVALUATION

- Hire evaluator before project starts in order to co-create plan that can be implemented with enough time to reach all parts of the organisation
- Include trustees as part of evaluation
- Create a comfortable place in the exhibition to fill out evaluation forms- inviting atmosphere that promotes reflection- ie: a couch, a chair- and this could be aesthetically integrated with the content of the exhibit- so for example, with *Sowing Roots*- could have a garden setting with some benches, inviting people to reflect on the exhibit and share their thoughts - or a wall where people can just write thoughts- as a survey isn't always an enjoyable experience. Also, consider digital evaluation form that can be easily done in the museum- so results are entered right away into a database

4.4 INFORMING FUTURE PRACTICE: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE ORGANISATION

From the content and methodologies for programming exhibitions, to the ways in which diversity training is designed to details of accessibility, staff, visitors, volunteers and participants recommended the following ways in which the organisation can develop an inclusive approach:

Programming

So much of the visitor and volunteer feedback reflected huge enthusiasm for programming that represents the gardening knowledge of local communities and cultures.

Regular Connection

Staff and volunteers expressed a desire to connect more regularly as a way to get to know each other better, brainstorm opportunities for inclusion and feel more in touch with all that is happening at the museum.

Develop collaborative community relationships

As the museum continues to develop relationships with numerous BPOC organisations, consider integrating them into planning, not just as participants, or visitor groups, but also as experts who can contribute to the sustainable design and delivery of programming that will reach BPOC communities.

Accessibility

- The Café- while the cafe design is beautiful and the food is delicious, the prices prohibit many from eating there. One person recommended having a food truck cafe parked in the garden outside- as many would like a quick coffee, or sandwich while enjoying the grounds.
- Accessibility of gravel path for those in wheelchairs or with mobility needs.
- Audio/visual elements for all exhibitions to offer a range of access points for those with impairments
- Benches, or other places to sit within the exhibition

Outreach

Staff and participants reflected on ways to reach more people in terms of building an awareness about the programming and events at the museum, as well as garnering more input from local communities in terms of what would draw them to attend the museum. The following suggestions were made:

- Develop relationships with local schools (creating gardening programmes at the schools)
- Flyer local community centres, cafes, etc.
- Develop an advisory board of local people who can contribute ideas for this

Diversity Training:

- At the start of a project for any new freelancers/volunteers, etc.
- Regular with accountable targets for staff/organisation
- Bespoke training for each part of the organisation
- Part of the annual budget

Diversify organisation

Many reflected on the need for the whole organisations including staff, volunteers, trustees and project freelancers to reflect the diverse local communities served by the museum.



5

SOWING ROOTS: LEGACY

This final section identifies the ways in which SOWING ROOTS will live on both at the museum and through its growing network of local and global communities.

5.1 LEGACY

SOWING ROOTS produced widespread enthusiasm across visitors, volunteers, participants, the freelance artists and staff, with many yearning for related programming and networking opportunities in the future. The project is already living on through several strands described below with additional opportunities emerging regularly.

ONLINE EXHIBITION

'Sowing Roots' will live on in-perpetuity as an online exhibition. This was always part of the project plan, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It will include the complete audio recordings of the oral history interviews- an element that didn't have the time to develop for the in-person exhibition. It will also include all the photographs and quotes from the participants, as well as documentation of their objects.

The online exhibition also offers a chance to input visitor feedback and expand the in-person exhibition with clearer labelling as well as more in-depth information about the participants. At the time of this evaluation, this online exhibition is currently in process and is slated to launch in late Spring 2022.

ARCHIVES & PERMANENT COLLECTION

- All of the oral histories will be transcribed and entered into the Garden Museum archives, accompanied by excerpts of the audio.
- A small display of objects from the exhibition featuring loans from participants as well as Rudi Patterson's ceramic birds remains on display until summer 2022.
- There is current discussion about where to locate the Mr. Pink video in the permanent collection.
- Upon recommendation from elder participant, Ras Prince Morgan, a cutlass gardening tool is also being considered as an addition to the permanent collection.
- Both the film and the cutlass have been added to financial planning for 2023-24.

JOURNAL PUBLICATION

Twice-yearly the Garden Museum produces a journal publication sent to museum friends across the country and available for purchase in the bookshop. The next one, planned for publication in November 2022, will be devoted to Sowing Roots, giving more people an opportunity to read and learn about the project.

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Media publications throughout the project included several participants, highlighting their lives and achievements as gardeners. Such attention will bolster efforts for those interested in sharing their gardening practices with a wider audience and pursuing funding to support their work.

PARTICIPANT NETWORKING

With a clear desire expressed by elder participants for more networking opportunities amongst each other and with groups like LION, Rootz into Growing, Ubele and more, Nelson is currently working with all of the participants about how this can take shape. Specific attention was called for opportunities to develop grant-writing skills to support growing efforts, as well visits to each others' allotments, home gardens and farm connections.

"it's keeping us as a group to talk about future exhibitions, to network, to learn about funding, but it's not just about funding- it's about spiritual and moral support, ...connectivity....That's what excites me... let's organise to go and see your space, look what we've got here, who's doing what, can we go and see what they're doing? So we've got an understanding and a support. And we're not just from this country. So we need to not get into tunnel vision. Because look where we're coming from."

-Carol Wright

EDWARD ADONTENG

Adonteng's participation had a huge impact on both himself and the museum. As someone who tends to an allotment and is passionate about inspiring fellow young people, and young people of colour in South London to garden, he has become an exciting new connection for the museum. Meeting with The Museum Director and Head of Learning to discuss potential collaboration, Adonteng has since been hired to help curate three events next year (beginning Autumn 2022). The museum will follow his lead on the content and curation of those events.

"I'd like to explore what space is...Or how we utilise space? What it means to us, with the context of Mr Pink's House. The permanence of space, its meaning to communities.... How that may tie in with urban displacement, gentrification ...Land etc. All just a brainstorm at the moment. Hoping to make it a three part series at the Museum, as I know that Janine and Christopher were keen on developing that continuity with the Heritage project."

-Edward Adonteng

FUTURE PROGRAMMING

Having established momentum, the museum plans to continue explorations of Caribbean heritage and horticulture. Forthcoming exhibitions are currently being planned that will introduce the museum and its audiences to more Caribbean artists and gardens. The following projects and events are also in development:

- The museum will make a film with and about Sowing Roots participant, Ras Prince Morgan.
- Two events about gardeners of colour in collaboration with Rootz into Food Growing
- Squash & Pumpkin Day in collaboration with Incredible Edible Lambeth, Botany Bay/Border Crossings (who are working on a project about indigenous relationships to land) and Rootz into Food Growing (BPoC food growers) in October, 2022.
- Windrush Day at the National Maritime Museum on 22nd June, 2022 will include two workshops (making clay birds), a pop-up exhibition, and an informal discussion with 8 participants from Sowing Roots.
- Sowing Roots exhibition in other venues – Nelson is currently in conversation about opportunities for the exhibition to pop up in Lewisham, St Thomas' and at the local GP surgery in Lambeth Walk. All of these opportunities are made possible through the Sowing Roots participants' connections.
- BBC Gardeners' World has reached out about the potential of making a film about two of the Sowing Roots participants after reading their stories through the exhibition.
- A rose (named after one of UK's first documented black gardeners) is going to be donated to the museum by Pauline Shakespeare and planted in their new community garden in a local park. A perfumer who saw the exhibition is interested in creating a new scent informed by this rose.

PAYING PARTICIPANTS

Informed by discussions raised about payment for participants, the museum is ensuring participants will be paid for their time.

- The film project in development with Ras Prince Morgan will pay him day rate equivalent to a freelance artist day rate
- Participants from Sowing Roots who take part in discussion as part of Windrush Day will be paid a stipend for their time.

FOOD

Caterers, like Ray of Sunshine and Caribe who catered SOWING ROOTS events, are now part of a roster of freelance caterers that the museum can hire for future events.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

The museum will continue discussions and trainings around the nuances of these issues. This work will be supported by a new role 'Deputy Director of Collections, Learning and Development' which will include coordination between departments, project managing multi-departmental projects and diversity and audience development.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Conversations are in progress to build more events, collaborations and links with those who brought groups to the exhibit, or took part in the learning programmed including:

Rootz into Black Growing, Coco Collective, Roots and Shoots, Coin Street's Gentle Gardeners, Capital Growth, Sustain Web, Land In Our Names , South London Refugee Association, Ubele, Museum Detox, Art in the Park, Loughborough Farm, Horniman museum gardeners and Head of horticulture, students on an ethnobotany MSc at the University of Kent who attended the talk at UCL and have since visited the museum with PhD colleagues and continue to share their research within and beyond the museum's networks.

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Jaden Adonteng

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Rootz into Black Growing, South London Refugee Association, Ubele, Museum Detox, Art in the Park, Loughborough Farm, Horniman museum gardeners and Head of horticulture, Lambeth Carers

INDIVIDUALS

Pauline Shakespeare (Rootz into Black Growing), Karen Hooper (Loughborough Farm), Tamara Astor (South London Refugee Association)

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