



Botanic Gardens Education Network

Annual Report 2023

This Annual Report summarises Bgen activity from 1st January to 31st December 2023

Botanic Gardens Education Network
c/o Botanic Gardens Conservation International
199 Kew Road
Richmond
TW9 3BW

info@Bgen.org.uk
www.Bgen.org.uk
Bgen is a registered
Charitable Incorporated Organisation
no: 1103482

BGEN

Who we are

Bgen (the Botanic Gardens Education Network) was founded in 1990 by a group of botanic garden educators, to share expertise and develop best practice in environmental and biodiversity education.

Our network supports and builds capacity in educators across the UK in areas such as the natural and plant sciences, biodiversity and sustainability, visitor engagement, audience development and impact, as well as funding, training, and job opportunities.

The network is run by a voluntary Board of Trustees, supported by a part-time Coordinator to help administrate and organise training and networking activities for its members.

Our Mission

To be a knowledgeable and strong network of organisations and professionals delivering inspiring, innovative, and relevant public engagement through plants and nature.

Our Vision

To inspire, innovate and influence how people engage with plants and the environment by empowering a strong network of organisations and building capacity in our membership.

Our Objectives

1. Serve our members and strengthen the network
2. Position bgen as experts in the field with regards to learning and engagement with plants and the environment.
3. Become a resilient organisation, through strong relevant governance and financial stability.

Our Values

Innovate: We welcome new ideas and find creative solutions to educate and engage the public in plant based and nature conservation.

Pursue excellence: We aspire to excellence in everything we do, by delivering high quality services to our members and always keep on improving.

Collaborate: We believe that by working together with our members and partners through reflective practice and sharing resources and ideas, we can provide better services and solutions.

Be inclusive: We value ideas, views, and strengths of everyone we work with and support. We treat everyone with kindness and respect.

Act with integrity: We promote an open and honest environment that gives credit and acknowledges mistakes. We ensure charity resources are managed responsibly, with ethical values and sustainable working practices.

Trustee Declaration

The trustees have paid due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission, and in deciding what activities Bgen should undertake.



In memory of Gail Bromley MBE FLS
(19th November 1950 – 7th May 2023)

Co-founder of Botanic Gardens Education Network, and former Chair,
Treasurer and Fundraising and Sponsorship Lead.

1. Bgen Membership

As of 31st December 2023, Bgen has 350 members, this includes members from 41 Organisations and 21 individual members.

Compared to the previous year, organisational membership grew by 4 organisations. The total membership has reduced by 30 and this due in part to more effective updating of organisational contacts and to not attracting quite so many individual members.

Membership fees: the Board reviewed membership fees in 2022 after lockdown and these price increases reflect the diversity and size of organisations and individuals.

Membership type	Price
Individual	£40
Student	£18
Organisation 1-4 staff	£135
Organisation 5-10 staff	£170
Organisation over 10 staff	£210

Bgen provides:

- Networking for members
- Promotion for members' events, training, and job / volunteering opportunities
- Reciprocal membership across participants
- Training events across the UK (currently delivered online)
- An annual conference to reflect on current sector trends and themes

Reciprocal members include:

BGCI

Botanic Gardens Conservation International - BGCI's work aims to promote and develop a more efficient, cost effective and rational approach to plant conservation in botanic gardens.

Black Environment Network

Black Environment Network is working towards a vision of full multicultural environmental participation, local and global.

Thrive

We use gardening to bring about positive changes in the lives of people living with disabilities or ill health, or who are isolated, disadvantaged, or vulnerable.

LEEF

London Environmental Educators forum. LEEF is a membership organisation for London's most passionate green educators. We meet to share skills and knowledge to improve the quality and quantity of environmental education delivered across the capital.

BIAZA

The British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) is the professional body representing the best zoos and aquariums in the UK and Ireland.

PlantNetwork

PlantNetwork is a charity and membership organisation that provides training and network support to gardens and gardeners throughout Britain and Ireland.

2. Training and Events

Since the pandemic, Bgen has delivered all training and activity for members and non-members online. This has allowed BGEN to increase its reach and be more inclusive and accessible to participants who otherwise would not be able to join activities in person, due to travel costs, time constraints and health conditions. In total, this past year Bgen has engaged in bgen 214 delegates in our activities, of which 185 were Bgen members and 28 were non-members.

An overview of training and events activity is below:

Soil Secrets: The Hidden World - 8th February 2023

A two-part training session exploring Fungi and Earthworms and the essential roles they play in soil health with Lee Davies, Fungarium Collections Manager at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Keiron Brown, Recording Officer at the Earthworm Society of Britain.

Members: 17. Non-Members: 7.

Bgen Virtual Coffee Morning: Tree with Golden Apples - 30th March 2023

Ian Edwards, a freelance ecologist, ethnobotanist, and forager introduced a new book on which he was a contributor, Tree With Golden Apples, by Susan Strauss. Tree With Golden Apples is a collection of twelve evocative stories drawn from world myths that reveal both the beauty and truth offered to humans by the plant kingdom.

Members: 11. Non-Members: 1.

Youth Panel Training - 29th June 2023

A comprehensive, half day's training on the process of setting up, recruiting, running, and evaluating a youth panel in a visitor attraction.

Charlotte Smith, Director of Conservation Education at Chester Zoo focused on young governance. Claire Howard, Youth Programme Coordinator at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew discussed the importance of reflective practice. Shivani Patel, Learning and Engagement

Officer & Katie Weston, Volunteer Development Manager from Chelsea Physic Garden focused on the recruitment process and setting up the panel.

Members: 17. Non-Members: 9

The Bgen Get Together 2023! - 11th August 2023

An informal but informative networking event hosted by Bgen and the fabulous team at Oxford Botanic Gardens.

A couple of hours networking with peers, a full garden tour and two interesting talks from the Oxford team.

Members: 5. Non-Members: 1

Bgen Virtual Coffee Morning: Michael Holland - 3rd October 2023

Freelance nature educator Michael Holland gave a glimpse into his varied work since leaving the world of botanical gardens and shared some factoids from his most recent book about indoor gardening - proving once and for all that there really is no such thing as a houseplant!

Members: 13. Non-Members: 1

Planting Seeds: The Art of Storytelling for Science Communication and Education - 11th October 2023

Alette Willis, PhD, a professional storyteller, author and academic ran a hands-on, half-day course exploring the art of storytelling in the context of science communication and education.

Members: 14. Non-Members: 4

Bgen Virtual Coffee Morning: From the Roots Up Part 2 - 23rd November 2023

Ben Oliver, Learning and Participation Manager at Westonbirt: The National Arboretum shared the findings of their yearlong insights project: Re-Imagining our National Tree Collections for Young People.

Members: 21. Non-Members: 0

3. Bgen Annual Conference

Botanical Garden Education: Past, Present, Future - 11th & 12th January 2023

Our Annual Conference is an important strand of Bgen's offer providing the opportunity to reflect on key issues and trends across the sector and offering participants to connect and share learning and ideas for future work.

This was the first in-person conference after the pandemic, and after delivering the November 2021 online to an international audience. The date of the conference was moved from November 2022 to January 2023 to utilise the fantastic venue and kind generosity of RHS Wisley. This was one of the first events hosted by Wisley after completing their

National Lottery Heritage Fund capital project. The conference was held at their fabulous Hilltop Centre, the first UK dedicated horticultural scientific centre of excellence.

We had 125 participants across the two days with ten people receiving the ticket bursary kindly provided by the Finnis Scott Foundation.

The title and theme of the conference was: Botanic Garden Education, Past, Present and Future. It explored the topics of;

- New approaches to delivery – reimagining your education offer using new technology.
- Identifying training needs to help you and your organisation continue to develop.
- Analysing your skillset and continuous professional development.
- Building education plans for the future.
- Seeking opportunities for income generation.
- Developing new practical skills and best practice skill share.
- Learning from others – creating networks and looking beyond the garden for inspiration.

Over the two days we had 14 speakers from gardens and sites across the UK, this included talks from Sam Kendall, Head of Schools, The Eden Project, Professor Louise Archer, Karl Mannheim Chair of Sociology of Education at UCL, Clare Matterson CBE, Director General Royal Horticultural Society, and Julia Willison, Head of Learning and Participation, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

There were also ten workshops across the two days from Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, National Botanical Garden, Wales, Chelsea Physic Garden and various RHS Garden Teams.

We enjoyed tours around RHS Wisley and on Wednesday evening a team from the Irish National Botanic Gardens made us all botanical cocktails to wind down from the first day.

To view the full programme and the speaker slides you can visit our website;

<https://bgen.org.uk/category/conference-presentations/>

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive with 88% of respondents rating the programme content 'excellent' and 92% stating that they would be using what they had learnt at conference in the future.

From now on, Bgen will alternate its annual conference between face-to-face and live online events, to strike a balance between accessibility and inclusion, and international perspectives and UK focus.

We would like to extend our thanks to Rachel Godfrey who led the conference organisation and to RHS Wisley for their generous provision of a wonderful venue for our conference and to their events team for all their support.

4. Structure Governance and Management

Bgen successfully converted from a Charitable Company to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 4th May 2021.

Changes to the Constitution:

In January 2022, the Board submitted a resolution to the Charity Commission to change the Trustee application and appointment process. This change allowed for up to 1/3 of the Board to be appointed from outside the membership to help recruit more effectively and help advance the charity's objectives, bring new ideas and experience to strengthen the Board, and help grow equality, diversity, and inclusion.

5. Bgen Board

5.1 Bgen Board Meetings:

All Board meetings were held online to maximise Trustee participation:

- 7th February 2023 – welcome new trustee, review of conference 2023, training plan for coming year, review of trustee roles and responsibilities.
- 15th May 2023 – welcome to new invited members of board, Treasurer update, Conference theme and date for 2024.
- 25th September 2023 – board renewals and workstream updates, fundraising and sponsorship strategy update, communications update, conference and training progress and updates. Treasurer recruitment update.
- 4th December 2023 – conference 2024 update and responsibilities for 2025 conference, training plan for 2024, treasurer recruitment and vote on applicant, trustee resignations and recruitment.

The AGM for 2023 was confirmed for Monday 29th January 2024.

5.2 Bgen Board Workstreams:

Each Board member serves on one (or two) specialised workstream groups: Training, Conference, Fundraising, Communication & Membership and Governance.

Workstreams meet regularly in between Board Meetings, to plan in detail their areas of work and advance on actions across the year. The focus of activity for these workstreams have been:

- **Communications & Membership:** advertising of job opportunities and promotion of events, audit of comms activity, recruitment of voluntary event reviewer role
- **Governance:** recruitment and induction of new Trustees to the Board, recruitment of new Coordinator
- **Fundraising & Sponsorship:** submission of bids to external trusts and foundations

- **Conference & Training:** plan events through the year and the annual Conference
- The **Treasury Group** have continued to oversee the Bgen finances and make recommendations to the Bgen Board.

5.3 Bgen Board Members:

After the last AGM in January 2023, the Bgen Board had the following changes:

Re-election: Felicity Gaffney, Gail Bromley, and Susie Kelpie sought re-election for another 3 years.

Resignations: Christine Meakin, from Forestry England (Westonbirt Arboretum); Ledy Leyssen, from The Royal Parks (London); Rose Froud from Ness Botanic Gardens, and Suzanne Hermiston from Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

Gail Bromley, Bgen's co-founder and Treasurer, sadly passed away on 7th May 2023, after a short illness.

Role changes:

Election: In 2023 we welcomed new Board member Steve Nash, and two Invited Members joined us, Dr Lauren Baker and Sophie Kirk who will be up for election at the next AGM.

Bgen Board (pre - 29th January 2024 AGM):

Trustee Name	Workstream	Appointed	Status
Jill Baker, RHS Garden Hyde Hall	Training	2007	Resigned Jan 2023
Gail Bromley, BGCI	Treasurer, Fundraising and Sponsorship Lead	2006	Passed Away May 2023
Zoë Chapman, Ness Botanic Gardens, University of Liverpool		Jan 2022	Active
Rose Froud, Ness Botanic Gardens	Communication and Membership Lead	2020	Resigned Dec 2023
Felicity Gaffney, National Botanic Garden Ireland	Conference and Training	2015	Active
Sarah Garry, PCA	Fundraising and Sponsorship	Jan 2022	Active
Rachel Godfrey, RHS	Training and Conference Lead	2019	Resigned Feb 2023
Suzanne Hermiston, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh	Training and Conference	Jan 2022	Resigned Dec 2023
Susie Kelpie, Bgen Member	Training and Conference	2012	Active
Ledy Leyssen, The Royal Parks	Governance Lead, Treasury group	2017	Resigned Dec 2023

Chris Meakin, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum	Governance	2017	Resigned Dec 2023
Steve Nash, Wild Planet Trust	Communications	2023	Active
Helen Miller, BGCI	Training, Treasury	2019	Active (on maternity leave Oct 2023)
Frances Sampayo, Chelsea Physic Garden	Governance	Jan 2022	Active
Sarah Webley, South London Botanical Institute	Training and Conference	Jan 2022	Active

There are two invited members who have been active participants in the Communications and Fundraising & Sponsorship workstreams; Dr Lauren Baker and Sophie Kirk.

The Bgen Board is supported by Sophie Edwards (Bgen Coordinator), PushLogic (website) and Sandy Openshaw (bookkeeper).

6. Reference and administrative information

Charity name: Botanic Gardens Education Network (Bgen)

Charity Registration Number: 1103482

Registered Office: c/o BGCI, Descanso House, 199 Kew Road, Richmond, TW9 3BW

Trustee Selection:

BGEN is managed by a Board of Trustees drawn from its members, and thanks to recent changes to the Constitution, BGEN can now recruit Trustees from outside the membership that can bring specialist skills and experience in support of BGEN's objectives.

Our trustees bring a broad range of skills and sector knowledge to the Board, with no financial remuneration from the charity. Trustees are appointed based on their knowledge and experience. Every trustee is appointed for an initial three-year term by a resolution passed at annual AGM and can also be co-opted throughout the year before they are confirmed at annual general meetings. Trustees can be re-elected when their initial three-year period.

BGEN trustees abide by Charity Commission guidelines on Trustees Responsibilities. BGEN's Constitution and Trustee Handbook provide further guidance in this area.

7. Financial Review and Accounts for financial year 2022/23

Reserves Policy

Reserves are that part of a charity's unrestricted funds that is freely available to spend on any of the charity's purposes. bgen maintains free unrestricted reserves:

- to provide a level of working capital that protects the continuity of our work, ensuring the stability of the network, its programmes, employment, and ongoing operations
- to provide a level of funding for unexpected opportunities, non-recurring expenses that will build long-term capacity, such as staff development, research and development, or investment in equipment and support materials
- to provide cover for risks such as unforeseen expenditure, one-time unbudgeted expenses, unanticipated loss of income or funding, or uninsured losses.

The board of trustees will review the above criteria with reference to bgen's strategy and Annual Plan and determine the target level of free reserves to meet these.

The Board of Trustees will at times designate funds from free reserves for significant project costs or replacement of major assets.

Operating Reserves are not intended to replace a permanent loss of funds or eliminate any ongoing budget gap. It is the intention for Operating Reserves to be used and replenished within a reasonably brief period. The Operating Reserve Policy will be implemented in concert with the other governance / policies of BGEN and is intended to support the goals and strategies contained in BGEN's Finance Policy and strategic and operational plans.

Treasurer's Report

Sadly, our Treasurer Gail Bromley passed away in May 2023. The Board agreed for Ledy Leyssen to act as interim Treasurer while a new recruitment was underway to appoint a new Treasurer for the organisation.

The 2022 – 23 financial year, saw a net profit of £4,593, a positive result compared to the previous year which saw a small loss, as bgen was recovering from the impact of lockdown, after the Covid 19 pandemic.

After the restrictions were lifted in February 2022, bgen focused on organising delivery of online workshops and free coffee mornings to reconnect with members. Income from training accounted for £3,146 for the financial year (£6,181 in the previous year).

Members' feedback requesting a face-to-face conference became a reality and the bgen Board agreed for a conference at RHS Wisley in January 2023. The conference, hosted at the newly opened Hilltop Centre by the RHS Learning team and bgen Trustees, attracted 93

participants from all over the UK, from early career practitioners to Heads of Education, consultants and freelancers representing the sector. Of the 93 people attending, fifteen participants received bursaries to help with conference costs, thanks to the Finnis Scott Foundation grant. Conference income reached £13,007 (with costs of £6,253, mainly coming from catering), which proved a welcomed boost to Bgen's finances and showed how important the annual conference is for the future of the organisation.

Membership income increased significantly to £4,445 compared to £1,828 the previous year. This increase is a testament to the hard work and commitment of our Coordinator, who focused on chasing delayed payments from members and updated their contact details, as many people changed roles after the pandemic.

Advertising accounted for £2,130 in revenue, compared to £1,300 from the previous accounting year, and this continue to grow thanks to the efforts of our Coordinator and promotion through our social media channels as well as bgen's dedicated email to members and subscribers. Although the Board agreed to keep prices at the pre pandemic levels to support members and their recruitment efforts, they agreed to review pricing later in 2023.

The financial year 2022-23 closed with £20,945. A summary of income and expenditure for this period is below:

Income: £22,976 (previous year £14,902) and Expenditure of £18,383 (previous year £15,704), providing a net profit of £4,593 for 2022-23 financial year (see Receipts and Payments form on next pages for detail).

Note bgen moved to a simplified 'Receipts and Payments' accounting system. This shows money moving in and out and does not take account of accruals - money that has been earned or spent but not yet paid. This might mean that occasionally there seems to be a mismatch between what monies Bgen has and the paperwork).

The accounts have been approved by the Board in January 2024. We now seek members' adoption of the accounts at the AGM so that they can be filed with the Charity Commission before the end of January 2024.

Our thanks to the Board, the Treasury Group, our Bookkeeper and Coordinator for all their support over the past year.

Ledy Leyssen, Acting Bgen Treasurer

[See Bgen Receipts and Payments 2022-23 on next page]



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
Botanic Garden Education Network

No (if any)
1103482

Receipts and payments accounts


CC16a

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	01/04/2022		31/03/2023

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Sales Discounts		-	-	-	-
Training Days	3,146	-	-	3,146	6,181
Membership	4,445	-	-	4,445	1,828
Conference	13,007	-	-	13,007	3,070
Adverts	2,130	-	-	2,130	1,300
Grants	-	-	-	-	2,500
Miscellaneous	248	-	-	248	23
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	22,976	-	-	22,976	14,902
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	22,976	-	-	22,976	14,902
A3 Payments					
Administrator	10,379	-	-	10,379	8,774
Computer & Software	368	-	-	368	340
Bookkeeping	992	-	-	992	936
Bank charges & Interest	383	-	-	383	307
Conference Expenses	6,253	-	-	6,253	120
General expenses	8	-	-	8	-
Training day	-	-	-	-	2,820
Marketing	-	-	-	-	2,369
Consultancy & Professional	-	-	-	-	38
Sub total	18,383	-	-	18,383	15,704
A4 Asset and investment purchases. (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	18,383	-	-	18,383	15,704
Net of receipts/(payments)	4,593	-	-	4,593	- 802
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	16,352	623	-	16,975	-
Cash funds this year end	20,945	623	-	21,568	- 802

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank	20,945	623	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	20,945	623	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	Debtors	1,620	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Laptop		595	1
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	Creditors	1176	-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Ledy Leyssen	10-Jan-24	

Special thanks to Sophie Edwards, Bgen Coordinator, for her dedication, determination and invaluable coordination of all network activities and support to the Board.

Thanks to our Board of Trustees for their work and commitment this past year, and to all our members for their continuing participation and support in so many ways, to help advance Bgen's mission and objectives.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
Botanic Garden Education Network

No (if any)
1103482

CC16a


Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date 01/04/2022	To	Period end date 31/03/2023
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Section A Receipts and payments

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Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

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		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	20,945	623	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Debtors	1,620	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Laptop		595	1
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities		Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	Creditors	1176	-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees		Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
			Ledy Leyssen	10-Jan-24