

Trustees Annual Report 10.03.23 to 9.03.2024 for the Parish Council and Charity Commission

As stated with the Charity Commission, Nature Citizens charitable purposes are to be of public benefit, to educate and promote the importance of the Natural World on our lives and action we can take to conserve, protect and improve the natural eco-system. The overall message is as the Charities name implies that we as Citizens are part of Nature and not separate from it, we rely on the natural processes and cycles of the planet for our survival, therefore it is in our best interest to preserve what we have and restore what we have lost in a way that allows people and the planet to flourish, that we can all take action and create a Nature Space, whatever the size and by doing so, all those collective efforts will naturally grow a Nature Network of connected habitats resulting in an increase in the abundance of biodiversity, contributing to mitigate the global concerns of declining flora and fauna, that the solutions are in our hands by helping Nature we are in turn helping ourselves and securing the future for generations to come.

**The Nature Citizen Polstead Community Project** is how The Charity continues to achieve these objects and community engagement through the:

**-Nature Citizen Polstead Community Garden and Mini Woodland**– this is a ‘Demonstration Nature Space’ and the Charities Head Office where we meet with Trustees, volunteers and members of the community. In this, we show how to purposely plant for the pollinating insects and create a variety of habitats to encourage many different insects. The Woodland has continued to be cleared of bramble and woodland plants planted to increase food sources for the insects. The trees planted in the woodland are still registered on the Queens Green Canopy Memorandum website. The Nature Citizen Community Garden and the Charity’s efforts continue to be on the Dedham Vale Wilder Together Website and have attended their meetings.

**-Together Growing a Nature Network** – There are now 20 Participating Gardens, whose contributions of creating their own Nature Space are adding to growing a Nature Network across the village and each year we aim to add more, helping with the charities aim of increasing the abundance of biodiversity locally.

Making the most of our voluntary time and reducing all the ‘red tape’ involved with recruiting volunteers is vital, therefore a large part of the project is exchange. We visit Parishioners, share information about gardening with nature in mind, discuss ideas about what could be done in their gardens to provide food, water and shelter for insects, offer help with design, send them a personalised electronic ‘Creating a Nature Space Information Pack’ and gift them homegrown plants (trees, hedging, shrubs, wildflower plugs and seeds) if they wish. Those that have excess plants have also contributed to gifting plants and in return the Parishioners invest their time and money they may donate to the Charity in their gardens to creating a Nature Space.

**-Promote the importance of Nature Spaces** – through public talks (The Polstead WI and Polstead Garden Club), posts on online platforms (Facebook and Instagram), articles in the local LSPN newsletter and Information Packs.

With the continued decline of many habitats, insect, wildlife and wild plant species numbers are still falling. Therefore, one of the main aims of the charity is to keep delivering the simple message... ‘if we can all do our little bit in our part of the world’ it all adds up to contributing to local, national and international targets of nature restoration and reversing biodiversity loss. The Charity’s simplified message is:

***Bee a Nature Citizen, create a Nature Space and Together we grow a Nature Network.***

***Providing food, water and homes for the little creatures that keep the world going.***

***If we all do a little wherever we are in the world, this will add up to helping a lot.***

**-History of our village and the changing landscape** – collaborating with community groups, inviting parishioners to share their knowledge, stories and memories, looking at old maps and seeing how land use has change over time.

The Charities activities (all time spent is voluntary hours) during the year have been:

- Continued evaluation and updates of The Charities Policies and Procedures
  - Continued membership of Community Action Suffolk
  - As the Trustees are so involved in the actual activities of the Charity, we continue to keep our carbon footprint low by combining meetings and activities at the Nature Citizen Polstead Community Garden with regular updates and reports sent via email and WhatsApp Group calls.
- Some examples of Voluntary hours/time spent.

- Approximately 346 voluntary hours at least has spent at the Nature Citizen Community Garden and Mini Woodland.
- Many hours have been spent on the NCNN (Nature Citizen Nature Network) which include visiting Parishioners Gardens and a local primary school, producing personalised information packs, the parishioners time creating their own Nature Space or adding to what they already have as part of their continued commitment to providing an all year round Nature Space, growing, watering and delivering plants to their gardens and the Community Garden. There are now 20 participating gardens in the village, which the Charity aims to continually increase.
- Publishing posts on social media and in the Local Newsletter reaching 4 local villages.
- Attending Parish Council meetings. Working with the Parish Council to deliver a green agenda.
- Running the Charity. Writing Policies, risk assessments etc.
- Writing reports, updates and email correspondence
- Trustee WhatsApp Meetings. Attending Community & Charity Meetings.
- Three School Children have started volunteering for their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award.
- The Charity had a Display table at the Village Kings Coronation Luncheon
- Continued Professional Development and Research - attending webinars and virtual events, conferences and courses (online), further education/studying topics such as Soil Regeneration, Soil Food Web, British Society Soil Science, United Nations World Soil Day, Agroecology, Bee Conservation, Regenerative Farming, attended Groundswell, National Capital, Clean Rivers, Wildlife Trusts - Wild Live, Zero Waste, Colchester Natural History Society events, etc.

*With thanks to the Friends of Nature Citizen and Trustees for donating plants from their gardens and time volunteering in the Community Garden.*

*With thanks to all the Parishioners who are participating in growing a Nature Network across the village.*

*With thanks to Eric for donating home-grown compost to enable to grow so many plants and enrich the soil at the Garden.*

*With thanks for the kind donation of a shed, the tools can be stored in dry conditions.*

*With thanks to Simon Goodchild for helping the Charity by keeping the Nature Citizen domain name, hosting, secure certificate and email account at direct cost and donating his time for doing this.*

*With thanks to the local Parish Council for their ongoing financial contribution that enables the Charity to cover its basic running costs and donating the allotment plots for the Nature Citizen Community Garden, both of which enable the Charity to continue with its environmental activities.*

*All these donations are very gratefully received as they save time and money to enable the Charity to meet its aims.*

With thanks from the Nature Citizen Team

Rachel White (Chair), Mary Murdoch (Treasurer), Clare Reeves (Secretary), Emma Daniels.

Lisa Matthews (Founder and C.E.O)

**If you wish to see more information and some pictures of progress from the last year that will be going in the Charity Commission Report, please continue...**

**Sustainability and becoming carbon neutral.**

Sustainability continues to be at the core of all decisions, activities and policies and procedures.

Examples are:

The plastic plant pots used to grow plants for gifting are returned and reused, cutting out needing to buy new.

Home grown compost is used to grow our own plants and trees from seeds and saplings, reducing cost, plastic use and transport miles.

No chemicals are used in the growing of plants or in the Community Garden, eliminating pollution.

The water used to water plants we grow is from collected rainwater wherever possible, saving water.

Hand tools are predominantly used, reducing our carbon footprint.

Materials used in the Garden have been from what others were going to throw away, preventing it going into landfill or being burnt, thus reducing the quick release of carbon dioxide.

Seed heads of plants are left to feed the birds over winter, helping sustain wildlife.

Leaves are left in borders to act as mulch and enrich the soil, perennials continue to be planted as over time both actions help in reducing the need to water and protecting the soil from erosion.

Seeds and surplus plants are collected and redistributed to others which saves them buying new plants and seeds reducing transport miles in the process.

The pruned branches are cut up and added to the dead hedge habitat removing the need to have a bonfire or transport miles to the tip.

Wherever possible we car share and use bicycles.

Information packs are sent to Parishioners electronically saving paper and printer ink, we make our own posters and focus our activities locally.

We have regular Charity Trustee meetings when we are working at the garden helping reduce our travel miles and Charities carbon footprint even further, also

Trustees have verified the Trustee Annual Report via email in support of reducing travel miles and keeping the Charities carbon footprint at net zero.



Nature Citizens table at the Kings Coronation Celebrations



# Nature Citizen – Cherishing All Life CHARITY NUMBER 1166223

Below are pictures from just three of the participating gardens - example of a 'gifting of trees and plants' drop off, two ponds that have been built and a wildflower strip all contributing to the 'Together Growing a Nature Network' across Polstead.



Below are articles from the local newsletter the LSPN, we started contributing monthly articles in February 2023.

## Nature Citizen *cherishing all life* Charity Number 1166223 (Article 16) May 2024

*Bee a Nature Citizen, create a Nature Space and Together we grow a Nature Network.*

*Providing food, water and homes for the little creatures that keep the world going.*

*If we all do a little wherever we are in the world, this will add up to helping a lot.*



No Mow Ever! Nature Citizen Community Garden... It's so lovely to see the cowslips and dandelions in the long grass area. In the Garden we have created a variety of habitats to encourage many different insects and long grass is just one of those. We never cut the grass except for pathways (as shown in the picture above) and over time this mostly untouched area has become a great all year-round hidey home for insects, reptiles and small mammals. We have also scattered seeds and introduced plants to provide more food (the nectar and pollen from the flowers) for the pollinating insects such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies.

The Community Garden based at the Polstead Allotments. The Charities aims are to increase the abundance of biodiversity locally. Ways to support the Charity: Join in the Nature Network and become a Participating Garden, donate your excess plants and tree saplings that will be gifted, all are welcome to visit or lend a hand at the Community Garden, follow us on Facebook (Nature Citizen) and Instagram (nature\_citizen).

For more information, please contact Lisa Matthews via email [lisa@naturecitizen.co.uk](mailto:lisa@naturecitizen.co.uk) or mobile 07513 484302. Thank you.

## Nature Citizen *cherishing all life* Charity Number 1166223 (Article 5) June

By creating a Nature Space, together we build a Nature Network, providing food, water and shelter for the little creatures that we so rely on for our survival.

Giving Nature a Helping Hand.... providing Solitary Cavity Nesting Bees, a place to lay their eggs. These Solitary Bee homes have a viewing window to be able to see inside. These bees use mud to make individual cells, fill it full of pollen for their young to feed on, lay an egg then seal it up with mud. These people made Bee Homes to replicate nesting tubes the bees would use in the wild. I've positioned ours to receive the sun all day, locating it close to flower and water sources. The key is to have plants that are in flower for as much of the year as possible, so there is a constant food source available.

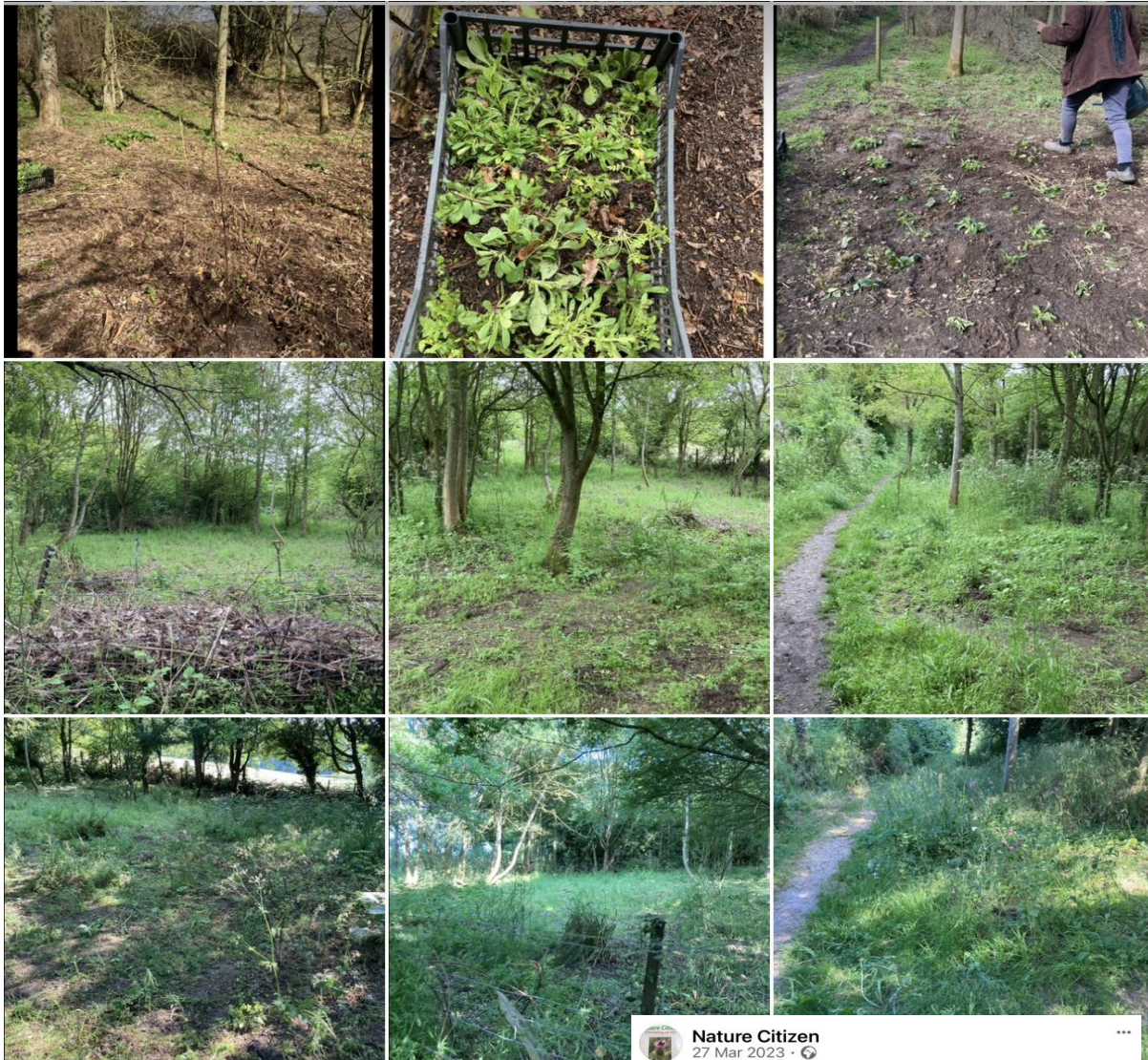
If we each create a Nature Space, to provide food, water and shelter for pollinators and other beneficial insects, these actions collectively add up to building a Nature Network of connected resources, contributing to the efforts of reversing the decline of insects.

Nature Citizen is a local voluntarily run charity based in Polstead, aiming to increase the abundance of biodiversity locally through the 'Together Building a Nature Network Project'. Please contact Lisa Matthews via email [lisa@naturecitizen.co.uk](mailto:lisa@naturecitizen.co.uk) mobile 07513 484302 for more information and ways to support the Charity is to join us to 'Garden for Nature' at the Nature Citizen Community Garden in Polstead and follow us on Facebook (Nature Citizen) & Instagram (nature\_citizen). Thank you.





The woodland has benefitted from the bramble cutting and woodland floor clearance, dead hedge building, and woodland plants planted. Wildflower plants from the community garden have been planted along the public footpath at the woodland edge. We also found puffballs.



**Nature Citizen**  
27 Mar 2023 · 🌍

Nature Citizen.... Giving nature a helping hand  
14 Trees Planted for the Queens Green Canopy  
Adding new varieties, increasing biodiversity in this woodland area, 3 Crab Apple, 2 Hazel, 2 Hornbeam, 1 Wild Pear, 2 Damson, 1 Holly, 3 Buckthorn. 🌱💚🍏





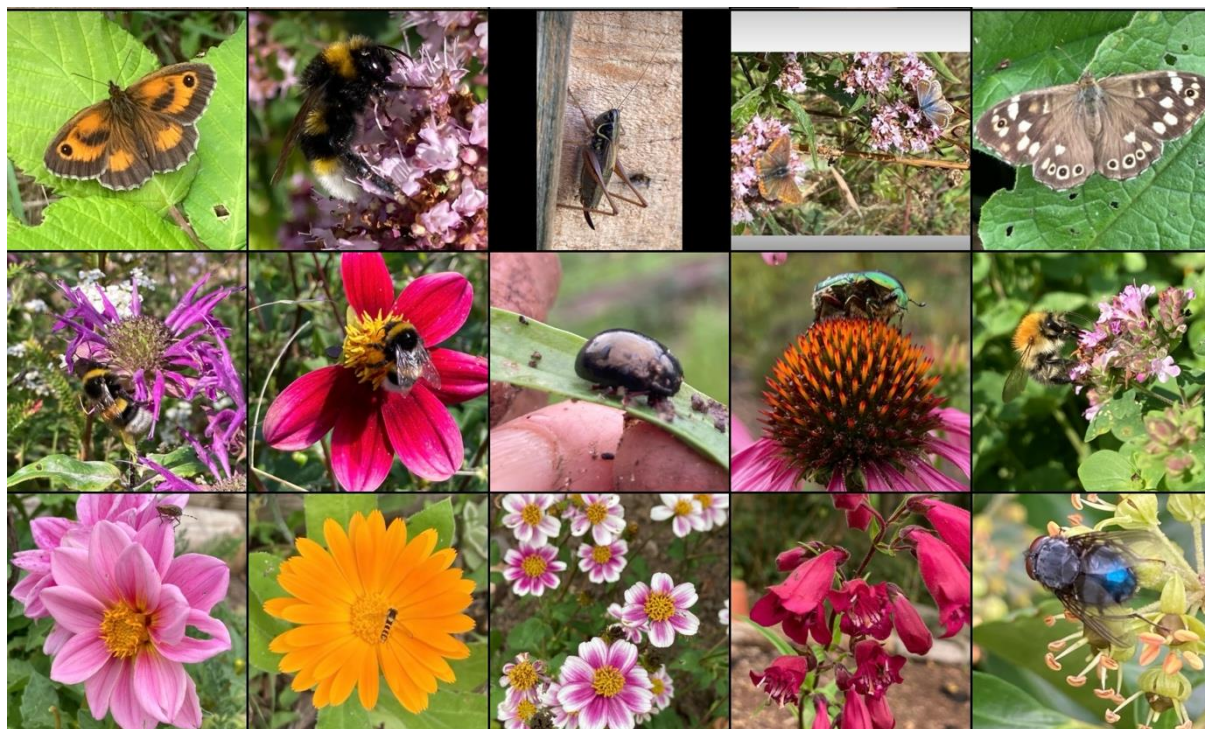
The Nature Citizen Community Garden.... Over time we have added home grown and donated plants to extend the time of flowering plants to provide as much food as possible from as early as February and as late as November and then we leave the seed heads overwinter and early spring to provide food for birds and small mammals and shelter for insects.



Lots of residents and visitors in the Polstead Community Garden











**The Nature Citizen Community Garden & Mini Woodland** – A Demonstration Nature Space.

*Creating a Nature Space and Gardening with Nature in Mind – diversity is the key.*

*The mosaic of habitats and a variety of successional flowering plants provides all year-round food, water and shelter for insects & other wildlife.*

*Examples that are in the garden are:*

*A flowering lawn, showing that you can provide a large area of pollen and nectar throughout the year without it looking wild!*

*A 'no mow ever' long grass area that over time has many grass tussocks/clumps established, providing all year-round shelter for insects, small mammals and reptiles, more wildflowers have been interplanted increasing food sources, black compost bins, which has sloe worms and ants living in them.*

*Compost heaps have been left and not turned because insects, reptiles and wildlife make homes, hibernate in them and find refuge.*

*Log piles, dead wood and dead hedge (ideal for all kinds of beetles and other insects). We have recorded the Stag Beetle sightings with the PTES (Peoples Trust for Endangered Species).*

*The log circle containing the nettles which is the food plant for caterpillars.*

*Bramble clump, the flowers provide pollen and nectar for insects, the berries later provide food for birds, small mammals and insects. With trimming it regularly it has become dense which provides shelter for wildlife.*

*Fallen leaves are left over winter to act as mulch and cover for insects in the winter and return organic matter and nutrition back into the soil.*

*Seed heads have been left uncut to feed the birds and small mammals over winter.*

*As the logs are decaying over time the variety of Fungi has increased.*

*Mini water sources that have stones in in case insects fall in they won't drown.*

*Wildlife homes (bugs, insects, birds, small mammals, hedgehogs etc).*

*Trees and shrubs around the edge of the NCCG provide cover, nesting sites and food (blossom and berries).*

*Mini woodland with dead hedges with bramble growing through them, an area left to create a dense thicket for birds, the woodland floor cleared of bramble to allow other things to grow, wildflowers planted on the edge of the path which is not only great for insects but lovely to see too.*

The last two pages are some examples of social media posts on the Nature Citizen Facebook page



**Nature Citizen** – *Cherishing All Life* CHARITY NUMBER 1166223



Nature Citizen - cherishing all life - Charity Number 1166223.

👉 By creating a Nature Space those efforts do build a Nature Network and increase the abundance of biodiversity in your local area 🐝💚🌻🪲🦋🐞🌿

The solutions are in our hands! Individual actions really do make a difference and collectively they can have a big impact. Without bees and other invertebrates our world would be a very different place, they are vital to the life cycle of many plants and trees! This includes the variety of food we eat, the flowers we enjoy and the plants and trees we use.

Bees and other pollinating insects feed on the pollen and nectar that are in the flowers, they have different length tongues (proboscis) and are about at different times of the year. Therefore if you have room or know someone that does have room available, know that by planting a variety of plants that are in flower at different times of year for as much of the year as possible, that vary in shape, colour and height is the key to providing an ongoing plentiful supply of food for them. By ensuring they survive, this in turns helps us to thrive 🐝



👉 Creating a Nature Space together building a Nature Network to increase the abundance of biodiversity.....

## So what does a Nature Space look like?

Well that can look like whatever you wish to create, have the space, time, resources and inclination to create'

For me a continual question is 'what else can I do and what more can I squeeze in'?

As insects are small and hugely varied, having a variety of mini habitats is really helpful. For example a pile of branches and logs in the sunshine will attract different insects from a pile that is underneath trees in the shade. Scanning.... Do we have something out in flower at the moment so theres food for the bees and other pollinating insects?

Do we have water available, has the bird bath dried out etc.

Do we have a home for them, even if its a pile of leaves. It doesn't have to be complicated, you don't need to be knowledgeable or go to great expense, in fact much can be done at no cost at all.

Below is a simple example of a Nature Space in a small area

The Rosemary herb is flowering (food) the recycled glass jar with stones in so the insects can get out is kept full (water) and we've drilled different size holes in left over piece of wood for solitary bees to lay their eggs (home)



🌻 22nd May is the United Nations International Day for Biological Diversity, often shortened to Biodiversity which means the variety of life of earth. The Theme this year is from agreement to action : build back biodiversity. When biodiversity has a problem, humanity has a problem.  
[www.un.org/en/observances/biological-diversity-day](http://www.un.org/en/observances/biological-diversity-day)

Nature Citizen also recognises the importance of Nature, that we are part of it, that individual actions really do collectively add up and that we can increase the abundance of biodiversity by creating a Nature Space in whatever room we have available. Taking action to provide food, water and shelter that we fundamentally strive for as humans is a gift and service to cherish all life.

When you have a variety of plants and habitats, you give food and homes to a variety of insects, which in turn feed a variety of animals and so on.....All of this abundance helps pollinate plants that provide us with food, flowers, trees and medicines for example, also decompose materials, build healthy soils, cleans air, rivers and oceans. Biodiversity keeps the balance of good bacteria and viruses. We are learning more and more of the importance of biodiversity, it's value is tremendous and not fully recognised and appreciated, but this intricate web works together to maintain balance and support life. 🐝🌍



👉 Giving Nature a helping hand....Sharing our space with Nature and living in harmony 🍀 What more can we do!

There are millions of gardens in the UK (more than all the Nature Reserves put together) and lawns can be a fabulous food source and home for beneficial insects.

Helpful actions include; mowing on a high cut allows the flowers to grow, having even a small area of long grass, not using chemicals, planting bulbs such as crocuses that come up in February, laying flags on an area of short grass to weaken the grass to then sow seeds or plant low growing plants such as clover, chamomile and creeping thyme which smell wonderful when walked on. If circumstances allow and you like the idea to have a flowering lawn and areas that are left to grow adds to the mosaic of mini habitats creating food and shelter for beneficial insects and adding to the abundance of biodiversity in your local area. If not there are lots of other ideas such as growing herbs, planting nectar rich plants in a border etc.

By being a Nature Citizen, create a Nature Space and together we build a Nature Network, doing our bit in our part of the world, to take action where we can to try and halt the concerning decline in insect numbers that are part of the intricate web of life that enable us to live the lives we do





**Nature Citizen** – *Cherishing All Life* CHARITY NUMBER 1166223

