

Nature Citizen – Cherishing All Life CHARITY NUMBER 1166223

Charity Commission Annual Return 2025

Trustees Annual Report 10th March 2024 to 9th March 2025

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 Charity continues to achieve these objects and community engagement through **‘The Nature Citizen Community Project’** which includes:

The Nature Citizen Community Garden and Mini Woodland

In this ‘Demonstration Nature Space,’ with the help of volunteers we continue to manage the garden with nature in mind, purposely planting for the pollinating insects, have a variety of habitats to encourage many different insects, and this year added a pond.

In The Mini Woodland area, we have planted more native woodland plants to increase food sources for the insects.

We were delighted to host the local Gardening Clubs ‘Annual Garden Party’ in Summer 2024 to highlight what can be done to provide an abundance of food, water, and shelter for nature, even in small areas.

Two of the Village School Children have achieved their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award by volunteering with Nature Citizen, one is continuing and doing their Silver Award.

The Garden is also our meeting place with the Trustees, volunteers, and members of the community and warmly referred to as ‘The Charities Head Office’

Together Growing a Nature Network & Promoting the importance of Nature Spaces

There are now 22 Participating Gardens across the village who have created their own Nature Space, which are contributing to increasing biodiversity locally. Each participating garden we visit, we give suggestions, send information packs and gift plants and trees if needed, showing how they can all provide food, water and shelter for the insects and small creatures.

We grow local native tree saplings and plants to gift to others, ensuring that all are included, reducing economic barriers.

Whilst the participating gardens we can measure, the reach and impact on the wider network is tricky to measure.

-As of March 2025, 25 articles have been written for the local monthly newsletter, which is delivered to every home in 4 local Parishes with a population (according to the 2021 Census) nearly 4,000 people.

-Article written for the Summer 2024 edition of The Dedham Vale Society magazine.

- We continue to offer Public Talks and visits to the Community Garden.

- We continue to put posts and videos on the online platforms Facebook and Instagram.

-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.

-Continued membership of Community Action Suffolk.

-The ongoing project of the ‘History of Our Village and the changing landscape’ is coming along nicely.

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.

Sustainability and contributing to the Net Zero Agenda

Sustainability and Self Sufficiency continue to be at the core of all our decisions, activities, policies, and procedures. Examples are:

The Charity has never bought any new plant pots used to grow plants for the community garden or gifting; they are donated, reused, and then returned to reuse again. Any surplus pots are taken to a plant-pot recycling point.

We use home made compost to grow our own plants and trees from seeds and saplings, reducing cost, use of plastic and transport miles.

No chemicals are used to grow or support plants in the Community Garden, cutting pollution and potential harm to the insects feeding on nectar from the plant's flowers. This also shows how we can all have organic gardens and that use nature-based solutions such as mulching for healthy soils, increasing plant diversity and habitats to encourage beneficial predatory insects such as ladybirds, hoverflies, and lacewings.

The water used to water plants we grow is from collected rainwater wherever possible, which is not only better for plant health, but saves using mains water, lowering utility costs, and lowering energy use for water treatment.

We mostly use hand tools that have been donated, as they do not need power thus reducing energy consumption.

Wood used in the Garden has been donated for reuse, preventing it going into the waste stream.

We leave many plant seed heads to feed the birds over winter, helping sustain wildlife.

Leaves are left in borders to act as mulch and enrich the soil, adding nutrients naturally, 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 (which releases carbon quickly) or transport miles to the tip.

Wherever possible we car share and use bicycles.

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

We share our sustainability messages through talks, articles, and posts on social media to spread the message to others.

We continue to keep our carbon footprint low by combining Trustee meetings and activities at the Nature Citizen Community Garden and WhatsApp group calls, with regular updates and reports sent via email. Trustees verify the Trustee Annual Report via email in support of reducing travel miles and keeping the Charities carbon footprint at net zero.

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

Some examples of Voluntary hours/time spent.

-Approximately 250 voluntary hours at least has spent at the NC Community Garden and Mini Woodland.

-Two School Children have completed volunteering for their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award (minimum 26 hours)

-Many hours have been spent on the NCNN (Nature Citizen Nature Network) which include 22 Participating Gardens, growing and gifting plants, spreading the word through talks, showing people around the community garden, writing articles, and posting on social media.

-Attending Parish Council meetings. Working with the Parish Council to deliver a green agenda.

-Running the Charity. Writing Policies, risk assessments, writing reports, updates, email correspondence, Trustee WhatsApp Meetings, Attending Community & Charity Meetings, continued evaluation and updates of The Charities Policies and Procedures.

-Continued Professional Development and Research - attending webinars and virtual events.

With thanks to : The Friends of Nature Citizen and Trustees for gifting plants and donating plants from their gardens and their time volunteering in the Community Garden. Also all the Parishioners who are taking part in growing a Nature Network across the village. Peter Irvine and Heather for donating wood chips for the new paths. The cash donations to pay for help redoing existing paths and building the new paths. The Gardening club donation for hosting the Annual Garden Party. The local Parish Council for their ongoing financial contribution that enables the Charity to cover its basic running costs & donating the allotment plots for The Community Garden, both of which enable the Charity to continue with its environmental activities. Simon Goodchild for helping by keeping the Nature Citizen domain name, hosting, secure certificate & email account at direct cost and donating his time for doing this. All these donations are very gratefully received, as they save time and money to enable the Charity to take action to meet its aims of increasing biodiversity.

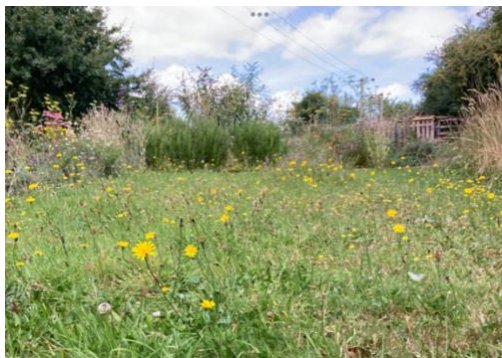
Below is information about and photos from the Garden, including articles and posts from Nature Citizens Social Media platforms.

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

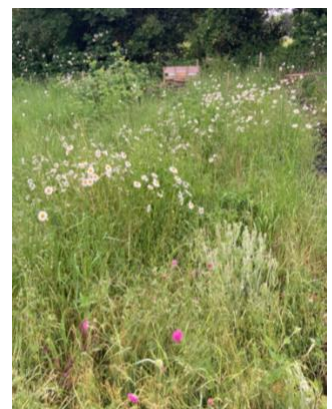
Creating a Nature Space and Gardening with Nature in Mind – diversity is the key.

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

Examples of the different areas 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 wild 'no mow ever' long grass area that over time has more grass tussocks/clumps, providing all year-round shelter for insects, small mammals and reptiles and we are seeing more ant hills too. More wildflowers, shrubs and perennials have been interplanted to increase food sources and the grass left to grow and to seed, provides food for the birds. Black compost bins that warm in the sunshine has sloe worms and ants living in them.



Log piles, dead wood and log circles containing nettles that are food plants for caterpillars.



The upturned logs and stag beetle piles are decaying over time, this is providing a reliable source of food for beetle larvae, and the variety of Fungi has increased.



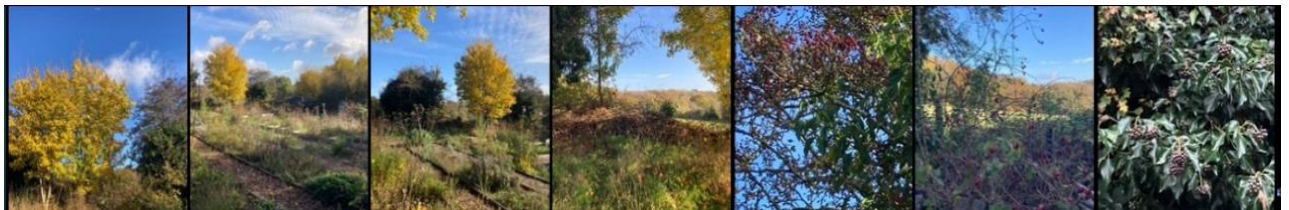
Bramble clump - the flowers provide pollen and nectar for insects, the berries later provide food for birds, small mammals and insects. With trimming it regularly it has become dense which provides shelter for wildlife. Mini water sources throughout the Garden that have stones in to prevent insects from drowning.



We keep adding plant debris to the compost heaps and, leave them unturned and undisturbed because insects, reptiles and wildlife make homes, hibernate in them and find refuge. Beetle Larvae are enjoying it too!



Dead hedges, trees and shrubs around the edge of the NCCG provide cover, nesting sites and food (blossom and berries).



Plant stems and seed heads have been left uncut to feed the birds and small mammals also providing shelter for insects over winter.



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.

Wildlife homes (bugs, insects, birds, small mammals, hedgehogs etc). The Solitary Bee Home is a new addition to the Garden.

We purposely plant for pollinating insects and are increasing the planting of perennial plants. Perennial plants are great as they return year after year, and their roots grow deeper than annual plants. Once established, we purposely have not watered the plants, so the only plants left are those that can flourish well in the soil conditions with the dry weather we have. This has been done over time grow a climate resilient garden, so we can show what plants can thrive in times of low rainfall and the changing climate.



It has been wonderful to see all the creatures that are visiting or making the garden their home.



Mini Woodland Area - Dead hedges made from branches run throughout to create connected habitats, those at the edge of the woodland has bramble growing through them, as they are a great food source. The woodland floor cleared of bramble to allow other plants to grow, and we have added woodland plants which are flourishing. The wildflowers, surplus from the Community Garden, that are planted on the edge of the path is a great added nectar rich food source for insects but lovely to see too. There is also an untouched dense thicket area that's been left to create a nesting site for birds,



Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award – Well done for all their efforts and voluntary contributions to increase biodiversity locally by creating Nature Spaces.

Gifted plants and trees from Nature Citizen, homemade solitary bee home, pond built and the plants and trees planted.



New pond built at the Community Garden, bug hotel built, helped with the redoing of the paths at the Garden, planted seeds and made new dead hedges.



A shed has been donated to replace the old one, and we have repurposed the usable parts as a dry shelter for insects and over time as we prune the the shrubs, we will fill it with the branches, which will provide another different type of habitat. New paths have been repaired and laid. We have started edging the wild (no mow) area with donated wooden boxes.



All our photos are taken by us at the Community Garden or in our Nature Spaces and we use these for all the social media posts, articles, information sharing, updates and annual reports. It's imperative to raise awareness about the importance of the natural world on our lives, the insects that often don't get the recognition they deserve and what we can do to help conserve them and their habitats.



Below is the Article in the Dedham Vale Society Magazine

NATURE CITIZEN: POLSTEAD COMMUNITY PROJECT

In 2019 Polstead Parish Council kindly donated an area at the Polstead Allotments to the Nature Citizen team to create a Community Garden. It has become the Charity's head office, educational hub and is a 'Demonstration Nature Space'. We specifically showcase plants which are beneficial to all kinds of pollinators in a range of different habitats which encourages a diversity of insects.

The Community Project aims to bring people and nature closer together by encouraging the public to create nature spaces of any size. In turn this provides a continuous supply of food, water and shelter for wildlife and will naturally contribute to growing a nature network of connected habitats across the village.

Our work consists of:

- Maintaining the garden.
- Public talks and writing articles.
- Posting on social media.
- Visiting parishioner's gardens to advise them on creating their own nature space.
- Assisting with design; providing an electronic 'Creating a Nature Space Information Pack'.
- Gifting homegrown plants (trees, shrubs, hedging, wildflower plugs and seed).

In return, parishioners can invest their time and money (rather than donating) to the charity in their own nature space.

Another part of the Community Project is the history of our village and the changing landscape. We are collaborating with community groups, inviting parishioners to share their knowledge, stories and memories. We also look at old maps to see how land use has changed over time.

Creating the Garden.

The first task was clearing the plot and cutting back all the invasive blackthorn to the hedge line. We designed the garden to ensure that many creatures could be catered for within this 25 x 25 metre plot.

Flower Beds.

Long, narrow beds divided by pathways have been planted with a wide variety of annuals and perennials to provide a continuous source of nectar for bees and other pollinators throughout the seasons. It is important to vary flower shapes, sizes and colours, particularly as insects have different length proboscis and emerge at different times of the year. Single flowers are preferred as double flowers lack essential nectar. Shrubs have been added to the existing trees and hedging surrounding the plot. These provide cover, nesting sites and food in the form of blossom and berries.

Flowering Lawn.

There are millions of gardens in the UK (more than all the nature reserves put together) and a flowering lawn is another valuable source for pollinating insects. We mow on a high cut, allowing existing low flowering plants in the lawn to bloom, seed and spread. We have planted spring bulbs that come up

in February, before the first cut, as early bees (both wild and honey bees) are emerging from hibernation and looking for food. N.B. species crocus are especially beneficial.

Long Grass Area.

This is the part of the garden (which is no mow ever, except for the paths within it) where we have left the grass completely undisturbed and over time it's matured into dense clumps of grass tussocks. This mostly untouched area has become a all year-round environment for insects, reptiles and small mammals, allowing their populations to build up.

We leave ivy to grow in the trees and hedges, the flowers are an important source of pollen and nectar for insects in the autumn. The berries provide a food source for over-wintering birds and the dense foliage provides shelter for much wildlife in the winter months. Seed heads are also important food sources for birds and small mammals.

Black compost bins have been placed in a sunny position to attract slow worms. The compost heaps are left undisturbed because insects, reptiles and wildlife hibernate in them.

Stone piles, leaf piles, log piles and dead hedges are ideal for all kinds of beetles, including Stag beetles, with insect and beetle larvae feeding on decaying wood. At no point have we needed to have a bonfire, as each year the dead hedge has decayed enough for the next lot of pruned branches.

Fallen leaves are left to provide cover for insects to hibernate under and mulch around plants, suppressing weeds and insulating the soil over winter, helping retain moisture, add nutrients and building soil as they break down.

There are log circles containing the nettles which is the favourite plant for particular caterpillars (Peacock and Tortoiseshell) and a bramble clump that with regular trimming has become dense creating an over-wintering home for mice and voles as well as the blossom being an important food source for midsummer butterflies and the berries feed many creatures.

Wildlife homes (such as bee hotels) have been introduced too. A pond and mini water sources are scattered around the garden with containers of varying sizes placed at different heights. All have pebbles and stones in to help insects access the water without drowning.

No chemicals are used in any part of the garden. Plants have been grown from seed and cuttings but many have been donated.

The question is: where do we go from here? All gardens develop as they grow older but that is dependant on the individual caring for them. One thing we know for certain, no matter how much, or how little, you do, if you build it the wildlife will come to you.



Ways you can support the charity:

- Create a nature space and help reverse biodiversity loss.
- Become a participating garden, contributing to the nature network of connecting habitats.
- Donate your excess plants and tree saplings so they can be gifted to others.

Please do come and visit or join us to garden with nature in mind at the Community Garden.

Follow us on Facebook: Nature Citizen and Instagram: nature citizen as this helps the charity reach a wider audience. For more information, please contact Lisa Matthews via email : lisa@naturecitizen.co.uk or mobile: 07513 484302.

Thank you.

The Community Garden at Polstead. Photo, Lisa Matthews.

NATURE CITIZEN Cherishing all life

Nature Citizen is a small local environmental charity which is run voluntarily. It aims to increase the abundance of biodiversity locally. The Nature Citizen Community Project is based in Polstead.

The main purpose of setting up Nature Citizen as a charity was to be of public benefit. The aim is to educate and promote the importance of the natural world in our lives. To demonstrate in a practical and simple way how we can all conserve, protect and improve the natural ecosystem around us. We all rely on the natural processes and cycles of the planet for our survival. By creating a network of habitats in our gardens and localities it is possible to reverse the decline of beneficial flora and fauna now and for future generations.

Lisa Matthews.
Charity Number 1166223

With thanks from the Nature Citizen Team

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

Rachel White (Chair),

Mary Murdoch, (Treasurer)

Clare Reeves (Secretary),

Emma Daniels

Melissa Matthews (Founder and CEO) known as Lisa

Nature Citizen – Trustee Annual Accounts - Year 9

Nature Citizen – Charity Number 1166223

Receipts and Payments for year ended 9th March 2025

Opening Balance b/f 10/03/2024 £403.90

Receipts		Payments	
Cash Donations	£ 420.00.	Garden Paths repair and construction	£ 400.00
		Charity Insurance.	£ 112.00
		Website and associated costs.	£ 20.49
		Anti weed rolls for paths	£ 158.90
		Printing Ink	£ 20.00

_____ **Closing Balance c/f 09/03/2025 £112.51**

TOTALS. £823.90 £823.90

Trustees have verified accounts via email due to meeting sustainability goals by reducing travel miles minimising the Charities carbon footprint and reducing exposure to covid and winter viruses.

Rachel White (Chair)

Mary Murdoch (Treasurer)

Clare Reeves (Secretary)

Emma Daniels

C.E.O – Melissa Matthews