

2025 EVENT REPORT

ABOUT TOWN GROWN

Town Grown is a Transition Town Hastings initiative to celebrate the art, act and enjoyment of locally grown food. Whether tending an allotment, cultivating herbs on a windowsill, or managing a professional growing operation, Town Grown aims to connect local people who share a love of fresh, healthy, and sustainable produce.

Since its launch in 2022, Town Grown has worked to make locally grown food more accessible and to acknowledge the wide variety of growers who contribute to the local food landscape.

In recent years Town Grown has run workshops, site visits, and community events designed to inspire and enable more people to grow their own food, regardless of their experience or available space.



INTRODUCTION

Edible Open Gardens 2025

Following the popularity of Town Grown's inaugural Edible Open Gardens the event was repeated in June 2025. The weekend celebrated the vibrant food-growing community across Hastings and the surrounding countryside. Over two days local growers of all kinds opened their gates to visitors, from home growers and allotment holders to smallholders and community projects.

The event was a chance to explore a wide range of growing projects, both public and private, and to see how people are transforming hidden corners of the town into productive, green places. Visitors were able to meet growers, exchange tips, and share in both the joys and challenges of growing food sustainably.

Thank you to our funders and support networks

CHALK CLIFF TRUST
TRANSITION TOWN HASTINGS
HVA Hastings Voluntary Action
GREAT DIXTER HOUSE & GARDENS
THE COMPOUND

EDIBLE OPEN GARDENS: MARKETING

20 page A5 Garden Guide

Increased print run of 900



Posters & flyers



Seafront poster campaign





MARKETING CONTD. PRESS & SOCIAL MEDIA



Hastings Independent

Edible Open Gardens Weekend: A Celebrationof Local Food Growing

HIP · May 21, 2025 · Food & Drink, Top Stories · No Comment

EDWINA HUGHES

Last month we featured a story on the allotments of Hastings, this month we are delighted to share news of an upcoming weekend that focuses on edible gardens across the town.

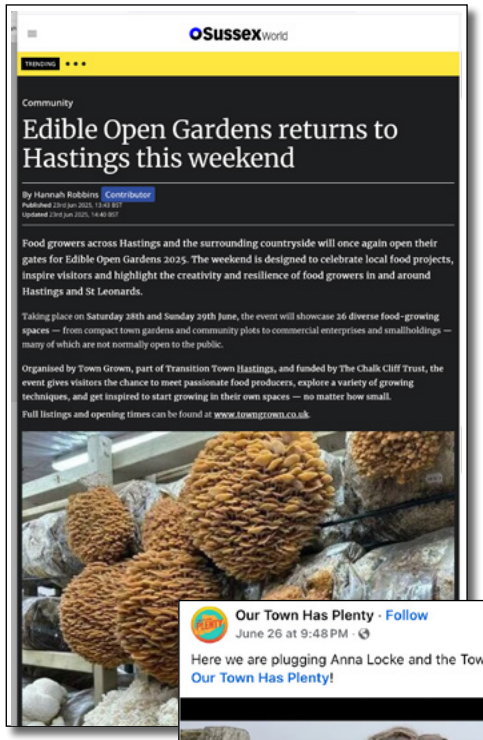
On 28 and 29 June 2025, local food growers will open up their gardens and spaces to visitors. Edible Open Gardens brings together local food growers and curious visitors for a weekend of inspiration and knowledge-sharing. Funded by The Chalk Cliff Trust and organised by Town Grown, this year's event will highlight the creativity and resilience of food growers in and around Hastings and St Leonards.

Edible Open Gardens showcases everything from compact domestic plots to thriving commercial enterprises with people from across Hastings opening up spaces including guerilla gardens, front & back gardens, allotments, community gardens and smallholdings to the general public. The weekend provides a rare opportunity to meet local growers, explore diverse gardening techniques and discover how even the smallest space can yield an abundance of fresh produce. For those of you with plans to grow your own food, you'll find inspiration and advice on how others have made it work on small scraps of land, gardens and allotments.

Launched in 2022 in response to rising food costs and environmental concerns, Town Grown has been working to support food sovereignty and biodiversity through talks, workshops, and community networking. As Anna Locke, permaculture author and founding member, explains: "Town Grown is about sharing our collective knowledge and passion to empower more people to grow their own food."

The Edible Open Gardens event will kick off with a launch event on the evening of Friday 13 June at The Compound. On the evening you will be able to pick up a handy map of the Hastings gardens and spaces taking part. Food and drink from local producers will be on sale, and guests are welcome to bring a bottle.

Launch event: Friday 13 June, 6.00 – 8.30pm The Compound, 161 Bexhill Rd, Hastings, St Leonards-on-sea TN38 8BG Edible Open Gardens Weekend 28 29 June. For more info, attend the launch event or visit towngrown.co.uk. Alternatively, pick up a free map from Wonderfill, 35 King's Road, St. Leonards.



SussexWorld

TRENDING

Community

Edible Open Gardens returns to Hastings this weekend

By Hannah Robbins Contributor

Published 23rd Jun 2025, 13:40 BST

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Food growers across Hastings and the surrounding countryside will once again open their gates for Edible Open Gardens 2025. The weekend is designed to celebrate local food projects, inspire visitors and highlight the creativity and resilience of food growers in and around Hastings and St Leonards.

Taking place on **Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th June**, the event will showcase **26 diverse food-growing spaces** — from compact town gardens and community plots to commercial enterprises and smallholdings — many of which are not normally open to the public.

Organised by Town Grown, part of Transition Town Hastings, and funded by The Chalk Cliff Trust, the event gives visitors the chance to meet passionate food producers, explore a variety of growing techniques, and get inspired to start growing in their own spaces — no matter how small.

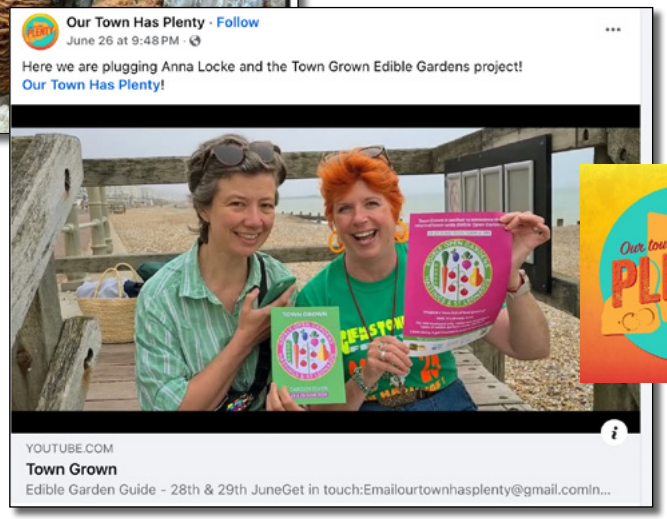
Full listings and opening times can be found at www.towngrown.co.uk







Social media announcements by Town Grown and participating gardens



Local press coverage in HIP, HOT, Observer and 2 articles in Sussex World



Interview & features on *Our town has plenty* Podcast

EVENT LAUNCH THE COMPOUND

A chance for organisers, participants and supporters to meet ahead of the EOG weekend, sharing details, contacts and enjoyment of local produce.



WEEKEND EVENTS

Over the weekend there was an opportunity to celebrate some of the food growers and gardens we have in and around our town. From small domestic plots to thriving commercial enterprises, many of these venues are usually closed to the public but all will be opening their gates to share their knowledge and experience with others.

Visitors were encouraged to create their own routes to enjoy and take inspiration from as many gardens as possible.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT CASE STUDY

Town Grown is keen to promote the involvement of **disadvantaged communities** who don't have access to gardens, **garden novices** including **younger generation** & **schools**.

ExploreTheArch, Archer Lodge



Address: Archer Lodge, Charles Road, St Leonards, TN38 0QX

Opening times: Saturday and Sunday, 1-4pm

Garden type: Community garden

Garden ethos: *Bee*: as we buzz to different places, can we keep connected through growing food?

Description: Our project is called '*Bee*', a sound garden themed on growth

The Four Courts Connect community plan to share wisdoms on growing related to the impending redevelopment of their high rise estate. A soundscape of spoken thoughts will accompany the food they are growing in Archer Lodge garden together, a place where they meet.

This ExploreTheArch project aim is to explore if adjusting to impending change by thinking of it as growth can make moving home easier. And if growing food together can help sustain connection and friendships as people begin to buzz to different neighbourhoods.

fourcourtsconnect.com explorethearch.com/find

FourCourtsConnect 4courtsconnect

Email disabled access needs in advance

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FOUR COURTS CONNECT



Four Courts Connect is a project foregrounding nature, heritage, and connection. Community participants decorated log store sound booths with crocheted flowers and played recordings of their thoughts on nature. Town Grown visitors were invited to sit in the booths and listen with pots of edible plants grown by the community at their feet.

This choice was made because it's important to the group that vegetable growing is presented as personal. The Four Courts estate is cut off from the rest of town and, with the impending demolition of the high rises, residents will be rehoused to different neighbourhoods. Any way to overcome isolation and increase connection is important. The group see gardening as one of the ways to improve community cohesion.

Creative Health:
Conversation | Heritage | Nature

www.fourcourtsconnect.com








Some of the weekend activity at Archer Lodge over the weekend

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – GREAT DIXTER

The residents of Four Courts enjoyed a wonderful day in the gardens at Great Dixter.













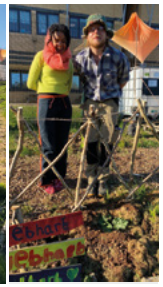


COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT CASE STUDY

A chance to see two fantastic local projects that are not open to the public. Based in schools they are providing inspiration for a generation of future gardeners and nature protectors.

TSLA – Permaculture Paradise





Address: The Saint Leonard's Academy – accessible by Google maps and collection from car park offered

Opening times: Sunday 10am, 12noon, and 2pm arrival slots. We will guide visitors down from the car park at 10am, 12noon and 2pm. Please arrive promptly for collection

Garden type: Community garden

Garden ethos: Permaculture in Education, care for people and planet

Description: A food forest and regenerative allotment co-created with students of the Saint Leonard's Academy

offset_food_forests



Future Growth is an exciting initiative at The Saint Leonard's Academy that blends permaculture, regenerative gardening and wellbeing for the students.

Working between the allotment, food forest, woodlands and classroom, TSLA students are given wellbeing tools that help them with daily life whilst growing food and supporting a thriving ecosystem.

Learning skills which include companion planting, working with mulch, painting and sowing seeds, students are offered skills and knowledge which help them to grow, whilst identifying which activities best support their emotional needs and mental health on a given day.

The Future Growth initiative is now a full time, permanent provision at Saint Leonard's Academy, but all the trees and seeds are paid for by members of the community through a subscription to OFFSET (Our Food Forest, Supporting Edible Towns). If you would like to support this project, or find out more, please visit the OFFSET Food Forest page on the Patreon Website.

The St Leonards Academy – Future Growth initiative

Growing a Regenerative Food Forest at Saint Leonard's Academy... then across the world!

www.instagram.com/offset_food_forests



Mud Club at St Leonards CEP Academy

Address: Collinswood Drive TN38 0NX. Entrance is on the footpath between Collinswood drive and Cavendish Ave

Opening times: Sunday 10am-4pm

Garden type: Community garden

Garden ethos: Community, education, wildlife friendly

Description: Volunteer run nature learning for children. Mini orchard, wildflower meadow, no dig beds, sensory space, wildlife pond, secret den, annual and perennial crops, story circle, mud kitchen, bug hotel, nature activities and storybooks.



mudclub.sl

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Mud Club

Sarah Burton runs this family gardening club at St Leonards CofE primary academy in St Leonards on Sea, providing inspirational nature learning.

www.instagram.com/mudclub.sl

@sarahburtongardens

EDIBLE OPEN GARDENS: IN NUMBERS

ACROSS 26 PARTICIPATING GARDENS OVER THE WEEKEND OF 28–29 JUNE, AVERAGE VISITOR NUMBERS INCREASED BY 26%, WITH SOME OF THE LARGER GARDENS ATTRACTING UP TO 200 VISITORS.

A GOOD YEAR FOR REFRESHMENTS!



















44% increase in garden participants and 97% increase in visitor numbers compared to 2023

SELECTED FEEDBACK: PARTICIPANTS

WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT EOG 25?

Absolutely loved coming on the 'coach trip'. So much better than driving and wandering about on my own.

So nice and inspiring to have the opportunity to be in such beautiful gardens and eat cake.

It's so lovely to see what other people are doing in their gardens, good to chat to people about their growing methods and swap ideas.

There was an amazing assortment of organic regenerative growing and so positive to see all the growers working so hard on their green spaces it was wonderful to experience and see . It has given me hope in regenerative farming and look forward to more popping up in around Hastings St leonards. Thank you.

Great event and so well run. It's so important to see where your food is grown and the community behind it. Let's make sure it happens every year. 5 Stars.

Fascinating, very interesting and important work. Educational!

My husband and I spent a fascinating and informative weekend visiting some of the varied gardens open – for no charge! – under your scheme. Brilliant! Thank you to all involved.

GALLERY

SOME IMAGES FROM THE 2025 EVENT INCLUDING BOOK LAUNCH, PROJECT LAUNCH AND OPEN GARDENS WEEKEND.


















Photo credits: Malcolm Glover, Ursula McLaughlin










Photo credits: Malcolm Glover, Ursula McLaughlin

THANK YOU

TOWN GROWN CAN'T DELIVER OUR PROJECTS WITHOUT SUPPORT FROM OUR FUNDERS:













Special thanks:

Malcolm Glover Photography

The Beacon

Judy Dewsbury

The Compound

Carol Cook

Great Dixter

Fergus Garrett & team

Copper Pot Distilleries

CONTACT DETAILS

www.towngrown.co.uk

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TownGrownHastings