

June 2014: CISL wins silver Green Impact Award, & special award for Best Environmental Improvement for our vegetable garden

In May 2013 our expansion into an additional building brought with it a walled garden. One serendipitous discussion with our Director later, and a once dreamed-of vegetable garden became a reality! We had our own piece of weedy earth in a sunny garden.



A plea to staff offered up manure, seeds, canes, gloves, tomato plants and some tools and we were ready to start. Staff volunteered at lunchtime during May and June and we soon had the ground clear of weeds and planted. Many seeds went in months after the optimal planting time but we were not deterred. Our enthusiasm paid off as from July to October we were harvesting beans, chard, spinach, radishes, carrots, potatoes, tomatoes and ONE beetroot. Some volunteers were experienced gardeners but others had never grown anything before. It was really rewarding to see the new vegetable growing converts happily harvesting the results of their labour. The vegetables we harvested were shared with all staff and everyone soon knew that if you saw muddy produce on the garden table it was up for grabs.



As well as providing vegetables with a very low carbon footprint for staff to eat the garden has also provided a habitat and feeding ground for insects; with many critters seen enjoying the flowering vegetable plant and occasional weed we “deliberately” missed! The addition of a compost bin allowed us compost our garden waste but more excitingly to compost our kitchen waste (e.g. teabags, fruit and vegetable peel, and coffee grinds) on site too. We’ve received lots of positive comments from staff who have enjoyed sitting by the vegetable patch and even from external guests. Following a well-attended staff planting event in April, seeds are now in the ground for 2014 and we look forward to another good growing year.