

What is it? *A clinic, a lab, a kitchen, a surgery?, a community space, a mobile unit, a living archive, a garden, a compost pile, a network, an organising space, a resource, a facility, a new lens on public health, a tool library, a commons, a database? **soil narratives?**....*

A new community facility offering free and low cost soil testing for growers, community gardeners and anyone with an interest in caring for their local environment. We will offer a drop in space—**starting in London**—where you can connect with others, share skills, learn together about soil health, and make use of specialist equipment like microscopes and soil chemistry tests. Using data about your soil's biology, nutrient content and potential pollutants you will be able to take action on helping your soils and communities to thrive. **The facility will operate while ensuring fair remuneration**

As a community space, the clinic will also host meetings, exhibitions, talks, workshops and events. It is home to a growing archive of soil samples and stories shared with us by visitors to the clinic. **Decolonial thinking “composting shit” and immersing in sticky icky discomfort is a strong metaphor for encouraging people to look deeper at harmful colonial practices. (N) can offer workshop exercises on this.**

We will also have a mobile service which can bring some of these elements to a garden / park / compost pile near you ~ ~ ~

What are our core values?

- Empowering people to test and learn about their soils
- A practice rooted in social justice, land justice, soil justice, food justice, racial justice and disability justice
- Making soil testing and soil knowledge more accessible, open source, tangible, useful + relevant to people who grow / forage food and medicine.
- Deepening understanding & relationships between people, land, soil & ecology
- Sense of awe, making experiences of awe about our surroundings accessible to more people
- Bringing 'science' outside of institutions, 'commoning science'
- Not 'citizen science' - we are aiming to shift the power balance in a more radical way
- Would like any work on this to be paid or exchange to be meaningful, as soon as possible
- Making sure potential funders understand and respect our values, and the ways we hope to bring them into being

- checking amongst ourselves about the language we use to describe the project
- holding ourselves to account
- address critically the source of funding
- Making it financially sustainable for people running it
- Centering, speaking to Traditional Ecological Knowledges (TEK)
- Get people's hands in the soil, enable people to play with soil, and dig holes.
- Valuing multiple senses as scientific(?) knowledge

Value	Practice it leads to

What will we do?

- Quantitative and qualitative analyses of soil microbiology, using microscopy, creative storytelling, imagery, videos and accessible mediums to share knowledge.
- Screening for lead, arsenic and other potential contaminants
- Nutrient testing (in soil and plant matter)
- Ph testing
- Soil quality assessments
- Soil carbon tests for community wealth building
- Chromatography
- Linking with geology: how is what we grow influenced by what is underneath?
- Community “lead” remediation projects
- Training up new community soil health practitioners
- Creative work to celebrate and respond to what we are learning (clay, storytelling, discos, movement, games, prints, food)
- Exhibitions, workshops, and making content to share learning and bring attention to soil health, soil carbon etc.
- A mobile service, bringing the clinic out to different locations.
- Help to set up more clinics in other locations (producing a toolkit and sharing resources) beyond the UK

- Open source & archiving of what we learn, the soil stories people bring to the clinic and data collected.
- Connect with and support the work of others doing this work in different places around the world.
- Spore library
- Bug library
- Toolkits and workshops to remediate soils
- Videos, maps, atlas, exhibitions, and other forms of soil visualisations
- Soil stories—including history of the land, what has happened there to trace impact of previous activities
- Connect soil with ponds and water bodies
- Make publications
- Create databases
- Make samples available

Who is this for?

- Growers
- Community gardeners
- Young people/ children
- Activists and organisers
- Low income groups
- People with health conditions
- People affected by soil pollution in urban and rural areas
- Coalitions with councils or other authorities
- Decision makers for policy making
- For the worms, bacteria, mycelium, inverts
- Leaders in communities

What are the ways that people could get involved/take part?

- If you connect with our values, vision and aims, you can get in touch about joining the core group to help set up the first clinic in London.
- If you would like to make use of the services we hope to offer, you can join our mailing list or email us directly soilhealthclinic@compost-mentis.com
- If you would like to work with us one day, please get in touch and we will let you know about upcoming roles, training and opportunities to collaborate.
- Follow us on social media? (no account yet)
- Visit our project page to find out about updates (not online yet)
- Get in touch about setting up your own clinic where you are and help to start building a network of clinics doing this work.
- Sharing good experiences/knowledge from similar initiatives elsewhere
- Paid workshops

What and where is the 'need' that we're addressing ?

- General disconnect from the land beneath our feet especially in urban areas and this project would bring soil to life.

- Creating access to lab equipment and making soil testing cheaper/free (lots of growers cannot afford to test their soil)
- Need for more understandable, engaging and accessible soil data
- Need to know if soil is safe to grow food/ medicine in, particularly in urban areas

What do we need to be able to make this happen (sites/locations/facilities, materials, skills, money, time...)

- Secure storage m2? Where delicate equipment can be kept permanently
- An accessible location that people are likely to come to
- Indoor space with electricity, water, and an accessible compost toilet??
- Access to a garden / growing space with existing composting infrastructures or the possibility to develop some.
- 2 compound microscopes, 2 lap tops, reagents tests, ph tests, nutrient tests, a refractometer for brix / nutrients, thermometers, bunsen burner (or similar), scales, USB microscopes, sample trays,
- A lab bench/es
- Possible space for exhibitions / presenting information
- A postal address where people can send samples
- A cargo bike, mobile set up or milk float (??!) for doing site visits
- Access to a university or commercial lab to carry out more accurate contaminant testing, and corroborate pilot results.
- Financial resources for 2-3 staff to open clinic 2 days a week for a year
- Financial resources to train staff and emerging soil health practitioners
- An effective way of collectively organising our work, internal communications, information flow and finances
- Financial resources to pay organising team

What change do we want to see?

- Improving the health of soils for food growing, ecosystems and climate.
- Improving the health of humans working/living with polluted urban and rural soil
- More resources (knowledge, power, nutrition, space, joy, funds) for low income growers and communities
- Increasing access to land for low income growers and community groups
- Increasing access to different types of knowledge about soil (commoning soil science), and redistributing the way power is held over land and the ways we care for it.
- Making soil testing and soil knowledge more accessible, open source, tangible, useful + relevant to people who grow / forage food and medicine.
- To facilitate / support new relationships between people and the soil ecologies that they care about.
- Making new ground for grassroots political action and solidarity work around social justice, racial justice, land justice, soil justice, food justice & climate justice.
- Bringing soil to life. Showing the life within soil. Making Soil visible and in our imagination.

NEXT STEPS (based on the boards)

- clarify decision making processes and how we want to organise together
- focus on how we can embed values / ethics throughout the project
- Fundraising, grants application
- Connect with existing efforts, groups from boards
 - Sustain, GLA, Kew Gardens, Capel Manor College, Chelsea Physic Garden, London Freedom Seedbank, Waltham Forest, Sustain, The Village, Shared Assets, Organiclea
- Collab with the Village (CIC) to move into space short mid term
- Proof of concept or next meeting to be held in suggested/offered places (we can discuss)
 - Outdoors space in N2 (Tej)
 - Hackney Herb at Hackney Wick
 - Glengall Wharf Garden (minimal electricity [solar]) (Naomi)
 - Global Generation paper garden (Naomi)
- Activities for proof of concept,
 - Mushroom workshops
 - Mapping by AAschool students projects
 - Community arts at Whitechapel Gallery
 - Amateur mycology (Alani)

