



Volunteer induction

Welcome! We're happy to have you.

Below is the story of this project, our mission and values and purpose, and some information to take in about wellbeing, health and safety at our gardens and when we're together - thank you!

Community Apothecary crew contact + area of work:

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[Youtube learning videos](#)

Health and safety

Look after yourself:

- Please wear appropriate clothes and shoes - warm and waterproof for cold and wet weather, comfortable for warm weather. The ground at the gardens can be uneven, rocky, muddy or slippery so shoes or boots that are thick soled and well insulated are good.
- Please bring plenty of water to drink, especially in warm weather.

- Bring sun cream or similar protection if it's hot.
- Don't push yourself too far physically.
- Let us know if you have any injuries or other health situations we should be aware of, and be careful of them if you do.

Practical wellbeing and hygiene for all of us:

- Please bring your own gloves if you can.
- We will do a stretch / warm up and down when doing strenuous physical work.
- Clean your hands before and after eating - we will have hand sanitiser/ a way to wash your hands at the gardens, but you are also welcome to bring your own.
- We ask you to bring your own plate, mug or cup and cutlery for lunchtime eating for simpler hygiene.
- We have risk assessments specific to each site and we will do an 'induction' and site tour at each of them the first time you come, so that you are aware of any risks.
- All the gardens are outdoors with plants (some of which are spiny), rough ground, living creatures like insects, sharp edges in places, tools and heavy things so we want to be aware of going carefully in these environments.

Look after each other:

- Be aware of your surroundings when using tools.
- Help us to look after you by letting us know of any allergies like food, bees, etc.

Site specific:

- Please bear in mind that Clyde Place doesn't have a toilet.
- Mulberry Close does not have a water source. We will have hand gel and cleaning materials onsite.
- When we are at Cheney we can use the toilet in the house that the garden is attached to but we must leave it clean and be respectful to the home.

Tool safety:

- Listen carefully to instructions on how to use tools and do ask if you have any questions on how to use them.
- Look out for tools around the site in case any have been left where they are.
- Bring tools back to the shed when you are finished at the end of your session and give them a clean.

Volunteer agreement/code of conduct

We, the Community Apothecary, are committed to doing our best to ensure that your experience of volunteering with us is happy and supported.

We would like to share our spaces, knowledge, and enthusiasm for our project with all who work with us, in a welcoming, safe and comfortable way.

The Community Apothecary agree to:

- Provide clear instructions for volunteers and ensure they are understood by all.

- Provide the tools and equipment required for the volunteer tasks.
- Ensure to the best of our ability that volunteers are working in a safe environment, physically and energetically.

The Community Apothecary and volunteers will agree to:

- Attend the volunteer sessions that have been signed up to, and arrive on time.
- Carry out agreed tasks in a safe and responsible way.
- Be aware and conscious of our behaviour in relation to each other, being caring and respectful to each other and to our environments.
- Respect the privacy of others by maintaining confidentiality where appropriate.

We're living in a world where we are navigating lots of complex and difficult histories and relationships. We are developing this project in a spirit and intention of love and care for healthier systems together. We want to make our spaces and activities comfortable and safe for you to be and thrive in with each other, with awareness of these contexts. We hope that you can always feel comfortable to communicate with us if you have any issues or need to share anything with us.

Specific to Mulberry Close:

This is a LBWF allotment site and so we have an MOU (memorandum of understanding) with the council and Organiclea covering health & safety and code of conduct on site. In case of any conflict or issues arising please speak with us and we will take action according to agreed procedures given in this document.

Mission statement

Our Vision is:

A web of healing medicine gardens at the heart of our communities

Our mission is to:

- Enable fellow humans of all backgrounds to access herbal medicine and outdoor spaces, in ways that are sensitive to our living contexts
- Take people with us on the cycle of seed to salve
- Train community members in land care, herb knowledge and cultivation, medicine making
- Share the model so it can be adapted to different localities and needs

Our Values are:

- Mutual respect: in a whole way, beyond humans to living ecosystems
- Accessible healthcare that seeks to be for everyone and everything
- Actively responding to needs around inclusion and safety
- Circles of sharing: knowledge, skills, land, resources, mutual healthcare

History

The Community Apothecary started as a vision of a place where people can access herbs and knowledge to support our collective health with plant medicine, learn, share skills and make medicine together for the community around it. We - Izzy, Ximena (food and herb growers and learning about herbal medicine) and Rasheeqa (medical herbalist in the community) - started discussing and thinking around what this could be, how it could work, along with others interested in this idea like Sunniva and Brian from Organiclea Community Growers. Through this process, with the brilliant support of Organiclea we have organically developed through the last few years in the shape of medicine gardens around Waltham Forest in London. These are in Leyton, Walthamstow and Chingford. They are a mix of housing estate, residential and allotment gardens whose use was activated and navigated by Organiclea outreach and then offered to us. When we started to care for and cultivate these gardens, a feeling of opening out and broadening of the original vision brought us to see that we could practice the whole journey - from seed to salve - together and learn from each other in the process how to approach health, how to take care of the land and ecosystems we live in, and how to respectfully connect with the healing activities of plants.

Through 2020 many of you were part of the start of this at the gardens, where we started seeing what was in them, thinking about what to do in them, preparing beds and soil, planting seeds and plug plants, making compost, meeting creatures, watering, drinking teas of herbs, making seasonal remedies, having lots of joyful moments. We decided to make a healing focus at each garden by planting herbs that were connected with particular kinds of health situations that we talked about together, health issues that arise commonly amongst us. At Kishwar's garden in Walthamstow, Cheney Row, it was the start of the pandemic situation and we planted herbs that bring anti-infective and respiratory & immune system supporting power. At Izzy's little garden in Leyton, Clyde Place, we are growing lots of skin soothing and soul soothing herbs. The other Leyton garden in the back of Siraj's house, very long and narrow, is the start of a mix of cycle-supporting herbs that help the hormones and the balance of stress. Of course health isn't divided up like that but it was a way to try some learning categories and combinations of herbs for medicine. And all the gardens have quite a mix really! It feels like a rich mix is good.

The most exciting part in 2020 was arriving at Mulberry Close, the Chingford garden which is a large and potent land, a council allotment site. Here there is a lot of space for growing herbs and we have planted a medicinal 'forest garden' zone, we are still in the stages of discovery there and there's a magic to the journey. In 2021 we made circular herb beds where larger amounts of medicine plants are being cultivated and harvested for remedies. The cycle of seed to salve is now in motion and we are growing herbs together, gathering them seasonally, preparing remedies communally at monthly workshops at the Hornbeam Cafe in Walthamstow, saving seeds for the following year, learning as we go and recording the knowledge for future use and for sharing with others who will find it useful. Lots of plans and visions for going forward.