



## **Gardens Trust 2023 Survey of Friends of Parks and Green Spaces:**

### **Results Report**

In June 2023, with the help of the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS), the Gardens Trust sent out a questionnaire to Green Space Forums, asking them to distribute this to the open green space Friends groups (organisations comprising volunteers who support their local public garden, park, cemetery or other green space) in their areas. 116 volunteers responded, representing 111 sites, from 19 counties or metropolitan boroughs, covered by more than 20 Green Spaces Forums.

They responded to a comprehensive set of questions designed to establish the function of these groups, the effect the Covid pandemic had upon them and their landscape, as well as their understanding of the history of their sites and their relationship with the Gardens Trust and/or their local County Gardens Trusts.

The NFPGS covers the three countries of Great Britain, however, 97% of responses came from English groups and the remainder from Scotland. There were notable regional differences in the numbers of groups who completed the questionnaire. 21% came from London, 18% from Yorkshire, 14.5% from Lancashire and 9.5% from Nottinghamshire. These 4 regions accounted for 73% of the organisations who replied. The majority of responders (79%) were from Friends groups supporting publicly accessible, designed parks or gardens, the remaining 21% represented cemeteries, publicly accessible woodlands, community gardens/allotments/orchards, nature reserves, sports/play grounds and the grounds of country houses.

A summary of the responses received to the Gardens Trust questions is as follows:

**Q1-6. Personal questions: name, email address, county, name of green space, group and area forum**

**Q7. How long have you volunteered with your current Friends group, or for other Friends groups, in total?**

<1 year	4%
1-5 years	24%
5-10 years	24%
10-20 years	46%
>40 years	1 person

**Q8. How did you hear about the opportunity to volunteer with a Friends group and what attracted you to join?**

Word of mouth/introduced by a friend	29%
Started the group (in response to a threat, or wanting to help care for the site more generally)	25%
Other, including internet, newsletter, local press	12%
Heard about it via another group, e.g. residents association, conservation, campaigners opposing development	9%
Social media	7%
Saw a notice/poster	7%
Heard about Friends at on-site events	5.5%
Asked for help with a specific task, by a member	5.5%

As a testament to the answers to the previous question, it is not surprising that 25% of the responders described themselves as founder members of their Friends Group. They have committed long service as volunteers and some wrote of their past concern over potential development on their local park which spurred them to set up a team of volunteers to work with their local council. A founder member of Friends of Turn Moss said 'Our playing fields were under threat so we formed a proactive group to protect the area. I heard about this by a flyer posted through the door.' For Freemans Wood, Lancaster their group began by joining a campaign protecting an area from developers, subsequently they participated in a public inquiry and establishment of town green status.

For some volunteers it was a perceived drop in a park's condition that encouraged them to form a group of friends. A volunteer with Friends of Victoria Park, Stretford, Manchester, said 'I helped form the group after discussions with the council - as we wanted to reverse the decline of the park'. A reply from the Friends of Lordship Rec., Haringey, said 'the park was neglected and unused so we formed the group in 2001'. While Elmfield Park, South

Yorkshire, 'needed a group to push the council to spend money to bring the park back into a much used, community asset'.

Other founder members formed their groups to address problem areas in a park . . . 'Our play equipment was removed after failing inspection in 1999... there was not a group at the time . . .soon after the Friends of Page Park (Bristol) was formed'. Whilst at Ruskin Park, 'Our group was established to campaign for new play equipment. The old equipment featured in *The Full Monty* as an example of how run down Sheffield was!'

A few of our responders described how they had been approached by their local Friends Group to fill a particular vacancy such as the treasurer, secretary or Chair. Comments included: 'I was press ganged into it by the retiring Chair. I agreed because I could not stand by and let the park (Stannington Park, Sheffield), go to rack and ruin.' While some volunteers were contacted to help with a specific task, for example, One volunteer 'joined the Friends of Ladybrook Valley, Manchester, to help them write a management plan, 18 years ago.'

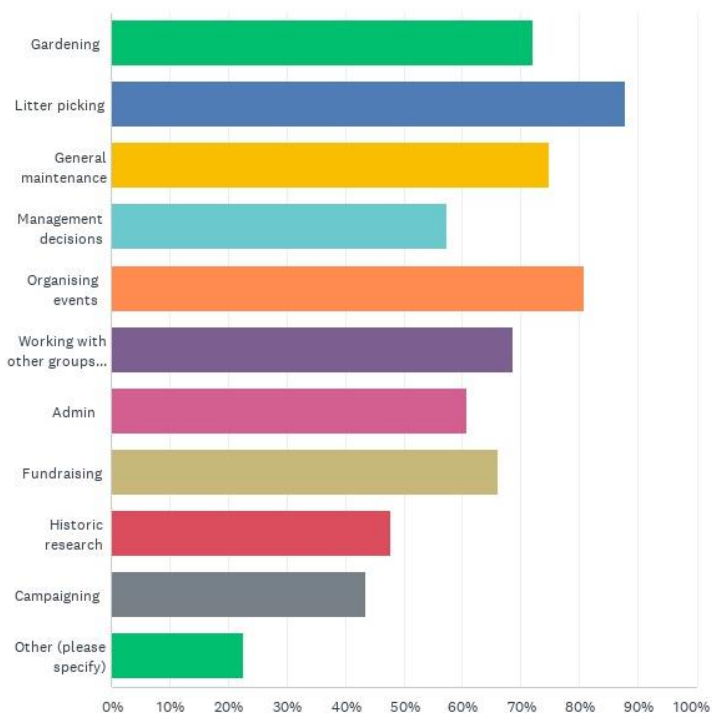
Many of the volunteers who replied were regular park or garden users and saw a plea for help on park notice boards, in the local press or on social media. Also, for many already familiar with their local green space it was a particular event that encouraged them to sign up. It was a Heritage Open Day tour that drew a volunteer to join the Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery - in her own words, 'due to the Cemetery being in dire need of help!' While at Parkwood Springs, Sheffield, a responder 'went on a Dawn Chorus walk organised by the group'; and for another it was after attending a '100 years celebration event being held in Page Park (Bristol), which was well run and delivered lots of entertainment on the day.'

Hearing about their park supporters group from friends and family, or just by word of mouth was another reason given, along with wanting to do their bit for their local park, encouraging wildlife in their area or to enjoy working out of doors with other people. For one Cheshire volunteer it was 'through researching for a report on Walton Old Hall as part of Research and Recording Group with Cheshire Gardens Trust, that made her join the Friends Group. Friends of Cemeteries volunteers cited personal reasons for helping maintain their sites, such as living next door, or out of a sense of local history and respect, or having a relative interred in the landscape.

#### **Q9. Name of your current role, if applicable**

Responders cited a number of roles they fulfil for their Friends group. By far the largest group (45.5%) were the volunteers who act as their group's chairperson, followed by those who were the secretary (20.5%). Other roles included: treasurer, membership secretary, volunteer organiser, biodiversity officer, gardeners, fund raisers, website and marketing volunteers.

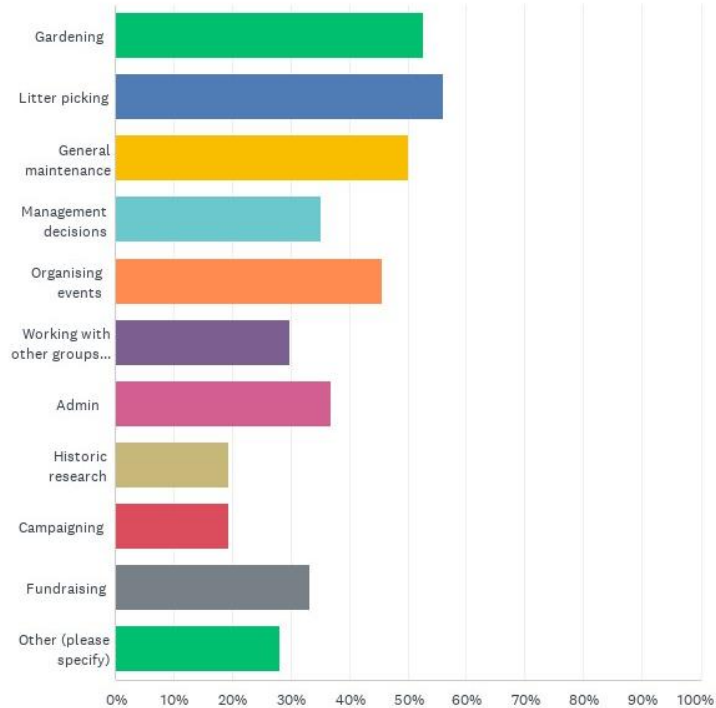
## Q10. What activities are undertaken by your Friends group?



The friends groups indicated all the activities they are involved in to support their park or garden through the year. Litter picking, by 102 (88%) of the groups, is the most undertaken activity, followed up by organising events (81%), general maintenance (77%), and gardening tasks (72.5%). While 71% of volunteers work with other groups such as schools, refugees, and sports teams, 66% of friends groups run fundraising activities and events, and 58% are involved in management decisions, including working with local borough or district councils.

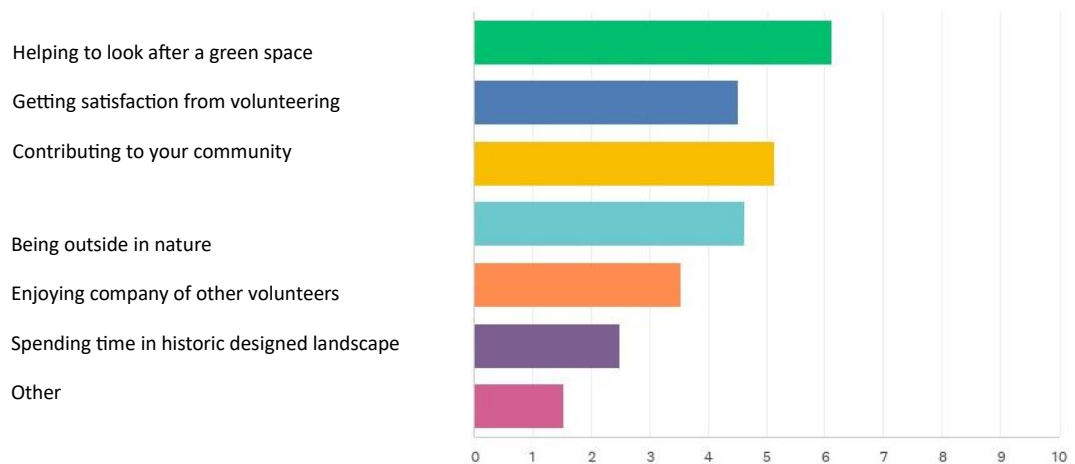
Nearly half (48%) of the responders told us their group had carried historical research into their landscape while 45% had campaigned to protect it in some way – The Friends of Stannington Park, campaigned and were successful in rescuing their park pavilion, in order for it to be turned into an effective community building. Biodiversity and nature conservation projects were mentioned by eight groups with one - Friends of Gedling House Woods, Nottingham - having their own licence to manage their woodland on behalf of Gedling Borough Council. The Friends of Brandwood Cemetery liaise with their local tree officer and organise tree replacement, while the Friends of Page Park in South Gloucestershire help look after an aviary.

### Q11, What would you say are your main tasks?



When asked to tell us their **main** activities on a day-to-day basis, the four main tasks were litter picking (56%), gardening (53.5%), general maintenance (50%) and organising event (45.5%).

### Q12. What do you like most about volunteering with a Friends group?



This question required responders to list the options given from one (high) to seven (low). The answer 'Helping to look after a park or green space' saw 46.5% of volunteers put it top of their reasons and 70% rated it as either their first or second reason. The option 'contributing to your community' saw 41% of volunteers rating it the first or second reason.

The option 'being outside in nature' saw 16% of volunteers ranked this as their first or second option, while only 5% of people said ranked 'spending time in a historic landscape' first of second, also, a similar percentage rated 'enjoying the company of other volunteers', in their top two reasons.

### **Q13. Please list any other aspects of volunteering with a Friends group which you find particularly enjoyable**

The answers to this question fell into the following categories: making a difference to their community, the chance to learn new skills and knowledge, helping nature, meeting new people and improving their own lives.

Many thought their Volunteering improved their local community and one volunteer from Nottingham Arboretum enjoyed seeing the 'increase in children and disadvantaged families accessing nature and informal outdoor sports and activities.' Another from Avon Valley Woodlands reported a 'sense of satisfaction in making the local woodlands a better place for everyone to enjoy and also meeting visitors - which can result in passing on information to help them enjoy their visit, as a bonus.'

For other volunteers it was the chance to learn new skills that drew them to support their local green space. A volunteer from The Fairfield Association nature reserve had enjoyed learning new skills including hedge laying and scything, while others told us they had picked up new horticultural skills and learnt about the ecology of their green spaces. On an even more personal level, many really valued being part of a group, enjoying coffee together and the chance to talk to new people, some of whom they would never otherwise had the opportunity to talk to. Several described how their volunteering kept them fit, helped them relax and relieve stress. A volunteer from the Friends of Bedfords Park, Essex, loved 'the general banter and feeling of being part of a team with common goals.'

Sharing their landscape with other people was rewarding too. Volunteers with groups supporting historic cemeteries seem to particularly enjoy helping others find out about the history of their site and its 'occupants'. A volunteer with the Quaker Gardens, Islington said they liked meeting 'pilgrims' to their historic site, while another at Hyde Park Cemetery, South Yorkshire said she really enjoyed 'helping loved ones find and locate family graves.' The history was important for a volunteer with the Friends of William Champion's Garden, Warmley, who liked that she was 'helping raise awareness of our unique mid-18th century landscape and structures.'

Many cited that they were delighted that their family's children and other local children were benefiting from repaired or new play equipment their group had campaigned for, and that they were helping to provide and maintain green public spaces. A volunteer from Graham Street Park, Islington was so pleased that their group enabled 'local children to get involved in gardening and enjoy their outside green space'. Organising events was a good way of outreach to local communities too, a volunteer from Colliers' Wood, Nottinghamshire felt that 'community events would lead eventually to a more responsible attitude amongst local youngsters'.

For many volunteers it was 'doing their bit' for the environment and to try and combat climate change, that they relished. A volunteer with Hesketh Park, Mellor Green, Carrwood, Happy Valley in Manchester said it was the 'ability to make a difference & improve our greenspaces, particularly to improve urban biodiversity & the connectivity between urban greenspaces', that he found most rewarding.

#### **Q14. Is there anything you would change about your volunteering experience?**

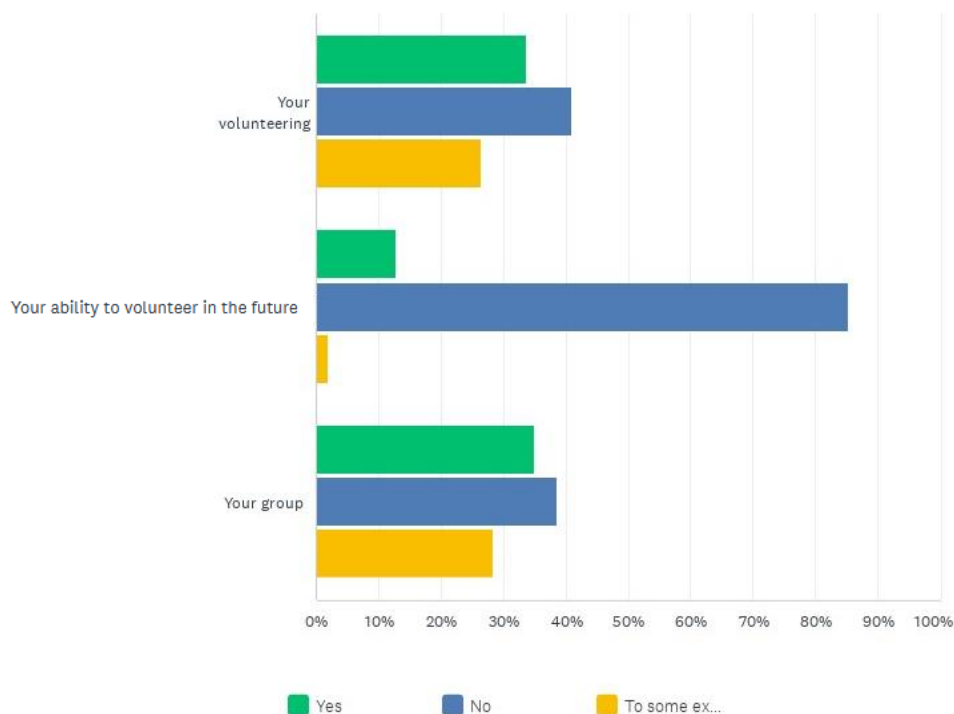
Two strong themes came through amongst the answers to this question - not enough new volunteers coming forward to help out and the lack of good relationship with their local parks departments and councils. The need for younger people (many of whom are park users) to come in and succeed older long term volunteers was mentioned frequently by people who would like to reduce their time or step back completely.

More funding would be welcome by many, from big projects to more practical smaller requirements, such as 'a shelter and a water supply', for The Meadows, Clermiston, Edinburgh. Also mentioned were more paid professional gardeners or groundsman, as well as opportunities for apprenticeships. 'Given the amount of work we all do, more support from the council would be appreciated' wrote The Friends of Hesketh Park, Manchester. 'Some financial help with basic costs such as meeting room hire and public liability insurance. Too much of our time is taken up by fund raising' said a volunteer from Colliers' Wood, Yorkshire.

Although responders understood that financial help would be limited at present, for many, like The Friends of Downshills Park in London, it is the 'lack of communication or responses from local authority parks department' that they found the most frustrating. The Friends of Calton Hill, Edinburgh wrote, 'The area is part of the city council's remit but we have had no response from the council when we've tried to approach them about improvements such as reopening the closed monument'. Volunteers at Balaam Park said 'we would like more support from the council who find it easier to say NO to anything we put forward as a project.' The volunteer from Colliers Wood went into more detail: 'We'd welcome a more genuine response from staff of the council. Some of whom look on the group as jeopardising their employment and others who want all green spaces to look like the regimented manicured urban parks . . . we'd like more involvement of our community in decision making, and they (the council staff) ignore the agreed management plan.' The Prior Park volunteer stated quite plainly 'I would like to feel more valued by Haringey Parks Services.'

Other volunteers wished for 'the public to care more for their open spaces . . . and stop fouling their park with litter and fly tipping', said a Stannington Park volunteer, 'and the council to provide easy access to cheap effective waste disposal facilities'. The Friends of De Vitre Community Gardens in Lancashire would like to be able to learn from the experience of others, before starting a project, to lessen costly mistakes.' Whereas, the volunteer from Colwick Park in Nottinghamshire would like 'more support from third party groups in a practical sense. There is a lot of 'beginner' support available but financial, communicative or social support would be valuable.' Nun's Moor Park in Tyne and Weir would like to see more historical research on their landscape.

**Q15. Do you feel that the Covid 19 pandemic had an impact on your park or garden, or your group?**



The questionnaire asked respondents about how they thought the Covid pandemic had affected their volunteering and that of others, and how it could still affect their volunteers in the future.

When asked if Covid affected their own volunteering, 33% of the volunteers said yes it had, 39% said it had not, and 25% thought it had to some extent.

On the subject of whether the pandemic would affect their own volunteering in the future, 12% said yes it would, 80% said it wouldn't, and 2% said it could to some extent.

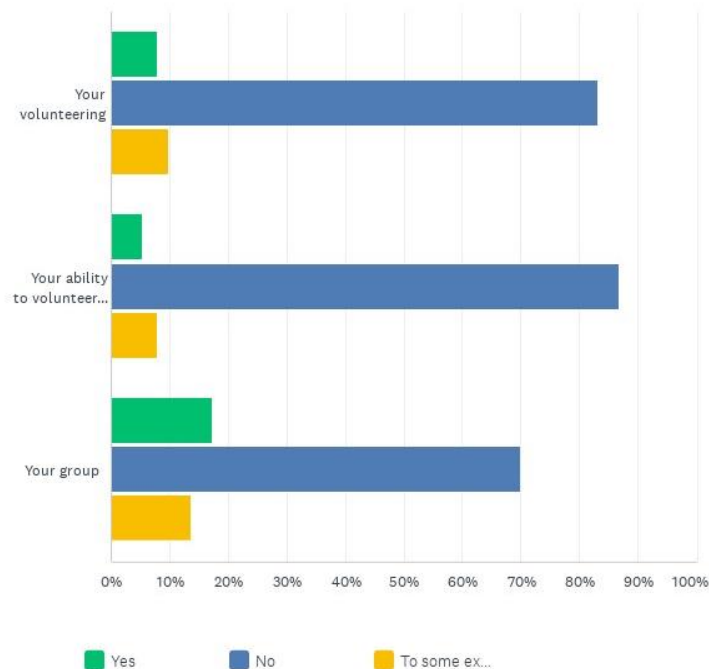
On the wider question of whether the pandemic had affected the volunteering for their Friends Group, 32% said it had, 35% said it hadn't and 25% thought it had to some extent.

The last question asked if the Covid pandemic had had an effect in other ways. Canizarro Park Friends, Wimbledon, thought there had been a positive effect of bringing them closer together, and Hagg Lane Organic Community Allotments in Sheffield echoed this happy situation. The John Billam Sportsground Association felt that 'after the initial protracted negative impact, it has brought a resurgence in the importance of green spaces and therefore support from both the Council and the community – a silver lining behind a very dark cloud.' The Meadows at Clermiston saw 'a marked rise in volunteers', and several groups told us there had been a rise in park users. The Friends of Nottingham Arboretum think that the pandemic has 'reminded people of the importance of green spaces for people to meet in.'



There were some negative effects mentioned too. The Havelock and Palace Park Friends lost committee members due to them losing their jobs and subsequently moving away. A few groups have also reported a loss in volunteers. Greaves Park, Lancashire said they had 'lost the momentum of volunteers', and Stannington Park, Sheffield thought the pandemic had 'seen an adverse effect on public behaviour.'

**Q16. Do you feel that the "cost of living crisis" is having an impact on your park or garden or your group?**



This question was designed to find out whether the cost of living crisis was having an effect on the volunteers who replied, as well as on their groups, now and in the future.

On the subject of whether the cost of living crisis has had an effect on their own volunteering, 8.5% said it had, while 81% said it had not. 10% thought it had to some extent.

Answering the next question on whether the cost of living crisis would have an effect on their future ability to volunteer for their park or garden, 5% thought it would and 84% thought it would not, and 8% thought it could affect them to some extent.

Again, on the wider situation of whether the cost of living crisis in their view could affect their volunteering group as a whole, 16% thought it would, while 66% thought it would not, a further 12% thought it could to some extent.

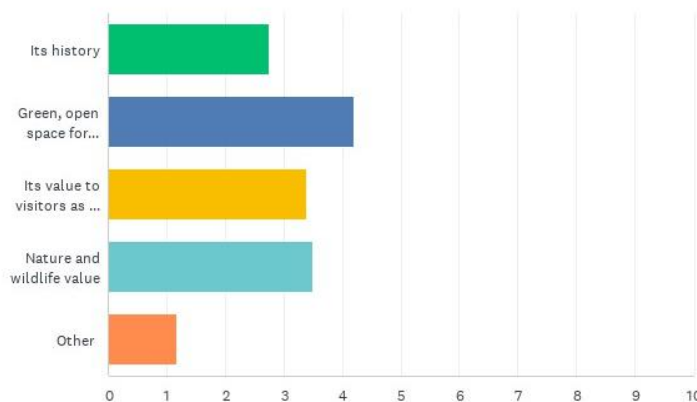
Some comments on other effects of the cost of living crisis included that it obviously could affect park funding, also that it could lead to people being less able to donate money, 'but we have not seen that yet' said Freeman's Wood, Lancaster. The Friends of Collier's Wood,

Sheffield thought they had seen a 'reduction in frequency and number of employees from Broxtowe Borough Council, in carrying out basic and urgent maintenance tasks'.

On a more positive note, the Storey Institute Gardens, Lancaster, thought they would not be that affected as 'most of our volunteers are retired and have secured pensions'.

### **Q17-18. What do you think is most significant/important about your park/green space?**

The questionnaire asked responders to rank what is the most significant aspect of their park or garden, from one (high) to 5 (low). The results were as follows:



1. It's a green, open space for relaxation and wellbeing: 43% rated this as 1, (75% as 1 or 2)
2. Its nature and wildlife value: 23% rated this as 1, (45% as 1 or 2)
3. Its value to visitors as an enjoyable place to spend time: 9.5% rated this as 1 (45% as 1 or 2)
4. Its history: 17% rated this as 1, (22% as 1 or 2)
5. Another significance: 2% rated this as 1, (2.5% as 1 or 2)

For the few who selected the Other option, and believed there was another really important role for their site, their reasons included the following. For Hagg Lane Organic Allotments in Sheffield it was allowing people to grow food sustainably that was their major goal, while nearby Ruskin Park Friends thought their landscape's importance was a space for people to walk their dogs in. Clermiston Meadows in Edinburgh is seen as significant in 'its role as a carbon sink and place to absorb rainwater'. Both Colliers Wood in Sheffield and Canizarro Park in Wimbledon saw their parks' importance not only being a safe place for all but the fact they are free and open every day. The Friends of Williamson Park in Lancaster see their landscape as an important contributor to the local tourist industry.

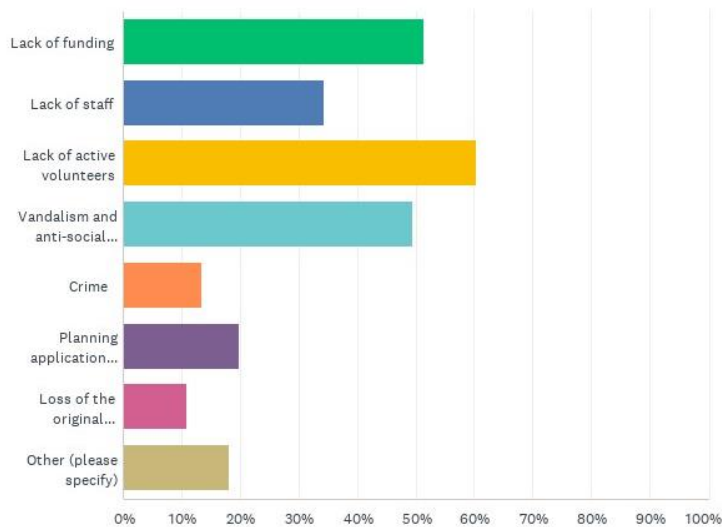
### **Q19. To what extent would you say you are familiar with the history and development of your park/green space?**

It was pleasing to discover that 65% of responders were very aware of the history of their landscape and 38% told us that had some knowledge of history and development. Only 2 people didn't give us an answer.

**Q20. Do you think that having more knowledge of your site’s history could help volunteers to manage and protect it more effectively?**

Despite 65% of people who thought they had a good knowledge of the history and development of their park or garden, 58% answered the above question by telling us they would welcome more knowledge and think it could help them protect their landscape. A further 40% said that having more knowledge could maybe help them in the future.

**Q21. As far as you are aware, is your site threatened in any way?**



Responders could tick as many of the categories of threats given, as they wished. The most perceived threats fell into three categories.

59% felt that the lack of active volunteers would threaten their site’s condition and/or survival.

51% thought that a lack of funding for their park or garden could be a future threat

48% selected the threat from vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

It was good to find out that only 13% felt that crime could threaten their landscape and 11% thought that the loss of the original landscape design was a possible threat. Slightly more (20%) saw the potential for adverse effects from future planning applications for new development, and 33.5% saw the lack of staff could be a problem.

**The next few questions were designed to find out more about where the volunteers give their time and their involvement with historic landscapes and garden history organisations.**

**Q22. Do you volunteer for any other groups?**

Considering whether they solely volunteer for their park or garden or whether they volunteer elsewhere now or have done in the past, the information given is as follows:

24% only volunteer for their park or garden friends group

21% have volunteered elsewhere in the past

50% are now actively volunteering in other settings.

**Q23. If yes to Q22, please could you list the groups and the activities you undertake**

For those who indicated that they are currently volunteering for other organisations and in other settings, we asked them to tell us more about the number and range of volunteering roles they undertake.

A number volunteer for other parks and gardens, whether as a gardener, committee member, or as a trustee for a regional or national green spaces organisation.

Others are involved in their local communities as parish or town councilors, volunteering at a library, hospice, citizens advice bureau, food banks, art festivals, theatres, museums, mental health charities, day care centres, churches or as a school governor.

Several work as a volunteer in nature reserves, on wildlife recording projects or monitoring river water qualities. A few volunteer with the National Trust, RSPB and local preservation trusts, and one was the Chairman of her county garden trust.

**Q24. Do you visit or use any historic parks, gardens or other designed landscapes, other than the one you volunteer at?**

It seems that volunteers with parks and gardens friends groups are generally interested in other designed landscapes as well as the one they volunteer with. 45.% said they visited other parks and gardens often, and a further 44% said they sometimes visited them.

## PART 2: ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND NETWORK WITH THE GARDENS TRUST AND COUNTY GARDENS TRUSTS

### Q25. Have you heard of the Gardens Trust: the only national charity dedicated to the research and conservation of designed landscapes in England and Wales?

35% of responders said they had heard of the Gardens Trust.

### Q26. Have you heard of the County Gardens Trusts: volunteer-run, county-based charities caring for gardens and designed landscapes in England and Wales?

15.5% had heard of county gardens trusts.

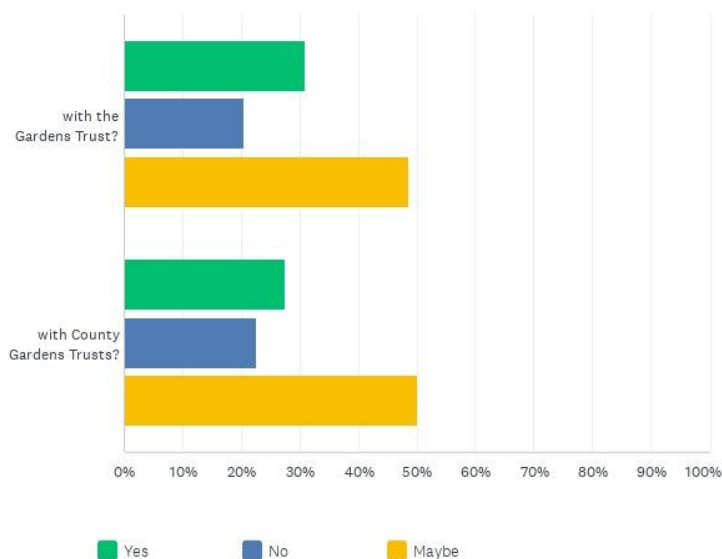
### Q27. If yes to the 2 previous questions, are you a member?

Of the people who had heard of the Gardens Trust and/or the county garden trusts, nine people were a member of the Gardens Trust and four people were a current member of a county gardens trust, with a further two being former county gardens trust members.

### Q28. If you have heard of the Gardens Trust or County Gardens Trusts, but are not a member, what contact have you had with them? Please give brief details

Of the 30 responses, answers varied from interactions with social media to being a member of a local parks forum or hearing about them from others. The volunteer with RHS Wisley had 'used the GT website to discover interesting content and am on mailing list'. While a volunteer with Beckett Street Cemetery, Leeds had been to a GT training workshop at Bramham Park. A couple of volunteers had come across London Parks and Gardens Trust through being a member of the London Green Forum.

### Q29. Would you be interested in exchanging knowledge and ideas?

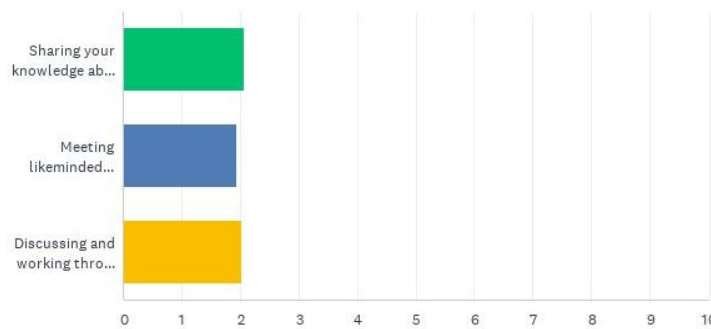


Of the 107 responders to this question:

With the Gardens Trust: 34 said yes, and 52 said maybe (29% and 45% of survey responders).

With their county gardens trust: 28 said yes, and 51 said maybe (24% and 44% of survey responders).

**Q30. If you are interested in connecting with us, which of the following would be most useful.**



From the 83 responses to this question, there was almost equal interest in connecting via the three methods offered:

Sharing your knowledge about your green space and Friends group: 80 responses (67% of survey responders)

Discussing working through issues affecting your green space: 76 responses (66% of survey responders)

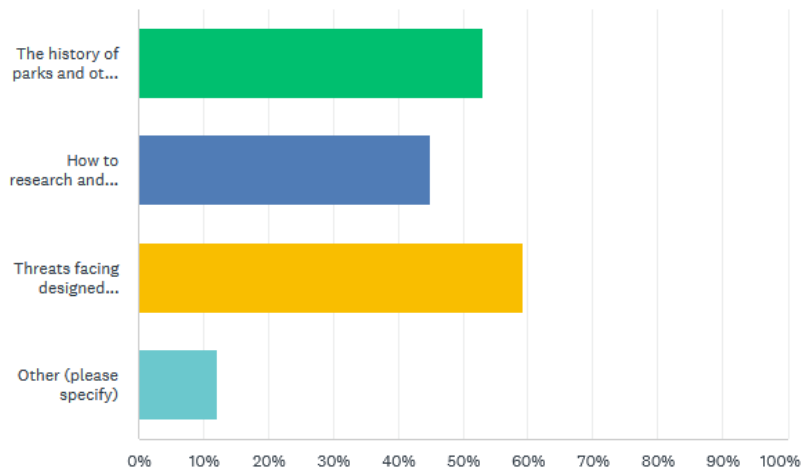
Meeting likeminded people who also care about historic parks and gardens: 75 responses (65% of survey responders)

**Q31. Are there any other subjects it might be useful to discuss with us?**

There were a few suggestions about what other topics the volunteers would find interesting to discuss with the Gardens Trust. These included:

- how to future proof a park or garden against climate change;
- how to campaign to get proper funding for local authorities and for them to have better statutory powers and obligations to look after green spaces;
- managing old and veteran trees;
- how to identify rare trees and learn about ecology; learning about historic landscapes;
- how to apply for funding and/or how to find specialist help.

**Q32. Would you be interested in receiving any of the following Gardens Trust training?**



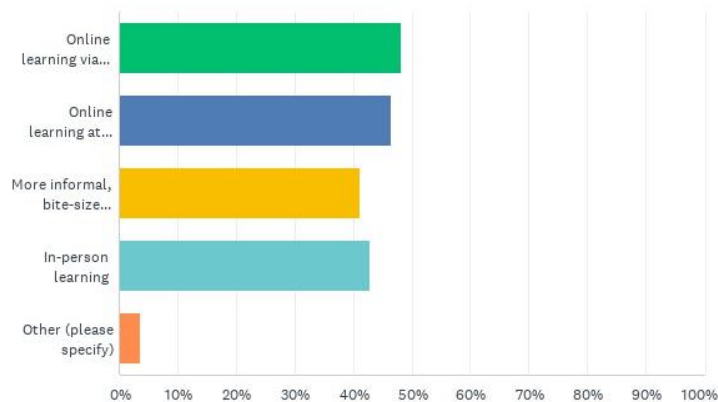
There was good interest in all three subjects:

Threats facing designed landscapes and how volunteers can help to combat them 59.18%

The history of parks and other designed landscapes 53.06%

How to research and understand designed landscapes 44.9%

**Q33. If so, how do you prefer to learn?**



The response to this question was fairly even with around 25% selecting each type of learning experience given. There was a very slight preference for online learning through webinars:

Online learning via webinars: 48.2%

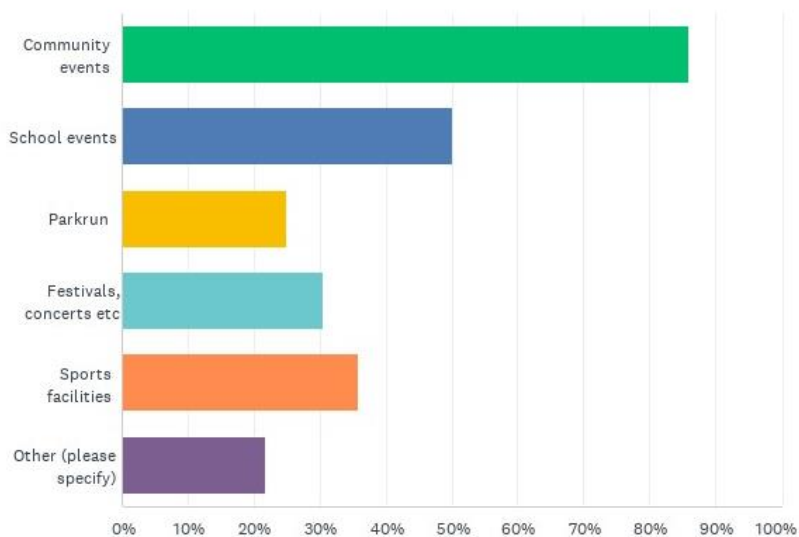
Online learning at your own pace, using free to access written materials: 46.4%

In-person learning: 42.9%

More informal, bite-size learning,  
e.g. via online videos and social media: 41%

One volunteer replied to the 'other' category by suggesting the Gardens Trust/County Gardens Trusts could come and speak to their regional parks forum.

**Q34. We'd really like our offer to reach as many people as possible who are connected with public parks and other open green spaces, whether as casual visitors or coming for sports, events etc. As far as you know, does your park contain or host any of the following activities?**



The choice of activities, and the percentage of responders who selected them, were as follows:

- Community events: 86%
- School events: 50%
- Sporting Facilities: 36%.
- Park Run: 25%

Quite a few responders told us about other activities they hold to outreach with the community, these included: art exhibitions, theatre productions, educational courses and workshops, research projects, well-being activities, family events, guided walks, a bioblitz event and an open day for refugees.



**Q35. We are looking for volunteers who could help us to get in touch with people who visit and use the park. Would you be able to spare a small amount of time to help us with the following**

Responders could tick any number of the ways they would be happy for us to carry out to get in touch with their park users, and their preferences were as follows:

Promoting the Gardens Trust's offers on their social media:	25%
Putting flyers up about our Volunteers Save Spaces! Project:	25%
Talking to some of their park's users about the project:	18%

**Q36. If you answered yes to the three options above, please provide your email address so that we can contact you. This will only be used in communications relating to our "Volunteers Save Space!" project, and not in conjunction with marketing etc. and will not be passed on to anyone else.**

45 people gave us a contact email address for this purpose, the rest left this question blank.

### **PART 3: ABOUT YOU**

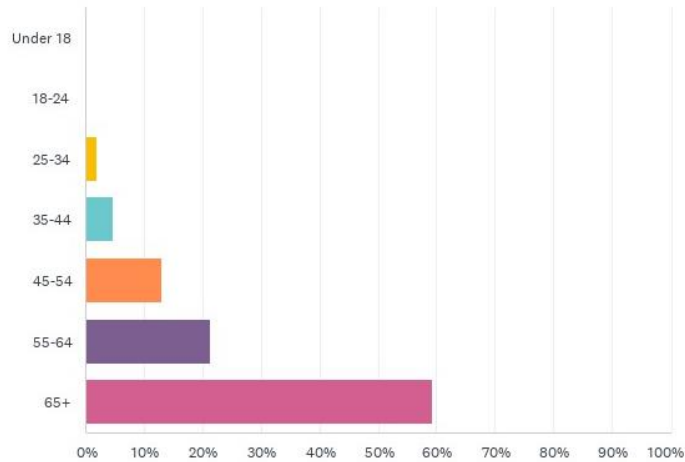
**The final four questions were aimed at finding out about the volunteers themselves, who filled out our questionnaire.**

#### **Q37. What's your gender?**

60% identified as female, 38% as male and 2% selected other, but declined the option to tell us what they identify as.

#### **Q38. What is your age group?**

A hundred of the volunteers told us which age bracket they fall in, and the results were:

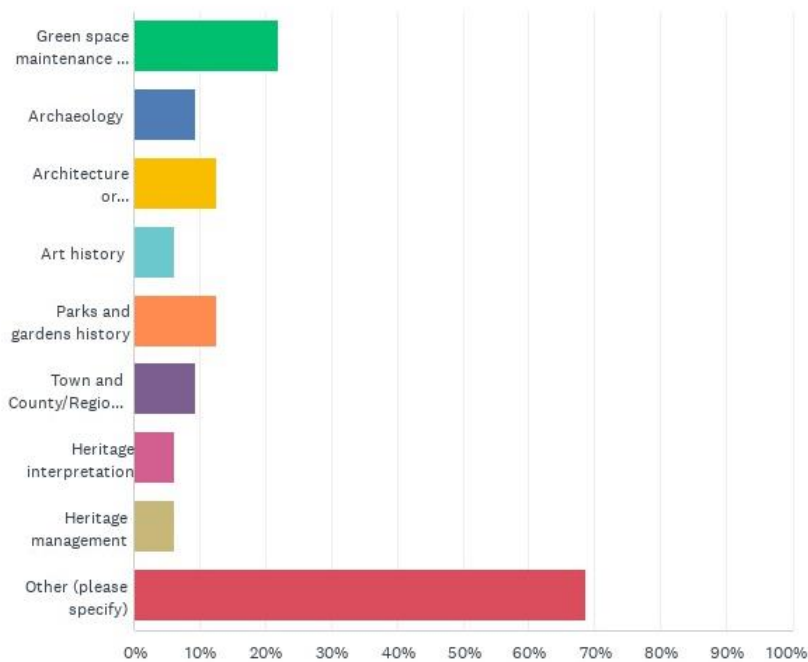


25 – 34 years: 2%  
35 – 44 years: 5%  
45 – 54 years: 14%  
55 – 64 years: 23%  
65+ years: 63%

#### **Q39. Ethnicity - please choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background**

The responders told us that they were 88% white (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, Irish or British), 1% Asian or Asian British, 1% from a mixed or multiple ethnic group, and 3% told us they identify as from another ethnic group, such as Spanish.

**Q40. Have you studied or worked professionally in any of the following areas?**



Our volunteers had a range of applicable or associated professional backgrounds: 7% have worked in garden maintenance and/or management; 3.5% in archaeology; 4% in architecture or architectural history; 2.5% in art history; 4% in parks or garden history; 3.5% in town and county/regional planning; 2.5% heritage interpretation and 2.5% in heritage management. Several other volunteers selected the other professional background option and their answers included: arboriculture, ecology, civil engineering, community development officer, school education, horticultural lecturer, police management, RHS horticultural qualification holders and a biologist specialising in aquatic environments and toxicity level monitoring.

## **Appendix 1: The survey form**

### **Gardens Trust Survey of Friends of Parks and Green Spaces**

#### **Introduction**

We're contacting you because, by being a volunteer for a Friends group, you are demonstrating that you care for the country's parks, gardens, cemeteries or other green spaces. We'd like to learn more about what you do and offer some opportunities to help enhance your volunteering experience.

The Gardens Trust is the only UK national charity dedicated to protecting and conserving our heritage of designed landscapes. We campaign on their behalf, undertake research and conservation work, and encourage public appreciation and involvement. Through the national network of County and Country Garden Trusts in England and Wales, we have access to people and local expertise throughout the country. This support is particularly valuable in our conservation work.

The Gardens Trust is excited to be working currently on 'Volunteers Save Space!', a two-year project part-funded by Historic England. Over the next year, until April 2024, our Volunteer Support Officers want to make contact with a wide range of people who visit, enjoy or volunteer in historic parks and gardens, to help build a greater network of supporters for these wonderful and vulnerable landscapes.

We'd be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete this survey, which is endorsed and distributed by the National Federation for Parks and Green Spaces. The results will be used to enable us build a picture of Friends of Parks volunteers' interests and priorities; to work out if and how the Gardens Trust can offer support or learning opportunities; and to start thinking about ways to build links between Friends and County Gardens Trusts, so that they can work together more effectively.

## Part 1: About your current volunteering experience

1. Name

2. Email address

\* 3. County where you volunteer

4. Name of park/parks or green space/spaces you volunteer at

5. Name of your Friends group/groups

\* 6. Name of your park/green space's Area Forum or Network (if your group is a member of one. If not please write N/A)

7. How long have you volunteered with your current Friends group, or for other Friends groups, in total?

- Less than one year
- 1 to 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- More than 10 years
- Other (please specify)

8. How did you hear about the opportunity to volunteer with a Friends group and what attracted you to join?

9. Name of your current role, if applicable

10. Please tick any activities undertaken by your Friends group

- Gardening
- Litter picking
- General maintenance
- Management decisions
- Organising events
- Working with other groups, such as schools
- Admin
- Fundraising
- Historic research
- Campaigning
- Other (please specify)

11. What are your main tasks? Please tick any that apply

- Gardening
- Litter picking
- General maintenance
- Management decisions
- Organising events
- Working with other groups, such as schools
- Admin
- Historic research
- Campaigning
- Fundraising
- Other (please specify)

12. What do you like most about volunteering with a Friends group? Please rank in order of importance, with most important at the top

<input type="checkbox"/> Helping to look after a park or green space	<input type="button" value="↑"/>	<input type="button" value="↓"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Getting satisfaction from volunteering	<input type="button" value="↑"/>	<input type="button" value="↓"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Contributing to your community	<input type="button" value="↑"/>	<input type="button" value="↓"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Being outside in nature	<input type="button" value="↑"/>	<input type="button" value="↓"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoying the company of other volunteers	<input type="button" value="↑"/>	<input type="button" value="↓"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Spending time in an historic designed landscape	<input type="button" value="↑"/>	<input type="button" value="↓"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="button" value="↑"/>	<input type="button" value="↓"/>

13. Please list any other aspects of volunteering with a Friends group which you find particularly enjoyable

14. Is there anything you would change about your volunteering experience? Please give details

15. Do you feel that the Covid 19 pandemic had an impact on the following?

	Yes	No	To some extent
Your volunteering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your ability to volunteer in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

16. Do you feel that the "cost of living crisis" is having an impact on the following?

	Yes	No	To some extent
Your volunteering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your ability to volunteer in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)



17. What do you think is most significant/important about your park/green space? Please rank these in order of importance, with most important at the top

<input type="checkbox"/> Its history	<input type="button" value="^"/> <input type="button" value="v"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Green, open space for relaxation and wellbeing	<input type="button" value="^"/> <input type="button" value="v"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Its value to visitors as an enjoyable place to spend time	<input type="button" value="^"/> <input type="button" value="v"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Nature and wildlife value	<input type="button" value="^"/> <input type="button" value="v"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="button" value="^"/> <input type="button" value="v"/>

18. If you selected 'other'in Q17, please give details

19. To what extent would you say you are familiar with the history and development of your park/green space?

- Very aware
- Have some knowledge
- Not at all familiar

20. Do you think that having more knowledge of your site's history could help volunteers to manage and protect it more effectively?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

21. As far as you are aware, is your site threatened in any way? Please tick all that apply

- Lack of funding
- Lack of staff
- Lack of active volunteers
- Vandalism and anti-social behaviour
- Crime
- Planning application threats, eg development in or next to the green space
- Loss of the original landscape design
- Other (please specify)

22. Do you volunteer for any other groups?

- Yes
- No
- Have done, in the past

23. If yes to Q22, please could you list the groups and the activities you undertake

24. Do you visit or use any historic parks, gardens or other designed landscapes, other than the one you volunteer at?

- Not really
- Sometimes
- Often
- Other (please specify)

## Part 2: About opportunities to learn and network with the Gardens Trust and County Gardens Trusts

25. Have you heard of the Gardens Trust: the only national charity dedicated to the research and conservation of designed landscapes in England and Wales? <https://thegardenstrust.org/>

- Yes
- No

26. Have you heard of the County Gardens Trusts: volunteer-run, county-based charities caring for gardens and designed landscapes in England and Wales? <https://thegardenstrust.org/about-us/find-local-cgts/>

- Yes
- No

27. If yes, are you a member of:

	Yes	No	Have been, in past
The Gardens Trust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A County Gardens Trust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. If you have heard of the Gardens Trust or County Gardens Trusts, but are not a member, what contact have you had with them? Please give brief details

Gardens Trust

County Gardens Trusts

---

29. Would you be interested in exchanging knowledge and ideas:

	Yes	No	Maybe
with the Gardens Trust?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with County Gardens Trusts?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30. If you are interested in connecting with us, which of the following would be most useful. Please rank in order of importance, with most important at the top:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Sharing your knowledge about your green space and Friends group	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meeting likeminded people who also care about historic parks and gardens	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussing and working through issues affecting your green space	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A

31. Are there any other subjects it might be useful to discuss with us?

32. Would you be interested in receiving any of the following Gardens Trust training?

- The history of parks and other designed landscapes
- How to research and understand designed landscapes
- Threats facing designed landscapes and how volunteers can help to combat them
- Other (please specify)

33. If so, how do you prefer to learn? Please tick all that apply

- Online learning via webinars
- Online learning at your own pace, using free to access written materials
- More informal, bite-size learning, e.g. via online videos and social media
- In-person learning
- Other (please specify)

---

34. We'd really like our offer to reach as many people as possible who are connected with public parks and other open green spaces, whether as casual visitors or coming for sports, events etc. As far as you know, does your park contain or host any of the following activities?

- Community events
- School events
- Parkrun
- Festivals, concerts etc
- Sports facilities
- Other (please specify)

35. We are looking for volunteers who could help us to get in touch with people who visit and use the park. Would you be able to spare a small amount of time to help us with the following (please tick all that apply)

- Promoting some of our offers on your social media channels
- Putting up flyers about our Volunteers Save Space! project
- Talking to some park users about us and our project

36. If you answered yes to question 29, 32 or 35, please provide your email address so that we can contact you. This will only be used in communications relating to our "Volunteers Save Space!" project, and not in conjunction with marketing etc and will not be passed on to anyone else.

### Part 3: About You

Historic designed landscapes need everyone's support so that they can survive for us all to enjoy. The Gardens Trust wants to share this message as widely as possible, to encourage everyone to play a role in helping to protect their local green spaces.

The information you can provide in this section will help us to understand who this message is reaching.

37. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other (please give details, if you'd like to)

38. Age group

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

39. Ethnicity - please choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background

- White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, Irish or British
- White - any other White background
- Mixed/multiple ethnic group
- Asian or Asian British
- Black - African/Caribbean/Black British
- Arab
- Other (please specify, if you'd like to)

40. Have you studied or worked professionally in any of the following areas?

- Green space maintenance and management
- Archaeology
- Architecture or architectural history
- Art history
- Parks and gardens history
- Town and County/Regional Planning
- Heritage interpretation
- Heritage management
- Other (please specify)



## **Gardens Trust Survey of Friends of Parks and Green Spaces**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

If you'd like to hear more about the work of the Gardens Trust and volunteers in the County Gardens Trusts, please visit our website to sign up for our monthly eBulletin <https://thegardenstrust.org/>