

We opened the garden with NGS for the first time in June 2022 and welcomed 160 visitors over the course of the afternoon, raising a very respectable amount for NGS' beneficiary charities. We served teas on the veranda and had a plant stall at the front. I gathered friends to help take the money, serve tea and home-made cakes, and sell plants. We were blessed with a sunny day and I loved that our visitors took such an interest in our garden. We enjoyed it so much that we are opening twice this year, on Sunday 30 April and Sunday 18 June.

Gardening for me was learnt by osmosis. My mother and my aunts were keen gardeners with large gardens, which they opened regularly for the NGS. At a young age I was coerced into weeding in the days running up to the garden being opened. My mother was always discovering new and exciting plant nurseries and I enjoyed going with her to buy plants. If there was an interesting church nearby to visit, her day was made!

When we moved to Beckenham, in 2018, I had the exciting task of working with a blank canvas: we'd inherited an overgrown, messy garden of about 50 by 60 feet, largely untouched for 30 years. My husband's only stipulation was "no lawn" because he'd spent too many years mowing.

One day, while we walked through the gardens at Beckenham Place Park, I saw an area of planting designed like a pie chart and I had my eureka moment. I just knew this should be the main design for my garden. We now have four triangular planting beds separated by gravel paths, with a stunning large blue pot in the middle. The beds are filled with salvias, euphorbias, iris, peony, roses, knautia, seasonal bulbs and many "filler" plants, grown from seed in my potting shed. We were amazed at the speed with which everything grew.

We also put in climbing roses and a few mature trees, including a winter-flowering cherry and an Amelanchier, now in its spring bloom.

Our grandchildren love the garden and enjoy planting carrots, spinach and other vegetables. I'm keen to nurture a love of gardening in them. Our vegetable beds also have some tulips, grown for cutting, as I can't bear to take tulips from the main garden!

Like my mother, I have become a plantaholic over the last few years, constantly trying to find unusual plants for our garden. I also still enjoy visiting the many small plant nurseries out there which have interesting plants and need our support.