



Playing Field during drought, August 2022



Meeting with Lewes District Council, June 2023



Making the rain garden bed, May 2024



Rain from the roof flows into planted trough, May 2024

The Rain Garden

A long time in planning - now finally it's happening!

Our discussions with Lewes District about a water strategy for the Growing Project at the Downs Leisure Centre began during the parched summer of 2022. Talks continued throughout the following year as Friends of Sutton Downs and local residents watered and cared for young trees planted the winter before to ensure their survival during yet another hot, dry summer. What seemed a simple idea for capturing rainwater from the roof of a public building proved a feat of strategic planning, coordination, technical preparation, procurement, timing and negotiation.

Designed by Lindsay Thomas, this ambitious project combines diverse skills from both council and community, to harness valuable rainwater, reduce waste and pollution and forge collaborative working practices.

Rainwater will collect into 2 storage tanks from a large area of leisure centre roof with overflows into plant troughs and a specially constructed flowerbed. During heavy rainfall, volumes of water that could inundate the storm drains and wash pollution into the water table will instead filter more slowly down through the troughs and bed before seeping deeper into the ground. We hope the garden will become a habitat for wildlife, and offer a more pleasant seating area outside the leisure centre cafe.

We aim to monitor water flow through the system and feed live data to our website. We are also compiling a digested guide on how rain gardens can be replicated in private and public spaces. With changing and erratic weather patterns more widespread action will be needed as the ways we use and manage water become more critical.



Preparation underway with Council and contractor, February 2024





Volunteers planting the trees in February on a very wet Valentine's Day, 2024.

Tree Planting at the Downs Update

We're really proud to have planted 28 trees and 200 hedgerow plants over the last three years together with Trees for Seaford. This year we partner with Brighton Permaculture Trust, and have added 4 more fruit trees to the orchard and a Mulberry Tree in the Memorial Garden at Sutton Corner.



Future Plans

The next phase of the Growing Project will explore and demonstrate innovative water-saving methods for growing food in a new, small, public community garden. We plan also to introduce bird boxes, bug hotels and habitats to attract and support wildlife plus benches and a nature trail to invite people to enjoy more nature in our neighbourhood.

Help us make Sutton Downs a greener place to live, work and play



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