

## **Growing Rosendale Project**

by Catriona Andrews, Community Education Officer

Growing Rosendale's aim was firstly to replace the old stores with a bright, light, welcoming self-service stores and secondly to build a new community building to provide a space for workshops and training. We wanted knowledge, skills and interest in food growing to be exchanged amongst plot holders and outside groups and for the community space to act as a hub for facilitating local community food growing projects. We hoped this would develop environment awareness and increase interest in, and commitment to, sustainable food growing in the local community.

The new buildings have been well received by the membership and interested groups across Lambeth and beyond. The facilities have helped to draw the community together and provide a space for both learning and socialising. Having somewhere to get a cup of tea and a snack, somewhere to relax and read up on food growing or just to meet up and chat to fellow plot holders.

Since completion of the building works we have held events, throughout the seasons. In August 2012 we held a soft launch, an allotment show, BBQ and social each September, apple pressing events in October, Christmas crafts and party each December, seed swaps in February and a plant swap in May. The community building was also host to allotments tours, highlighting the history of allotments and a series of horticulture related talks linked to Chelsea Fringe in May 2013.

Over the course of the project we scheduled seasonal programmes, delivering on average two workshops a month for adults and two for children. We responded to growers' workshop requests to cover gaps in their knowledge and highlight all the issues surrounding food growing. These included tackling weeds, pest and diseases, composting, fruit pruning, soil fertility, cut flowers, growing herbs, crop planning, crop rotation and harvest, preserving and storing.

The children's workshops were focused on food growing processes, wildlife and natural play. Children were engaged in the world around them and learnt about many of the processes involved in caring for soil, planting seeds, maintaining crops and the many creatures that help or hinder these processes. They enjoyed hunting for mini beasts, watching birds and being creative using natural materials.

From the allotment hub we ran an outreach programme, facilitating food growing on estates, schools, GP surgeries, after school and pre school centres and with other community groups. In all we engaged with 37 community groups, helping and encouraging them as the need arose. We also linked up with Incredible Edible Lambeth, putting the allotments on the borough food growing map and working with other hubs to devise strategic policies for everyone involved with food growing and horticulture in the borough.

A great deal of work was carried out on behalf of the association. Facilitating the re fitting and stocking the voluntarily run stores. Buying a variety of power and hand tools and setting up a tool hire system for the membership. Facilitating volunteering events for the committee. Working on the plot database and making an exciting resource centre, full of gardening books, available to members.