

Green Impact Excellence Project Report

To be completed before 5 May 2023

This update is an opportunity for you to celebrate your hard work and achievements in Excellence. We hope that a lot of your projects will continue after the submission deadline, but you should aim to summarise your work so far, as well as any work due to be completed. Please ensure your project update doesn't exceed 2,500 words.

Name of Team: Jesus College/Churchill College
Excellence Submission Title: Seed Library

A summary of your project's achievements

Our project is well on track to achieving our aims and objectives. We have made demonstratable progress in all of the areas listed in our project plan

We have received very positive feedback from our colleges' communities, as detailed under 'Evaluating the Impact of your Project', including from people who haven't tried gardening before, and those who have been encouraged to pick up the hobby again.

Students in both colleges have started windowsill gardens, and at Churchill College there are now a variety of seedlings growing in the greenhouses and raised beds. Pollinator-friendly plants and native wildflowers have been particularly popular at both colleges.

We have expanded on our objective to promote within our college communities, presenting at several events as detailed under 'Value Added Benefits'.

KPI Delivery Update

KPIs (as in project plan)	Revised KPIs (If applicable)	Actual outcomes
An increase in the number of seed packets used, and seed packets donated, versus our October baseline		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- At Churchill College:- In October we had 99 seed packets in the seed library, 58 of which had been donated over the summer/at the start of Michaelmas term.- Since then, 88 full packets have been "checked out" of the library,

Green Impact Excellence Project Report

		<p>and 31 packets have been added in donations. Most of the other seed packets in the library have been opened, partially used, and re-sealed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We still have some funds remaining from our microgrant which have been held back for seed purchases in response to student requests this term. - At Jesus College we bought 25 packets of seeds; a mix of microherbs, flowers and vegetables. We quickly had a donation of small pots and 24 packets of seeds. We also received two large bags of seeds from the College Wildflower Meadow (approx. 30cmx30cm each). This was split up into small packets, which have all been used. Many of the other seed packets are being opened and people are only taking the amount of seeds they need, leaving the remainder for other people to use.
<p>An increase in use/borrowing activity on the gardening books in our collections</p>		<p>("In-house use" means the book has been returned at the self-issue machine without having been out on loan, usually when library staff clear desks in the library.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books in Churchill College's Gardening and Wildlife Collection have seen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 in-house uses in Michaelmas term 2022 ○ 8 in-house uses in Lent term 2023 ○ 1 in-house use in Easter term 2023 (as of 26th April)

Green Impact Excellence Project Report

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 5 loans in Michaelmas 2022 ○ 1 loans in Lent 2023 ○ 0 loans in Easter 2023 (as of 26th April) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Jesus College, we have had: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 in-house uses and 6 laons in Michaelmas Term 2022 ○ 9 loans in Lent Term 2023 • Jesus College library were asked to buy 2 new gardening books in our annual questionnaire.
<p>Engagement (likes/shares) on social media posts</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tweet launching the Churchill College Wellbeing Seed Library in Michaelmas term received 1,410 impressions and 73 engagements. • A tweet highlighting which seeds could be sown in January was Churchill Library account's most engaged with Twitter post in Lent Term, with 16,797 impressions and 226 engagements. • Tweets about greenhouse drop-in sessions (1, 2) have been the two most engaged with posts on Churchill Library's twitter account at this early stage in Easter term, with 1,139 impressions and 17 engagements/1,562 impressions and 12 engagements respectively. • Jesus College has posted about the Seed Library on various facebook sites and the initial posts at the start of the Michaelmas term have generated 109

Green Impact Excellence Project Report

		likes and 9 shares. A post about the new soil, equipment and gardening advice received 29 likes and 2 shares.
Number of seed packets exchanged between the two colleges		Churchill College sent Jesus College a selection of pumpkin seeds (3 varieties), and Jesus College shared 21 packets of their wildflower mix with Churchill College.
Engagement from people suggesting expansions to the project.		<p>We have received several suggestions for expansions, which we have been able to act upon thanks to the microgrant received.</p> <p>Churchill have had requests for specific types of seeds and some more tools, which we have bought. Our gardeners suggested running drop-in sessions at the greenhouses in the first week of term, coinciding with Cambridge Green Week - this was highlighted on social media by Cambridge University Library as an example of wellbeing activities that libraries help to support in the run-up to exams.</p> <p>Jesus students have requested compost, gardening tools, and many more seeds, which were purchased with the microgrant funding. There have been several requests for help in how to plant seeds. Please see the information from our Library Questionnaire below.</p>
If any other libraries or departments set up their own seed library		Several other libraries and departments within the university and two external organisations have approached us for advice and information. We are not aware of any other seed libraries being launched yet, but we are keeping in touch with those interested.

Green Impact Excellence Project Report

Evaluating the impact of your project

We have received a lot of positive qualitative feedback. The email below was received from a Jesus College member:

Hello,

My partner, who is a Cambridge student, and I live in partner's accomodation at Jesus College.

Last month, we took advantage of the seed collection available at the Jesus College library. We are both vegetarian and planted some of our favorite vegetables to enjoy this summer, including some flowers to help the garden look beautiful!

We bought two large window box planters for the windows in our second story apartment, and we look forward to sowing the seedlings outside in May.

I have some experience gardening at home in America as a teenager, but after leaving for college, I never lived in one county long enough to garden again. It has been an absolute joy planting again for the first time in over 5 years.

This was my partner's first time planting seeds, and he's been enjoying every moment of it! He said he likes taking care of them and watching them grow. Although, he was pretty disappointed that his chives didn't grow (we can't win them all!).

[photos attached below]

Thank you for organizing the seed library, it has brought the joy of spring into our home.

Best wishes,

Josephine

Kath Banarse Davies (Grounds and Gardens Team Leader, Churchill College) ran drop-in sessions at the greenhouse throughout Green Week as a wellbeing activity in the run-up to exams, and set up a WhatsApp group for student gardeners, with 11 people currently in the WhatsApp group. Head of Grounds and Gardens John Moore said:

The seed library and extra items we bought are an excellent addition for our student greenhouse and veg plots. The funding mean there is no barrier to getting involved as they have everything they need provided. It is still early in the season for seed sowing but we are now seeing an increase in activity in the area which is great. Being able to buy sustainable items especially shared ones is incredibly important to both the students and College. The extra items we have bought will allow the gardening group grow from strength to strength.

Green Impact Excellence Project Report

Jesus College Library's annual questionnaire (Lent Term 2023) included the question "As the seed library is a new initiative this year, we'd love to hear your thoughts and suggestions for improvements". 64 people were very positive, while 16 people hadn't yet heard about the library and 7 people asked for more help in how to plant. One person asked for gardening equipment, 10 asked for soil and 10 asked for pots to plant in.

Sample of the comments:

- I think the seed library is a fantastic initiative. Maybe if there could be a seed library workshop, to make it more interactive, that would be great to also connect with other people using the seed library.
- I haven't used it yet, seems like a great idea though!
- It's a brilliant idea, absolutely love it
- It would be nice if there were gardening tools as well as it is difficult to plant the seeds without them
- A bit of soil to plant the seeds in would be very useful as I won't buy a full bag just for a few flowers.
- I have not used the seed library this year because my room is not large enough for a window box, but I do think it is a great idea for giving
- people a sense of connection to the natural world and something to cultivate or care for.
- I haven't tried it yet - but this is a reminder that I should!
- It seems amazing! I have collected a few pumpkin seeds I am looking forward to growing them.
- I think it's a really great idea! I just have nothing to plant anything in, and have no idea how to take care of plants.
- I have not used this but housemates have and it was nice to have in the kitchen

The only negative comment was:

- Interesting idea but I would expect packs of seeds to be found in a florist shop / or offered by the Gardening Dept. not by the library. Don't see the connection apart from using the word 'library'.

The questionnaire has given us ways forward to develop the collection. There is obviously a demand for the seeds and an appreciation of the project, but also a need for more advertising, equipment and gardening education.

Project Difficulties and Opportunities

One difficulty is getting feedback and therefore difficulty measuring the success. Far more seeds have been taken from the libraries than we have seen growing in the greenhouses and raised beds, and although we have heard anecdotally of people growing plants in bedroom windowsills and kitchens, this is much harder to measure.

Jesus College was due to provide raised beds for planting last year; this has been delayed a year so hopefully more people will have the opportunity to garden on site in the future.

Undergraduate vacations are a barrier to sowing and tending plants. So far it seems there is more interest from postgraduates rather than undergraduates, although at Churchill College the garden areas are popular relaxation spots for some undergraduates. Kath Banarse-Davies started off some plants grown

Green Impact Excellence Project Report

from the seed library and planted these out in the raised beds to encourage others to make a start (as a completely “blank canvas” could potentially be off-putting.) These communal plants also give undergraduates something that they can help tend and take cut flowers from.

In future we hope to link up more existing resources to help integrate the project and increase engagement, e.g. college gardeners, the seed library, student green officers and the gardening group, and various social media accounts from different college groups.

We have always intended that this be an ongoing project that we build on, becoming more self-sustaining as the years go by. If more libraries spring up in the local area, then the opportunities for seed swapping and knowledge sharing rise accordingly.

Value added benefits

We have engaged with a wider community than anticipated in our original objectives. We presented at the OxCam librarians conference, and exhibited a poster at the Cambridge Natural History Society Conversazione, leading to conversations with individuals outside the university (including Oxford University, Cambridge Botanic Gardens, Shepreth Wildlife Park, the Leys School).

We have strengthened links within our own colleges and got involved in related projects – for example Annie Gleeson is now an active member of Churchill’s Green Impact team and helped to put together the College’s workbook submission for 2023.

Legacy

Community, Collaboration, Engagement:

This project has generated cross-college conversations. It has brought people into the library that have never been in before, and has brought the librarians and gardeners closer together to exchange ideas and advice.

We have provided an incentive to get people gardening, sometimes for the first time. We have advertised our project within the university and further afield.

Sustainability:

Both collections have received donations including ‘used’ small pots, harvested seeds, and half-opened packets that people do not want to waste. The contribution of the wildflower meadow mix is also something that might have gone to waste if it wasn’t passed on. With continual advertising we hope the sustainability of the project will continue and increase.

Wellbeing:

Green Impact Excellence Project Report

"There is strong evidence that gardens and gardening can improve mental, physical and social health" Dr Lauriane Chalmin-Pui (Churchill alumnus), RHS Health and Horticulture Conference 2022. Encouraging people to garden and spend time outdoors, to have plants in their rooms and to grow their own vegetables, all contributes to the wellbeing of our college members.

Biodiversity:

"UK's flying insects have declined by 60% in 20 years" Natural History Museum, 6 May 2022. <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/news/2022/may/uks-flying-insects-have-declined-60-in-20-years.html> Planting for biodiversity is becoming a necessity rather than a luxury and we can help educate people and create a legacy by providing pollinator-friendly seeds. Jesus College harvests its wildflower meadow every year, and sharing this seed will hopefully create small patches around Cambridge to support our insect population. The photo below, of two test tubes – one from King's College wildflower meadow (where our wildflower seed originally came from) and one from the grass lawn beside it is a simple visual reminder why a wildflower meadow is better for biodiversity than the 'desert' of the grass lawn. The contents of the tubes were collected from pitfall traps (small plastic cups set into the ground) after one week in the autumn of 2022. The tube from the lawn is almost empty, the tube from the meadow is full of insects.

Education:

Both libraries provide books on gardening, saving seeds, and wildlife. We have made them easy to find in the 'Collections' area on the university catalogue. Churchill gardeners have provided practical sessions for budding gardeners and Jesus gardeners have just started this too. We hope that there will also be sessions on seed harvesting in the autumn. Later this Spring Jesus library will offer advice on identifying wildlife to encourage people to post the wildlife they see in their gardens to the national recording database iRecord (which some students use in their degree course and many naturalists use in their daily lives). Jesus College has already provided an instruction video on how to do this that is freely available on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rxqd27OE58>

Recommendations:

The Seed Library has been easy to set up for both of us. Churchill started with a donation of seeds, and Jesus with a small budget. We have received donations of seeds and pots, and, with the microgrant have been able to extend the project. People thinking about setting up their own project are encouraged to get in touch with us and we'll be happy to provide advice. It can be left simply as a seed swap, or it can be expanded with practical advice, skills training and the tools to garden.

Green Impact Excellence Project Report

Photographs



Sweet pea seedlings in Churchill College raised beds



Gardening tools next to a tray of seedheads drying in Churchill greenhouse



Josephine's windowsill garden (Jesus College)



Josephine's garden progress

Green Impact Excellence Project Report



Seed library at Jesus College including books on gardening, compostable seed trays, and seed packets



Insect specimens collected from pitfall traps in King's College wildflower meadow (left) and adjacent lawn (right)

Green Impact Excellence Project Report



Seed Libraries stall at CNHS Conversazione 14th-15th April 2023



Annie Gleeson and Rhona Watson at Conversazione 14th April 2023