



Green Gown
Awards 2013

Finalist's case study

Dissemination supported by:



University of the Arts London - London College of Fashion Research and Development Natural Dye Beds and Sustainable Fashion



Profile

- HEI
- Students -18,678 (includes full and part time students)
- Staff – 3,185
- Urban locations

Section 1 About the project

Summary

London College of Fashion (LCF) created a community garden and natural dye beds at their Mare Street site in Hackney. These natural dye plants were used to colour cloth for a number of MA collections. The unique and beautiful results were showcased at Chelsea Flower Show, demonstrating what can be achieved through harvesting locally sourced plants.

Project partners

LCF collaborated with the local community, who formed the Cordwainers Community Garden to grow food crops on University land. The mental health charity City and Hackney Mind ran a project to engage unemployed men at risk from developing depression in gardening and tending to the dye beds. Chelsea Flower Show awarded LCF an Artists' Retreat to showcase dye plants and naturally coloured textiles.

Section 2 The results

The problem

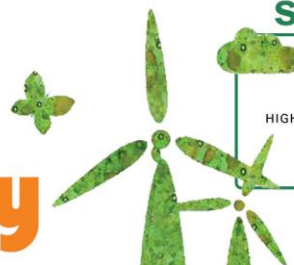
There is a lack of outside space for local communities and charities to use in London. This, combined with a lack of biodiversity within the College estate was the starting point for this project. The College also wanted students to have a better understanding of the environmental impact of the materials, such as dyes and fabrics, used in their work, so they can make informed decisions now and in future employment.

The approach

The Natural Dye Beds at LCF's Mare Street campus have been supported by the Cordwainers Community Garden (CCG), whose volunteers use University land for food growing. The collaboration saw Kate Poland, from CCG, combine her knowledge of raising plants with the MA Fashion and Environment students' dyeing expertise for mutual, and wider community, benefits.

Our goals

LCF was keen to increase the ecological value of the unused outside space, enhance the area for staff, students, the local community and wildlife, and positively contribute to the UAL Environmental Management



System. The project also aimed to strengthen the link between student learning and teaching and interaction with the environment.

Obstacles and solutions

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Large number of stakeholders | On site meetings to ensure the garden is suitable for everyone. |
| Up keep of the garden | Student volunteers developed an online diary to list jobs that needed completing and arrange work days in the garden. |

Performance and results

The Natural Dye Beds have increased the biodiversity of the Mare Street garden by introducing new plant species to the area. The dye beds have more than doubled the area of planted (non-grassed) land in the courtyard. This benefits local wildlife such as bees, butterflies and birds and supports the development and adoption of the UAL Biodiversity Action Plan.

The group of volunteers from Mind who took part in the project; aged 45-60, long-term unemployed with low-level mental health needs, are perceived to have increased their self-worth by participating in activities that have a value to the College. In addition, according to Mind, participation in activities such as gardening is known to drive wellbeing, as a basis for good mental health.

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

The success of the Natural Dye Beds and community involvement has lead the College to apply for funding to create a community garden (to include dye plants) at the Shepherd's Bush site. Skills and expertise gained in the creation of the dye beds, fashion applications and community engagement will be used and built upon to ensure the success of this project.

City and Hackney Mind will be running the gardening project again in early 2014 and hope to work on further mutually beneficial projects with LCF in the future.

Sharing your project

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) were very pleased with the outcomes of the LCF Retreat at Chelsea Flower Show and are currently supporting the College's application for a Conceptual Garden for 2014. Current research will be shared with external textile companies, museums, galleries and other institutions, to enable new knowledge building, leading to further cycles of collaboration, research and dissemination.

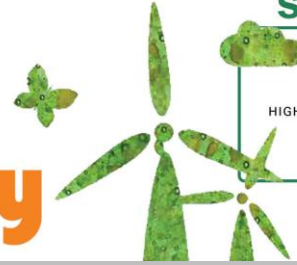
This work will be used to inform teaching and learning around sustainability, the environmental impact of fashion, new developments in textile colouration and fabrications, seasonality, husbandry, wellbeing and pleasure as related to fashion. It is hoped that the outcomes will be further development of the natural dye beds to include an outside flexible learning incubator space plus a series of conferences and workshops linking fashion futures with horticulture to encourage sharing of ideas and replication by others.



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What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

LCF is delighted to be a Green Gown Award finalist and is committed to further improving environmental performance across all areas of operation. Positive recognition of the Natural Dye Bed project is particularly important as it engages the students and wider community in relevant sustainable and creative activities allowing the College and local environment to flourish.

Further information

www.arts.ac.uk

<http://blogs.arts.ac.uk/sustainability/>

www.greengownawards.org.uk

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