A. About the Awards

Lemos&Crane working with The City of London Corporation’s Charity, The City Bridge Trust presents The Growing Localities Awards. Total prize money of £2,500 is offered for projects based in London that demonstrate excellence in using nature to enhance and improve local communities and in particular the lives of vulnerable or socially excluded people, generating positive outcomes such as health and well-being, new skills and knowledge, new relationships, and a sense of purpose and belonging.

To apply for the award you will need to describe what your project already does and to explain how the prize money would be spent to further your work.

This year entries are invited for projects and initiatives in any London borough that involve any one or combination of:

- **Gardening and growing food**: for communal eating and small-scale enterprise
- **Introducing young people to nature**: encouraging young people to develop an interest in nature through bird-watching and similar activities
- **Keeping animals**: bees, chickens, pigs, etc for the experience of care but also to farm
- **Nature-themed arts and crafts**: woodcraft, photography, film-making, writing, etc
- **Reclaiming and developing wasteland**: especially led by residents and tenants
- **‘Green’ exercise**: groups for walking, cycling, running, etc with a nature theme

Entries are invited from non-profit organisations such as:

- Homeless agencies
- Supported housing (providing mental health services, substance misuse, etc)
- Social housing providers
- Residential care providers
- Health organisations
- Hospices
- Prisons
- Churches and faith groups
- Other community-based and voluntary organisations.
Entries will be judged based on criteria including:

- **Originality** – the distinctiveness and memorability of the project idea
- **Replicability** – how others could be inspired by and run similar projects themselves
- **Reach** – the numbers of people involved in the project, particularly in engaging the wider community
- **Diversity** – of people engaged, particularly those who are ‘hard to reach’ or have challenging needs and who are brought together with the local community
- **Impact** – of the project (demonstrated qualitatively or quantitatively) on people’s health, well-being, relationships, skills, knowledge, sense of purpose and belonging.

B. Timetable

- Deadline for entries – **Wednesday 17 December, 2014**
- Shortlist announced – **End of March 2015**
- Winners announced – **June 2015**

C. Rules and procedures

1. Entries must be completed using this entry form and submitted electronically [here](#).
2. Receipt of all entries submitted online will be automatically acknowledged.
3. Entrants may be asked to provide further information.
4. The judges’ decision is final. Awards will be made at the judges’ discretion and no correspondence will be entered into concerning any decision. Not all the awards advertised may be awarded if the judges consider the criteria have not been met. Additional commendations may be made at the judges’ discretion.
5. The content of any entry may be used for informing other practitioners and also for publicity purposes unless the entrant withholds their consent to this in writing.
6. Entrants are deemed to have accepted these rules and procedures and to have agreed to be bound by them when entering this competition.

D. Your Entry

*Please do not exceed 1500 words in total.*
1. Name of project you are entering for The Growing Localities Awards

Rootless Garden

2. Describe your project in one sentence

Rootless Garden is a social enterprise that works with older people to combat loneliness and increase wellbeing by using the natural world as inspiration to create, explore and transform environments through empowering opportunities.

3. Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (e.g. homeless agency, social housing, prison, community, etc)?

Our projects are delivered in elderly care spaces: residential care homes; sheltered accommodation; day facilities. We also host projects and events in community hubs such as churches, pubs and community centres. All of our projects are carried out in London where we work with captured audiences and engage communities through outreach and advertising.

4. What are the project’s objectives?

Rootless Garden is a social enterprise that uses nature to inspire social connections and reconnect people with the outside world. We create experiences that engage people and reintroduce elements of nature into urban lives. Our work primarily uses the power of socialising and nature to combat loneliness amongst London’s older people. We create intergenerational opportunities in elderly care and community spaces to increase the wellbeing of older and younger people alike.

Rootless Garden’s ethos is built around human nature at the most basic level: the shared connection we all have to nature and that we all share as humans. Our work allows older and younger people to reconnect through shared, natured-based experiences. We allow our elderly friends to reconnect to one another and make new friends through empowering, creative and co-directed activities, from indoor and outdoor gardening, botanical tea and cocktail parties, and activities inspired by the world around us.

Our principle aim is to improve the wellbeing of older people in London, we intend to do so by helping our beneficiaries feel in control, have a sense of purpose, feel like satisfaction and a sense of belonging and, finally, gain an optimistic life outlook. We achieve this by allowing them to experience social opportunities and reconnect with nature. The benefits of socialising are very obvious, and it becomes especially important, as people get older as a key part of a balanced, healthy lifestyle. Many older people do not have this however, and this is leading to an epidemic of loneliness, which
has a direct link to negative mental and physical health.

Nature: Despite London having an abundance of green space, older people are often left behind by poor physical or mental health. Rootless Garden aims to increase access to nature for this group through numerous green activities, which have been proven to bring about powerful, beneficial results. Our objectives are inspired by *Green Care* and *Social and Therapeutic Horticulture* as well as a growing awareness around holistic and alternative therapies. It has been proven across various contexts that green activities, such as gardening, can bring about powerful, beneficial results: they are relaxing yet promote physical activity; they balance and uplift moods; they engage with senses, promote social inclusion and reconnection and trigger reminiscence.

We allow people to engage with nature-based activities in any way they want to participate. Whether beneficiaries engage actively or passively the effects of natural surroundings create a positive effect. It is this access to environments outside of their usual ones that proves very powerful; a change of physical space by moving outdoors, or transforming existing environments to uplift and refresh indoor spaces.

5. What are the project’s activities?

Our project’s activities will be in one of our three areas of our work with the elderly: gardening projects, social clubs, and botanical tea and cocktail glasses. Possible activities include seasonal planting, potting and flower arranging, arts and crafts, pop-up gardens, outdoor gardening projects and table-top planting. When designing our activities we strive to make them accessible and inclusive for people of all mental and physical abilities.

Our projects provide unique social activities for older people, allowing them to engage with their peers and younger generations. There is an intrinsic link between our happiness, physical and mental health, and this is tied together by a sense of positive wellbeing. Loneliness is an extremely harmful, and often a very hard cycle to break, therefore we believe that by creating social opportunities and experiences in care and community spaces we will be contributing to the happiness of older people by allowing them to connect with others in a meaningful way. This in itself is incredibly empowering as it gives older people the opportunity to feel a part of a group, a community, and friendships. In particular cases when we have a group with a range of abilities we like to create group interdependence and skill sharing to allow groups to benefit from one-another’s help. This is empowering for many as it creates peer-to-peer support for groups that often experience over-facilitated help, which can often create a culture of dependence.

Concerning the natural aspect of our activities, green focused activities are psychologically beneficial as they allow people to focus and work towards a tangible end. This is soothing and calming as people focus and immerse themselves in greenery and in a sensory activity, whilst distracting them in a creative and calming environment. On the other hand, our sensory activities provide older people with a point of reminiscence, which is especially pertinent for people with dementia for whom cognitive stimulation and alternative methods of engagement are increasingly important.

Lastly, our activities provide gentle physical activity, which is incredibly beneficial to people of all
ages, especially the elderly at a time when traditional exercise becomes limited.

6. What has been the impact / achievement of the project?

The immediate impact of our activities is very palpable. Indeed, it is visible that the beneficiaries’ confidence instantly increases; they appear to be happier and more active. This is clear in the following member’s testimonial:

"You can see the change in the garden. Everybody's having a go and getting involved. The young people are very enthusiastic and I believe this has rubbed off on the older generation. You can be planting, or painting, or discussing things, or just setting drinking fruit juice! I believe that's a good thing".

Our beneficiaries become willing to engage in new challenges and get to know others, which, serves as a catalyst for socialising and further empowerment. Even if they aren't actively participating, many of our beneficiaries enjoy being involved in the wider group and the change of scenery and pace.

Concerning our Social Clubs, these have successfully promoted social connections, skill sharing and are inclusive to differing needs. Members experience empowerment, belonging as well as cognitive and gentle physical stimulation. In our first pub project – the W4 Social Club - we are already seeing impacts. One woman with Parkinson’s attends the club with her husband, an architect who had not painted for seven years since becoming her carer. He now spends the two hours drawing and painting the flowers and plants we bring every week, while his wife plays scrabble and chats to her new friends. Our club does not only promote friendships and improve confidence, but provides respite for carers.

Some of our members have shared their opinion on the club, describing it as:

“An excellent idea for people who wish to meet other people. Also, it gives people who live on their own a chance to get out of the house and have somewhere to go, to be with friends”.

It is difficult to acquire quantitative data on factors such as happiness, loneliness and purpose. We have now created our own tool, based on models from Campaign to End Loneliness, Office for National Statistics Wellbeing Scale, UCLA Loneliness Scale, and The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale to measure our impact of our projects.

Our previous measurements have been qualitative. It is visibly clear that moods improve; we see increased interaction, conversation and improved body language. We invite feedback from our services users, families, carers and friends. It’s the changes that we see in the individuals we work with, and the examples listed above that prove our work has an incredible impact on confidence, happiness, and connection.

Our projects have won accolades from Kingston in Bloom 2014 for creating the best private community garden at The Bradbury Centre, and have seen us to be recognised as one of Nesta and The Observer’s 50 New Radicals, and Indie’s recognition from London City Hall as a LSDC 2015 London Leader.
7. How would you spend any prize money to further your project/initiative?

We would channel this financial support towards costs associated with running projects in elderly care facilities and communities. Costs include materials, administration and outreach costs for project delivery, as well as meeting some small scale volunteer expenses such as refreshments. Outreach costs will range and target specifically hard to reach groups and garner interest from within care groups too.

We have successfully carried out over a year of operations and service delivery. During this time we have learned what works, and what doesn't and constantly evolved and restructured our social enterprise to become more efficient. In order to grow and have a wider impact we need to continue carrying out our projects whilst involving and benefitting new communities across London. This is how we will use the Growing Localities Award.

Furthermore, this step would contribute to our long-term objective of expanding outside of London by creating volunteer led replicas of Rootless Garden. The reproduction and spread of our mission would increase impact by benefitting older people in numerous communities across the UK, and one say beyond.

E. Submitting your entry

Please return this entry form by **5pm, Wednesday 17, Dec 2014** by uploading it on this page

Please add any documents, photos, videos or other media that are relevant to your entry and email them to awards@lemosandcrane.co.uk quoting ‘Growing Localities award entry’ and your organisation name in the subject heading.

If you have any problems uploading your entry please also email awards@lemosandcrane.co.uk

Thank you for your time and effort which is much appreciated. Good luck!