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The Earl's Court Square garden is unique in that it has many of the elements of a private garden; it is quite unlike a municipal public space such as a park, and I think that this is what the residents and visitors like about it. There are flowers that come and go with the seasons, it is a biodiverse space that attracts wildlife, there are interesting, specialist plants that need good horticultural knowledge to maintain them. The committee sources a mass of bulbs to keep it looking beautiful in spring and believe in the horticultural basics we do such as mulch with compost and prune the different plants in the correct way which is more than taking a hedge trimmer to the shrubs – this is about treating each plant with care to create an harmonious whole.

To have a garden like this one, with character and life, and something in flower all year round takes time and horticultural knowledge. I don't think that residents would be happy with a garden full of evergreen shrubs pepped up with a few expensive seasonal planting schemes for flowers, which is how many municipal park spaces are maintained. As gardeners, we also look after the specialist watering systems, lighting and a beautiful water feature here in the garden.

I have a vested interest in the square, I lived here for many years, still own a flat here and love the garden, so it is personally important that the garden looks its absolute best for those who live around the square, many of whom are friends and previous neighbours. I used to work closely with Harriet of Worsley Design who now lives in Wetherby Mansions and used to run the garden club for the children. She recognises its unique nature and provides ad hoc pro bono advice on planting and ideas for development of the garden. It's great to be collaborating with Harriet again and to have that planting design resource on tap when needed, for free.

A well-designed and maintained garden adds value to property, but of course has an on-going cost, the responsibility for which lies with those properties with guaranteed access. Without the additional funds provided by the key holders, or a further increase in the garden levy, we would need to cut back on essentials such as planting and mulching and other development projects would be limited. This would be to the detriment of the overall quality of the Square and detract from the value of properties overlooking it.

Over the years, working with the Sub-Committee we have installed the water feature, the rose arbours, carried out a major renovation of the irrigation system, installed the new garden shed and created the compost bins. In the future we are discussing the requirement to replace the footings under the railings when the committee has sufficient funds. All of these have been possible without the Sub-Committee asking for increased funding from the garden rate payers because of the contribution made by the Subscriber key income.

Gardens should be and are social places. My team has got to know many of the residents over the years, and we all really care about the gardens and their upkeep and appreciate the fact that the residents value and appreciate it too. This small green oasis of calm in the busy city needs to be nurtured and looked after in the best possible and most efficient way, and the horticultural expertise and vision which we contribute is paramount. The value of community is a massive contributor to property value and it is a pleasure to share our horticultural expertise, vision and experience to look after this garden when it is such a precious resource for the community.

Charles Wood
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