

LONDON: GARDEN CITY?

FAQs

Why did you carry out this research?

- London Wildlife Trust and GiGL are members of the London Biodiversity Partnership, and involved in the delivery of many action plans, including that for private gardens. We have very good knowledge of the key habitats in London; the gap was in that of gardens – their coverage and general structure. The emergence of high-quality aerial photographs and digital mapping datasets made this task easier, and so resources were secured to carry the research out: a) to get some idea of the quantity and coverage of gardens across London, b) what they broadly consisted of in terms of features, and c) whether we could detect any changes between the two periods. (Similar work has been carried out in respect of other habitats).
- The Greater London Authority supported the project, being particularly interested in how this might relate to the influence of planning policy in respect of in-fill development.

Why were these data-sets used, and not those more recent?

- The research began at the end of 2008, and at that time the most accurate aerial photographs and mapping data were from 2006-08 and a previous set from 1998-9. Changes pre-dating this period could not be studied as earlier equivalent photographs were not available. Accuracy of the underlying data was key to ensuring a high degree of confidence in the results. It has also taken some time to complete the research. Nevertheless, we recognise that further investigation of data from the next few years would help us to determine where the trends are going.

Did the research look at the same gardens, in the years 1998-9 and 2006-7?

- Yes, from a total randomly stratified sample of 1292 plots. The samples covered each borough and were chosen as representative areas. It was from these that the changes were extrapolated to an estimate across London as a whole.

What confidence do you have in the results?

- An indication of the variation in the data is provided by the standard error of the mean of the values that were summed to give the various estimates of total land cover area. These standard errors varied from 2% to 4% of the mean for the main land cover categories. Our confidence in the precision of the various estimates would be of this order, which is why the findings are reported to two significant figures, or the nearest percentage point.
- It is more standard to report main findings with their confidence intervals, however, the various biases and the great amount of skew in the distribution of garden sizes made this a technically difficult task, which is why the above indication is provided instead.

100 months isn't a commonly used timeframe; why was this?

- We were confined by the availability of the data-sets, which were on average 8.5 years apart, which is approximately 100 months.

Are some areas of London subject to greater changes than others?

- This was not investigated. The gardens looked at were 'anonymous' in their location, although we ensured that there was a consistent spread across London in every London borough. However, we recognise that there would be value in investigating this further, which could also be related to size of garden and age of housing, if resources permitted.

Was consideration given – in the analysis of the recorded changes – of the impacts of TV garden makeover programmes?

- No direct relationship was investigated of any environmental, cultural or legislative influence that might affect garden design and management; we looked purely at the physical changes within the gardens. However, in trying to understand what might have influenced these changes, the research team were aware of issues such as garden fashions, the influence of TV programmes, and the impacts of Controlled Parking Zones. We have subsequently been made aware that the study period coincided with the broadcast of TV garden makeover programmes; this was entirely coincidental.

Is there a relationship between the changes in gardens and tenure?

- This was not investigated. It would have been difficult to research this without further resources, as it is difficult to determine without extensive ground-truthing. The research specifically excluded the gardens and grounds of housing estates (private and social).