

About BOG

The purpose of this document is to draw together in one place BOG's objectives, policies and practices. It should help members and others to understand what BOG is for, how BOG works and the direction it is taking.

Contents

1. What is BOG for?
2. What does BOG do?
3. BOG's commitment to sustainability
4. Who is involved with BOG?
5. BOG's distinctive features
6. Communication
7. Finance and Resources
8. Equality of opportunities, access and diversity
9. Health and Safety
10. Constitution and organisation
11. Objectives for 2022-3
12. Appendix: The History of BOG

1. What is BOG for?

‘The company’s objects are to advance the education of the general public in the principles of organic growing and gardening by promoting the use and development of organic gardening methods.’

Memorandum and Articles of Association 1989

BOG aims to share and spread the knowledge and practice of organic gardening by:

- Encouraging people to grow their own vegetables and fruit organically
- Providing advice and ideas through workshops, articles and events
- Supporting and encouraging schools to develop gardens
- Promoting wildlife and biodiversity in our gardens

We also aim to

- Reduce our impact on the environment by re-use and recycling
- Campaign about the impacts of climate change on horticulture.

What is organic gardening?

Organic gardening means maintaining healthy soil, controlling pests and diseases without synthetic chemicals, making and using your own compost and welcoming the natural world into your garden.

Why do we encourage organic gardening?

Organic methods keep carbon in the soil, trees and plants and avoid products based on fossil-fuel. We don’t use peat, which should be left undisturbed, storing carbon. We use resources responsibly and recycle waste materials when possible. We eat food from our gardens free from pesticides and with zero food miles. We try to avoid using plastic in our gardens. We use natural fertilisers.

2. What does BOG do?

We have an annual programme of practical workshops, talks and visits. We organise Potato Day in spring and Apple Day in autumn for the general public. Members get a printed magazine, BOG News, three times a year: it has seasonal articles, gardening tips and recipes; and there is an electronic magazine, eNews. Members can benefit from

annual group orders of organic seed and of organic compost at reduced prices.

Potato Day

Held in early March, Potato Day is very important to BOG. The event is longstanding and well known in the Borders and beyond, attended by up to 1,000 visitors. Stallholders are keen to be present. It is our main contact with the general public, a source of income and new members. We publicised Potato Day in earlier years through the local press, but have in recent years relied on leaflets and social media. The event depends on volunteers who carry out the tasks of potato-ordering, hiring the venue and liaising with its staff, attracting and booking stallholders, publicity and the wide range of responsibilities on the day. These include stocking the potato tables, running the cash desks, organising the children's area, and attending the BOG stall and book stall.

Apple Day

In recent years BOG liaised with Scottish Borders Council and Live Borders to mount an Apple Day at Harestanes Countryside Visitor Centre. This was a celebration of apples, including a large display of varieties from Anton's Hill, the garden of former owner Alec West. BOG ran a stall selling apples, baking, jams and plants; offered apple juice samples; and ran a William Tell game for children. Proceeds were sent to Farm Africa. There was no Apple Day in 2020 or 2021 because of Covid and disruption to Live Borders' services. We are planning a revived Apple Day at Woodside Plant Centre in 2022 to be held over a weekend, including a family-friendly Sunday.

ACTION needed

- ***evaluate Apple Day at Woodside and consider future plans for Apple Day.***

Visits and workshops

BOG runs a programme of events over the year. These include visits to members' gardens, plant exchanges and visits to organisations of interest. We run workshops on aspects such as pruning, composting, garden planning and tree-grafting.

On-line meetings

Because of Covid regulations, BOG started a programme of on-line talks and meetings. In the first year these included sessions on garden planning, gardening for climate change, potatoes in South America

and a Question Time. These were well received and have been adopted as part of our regular programme.

Business meetings have usually been held four times a year and are open to all. In normal times they are held in a member's house and followed by a shared lunch and plant exchange or garden visit. However, members from a wider area have been able to attend meetings on line, so we may have a mix of the two in future.

Involvement of young people

We have always aimed to send a message about organic gardening to children and young people.

The formal ways in which we do this are:

- providing a BOG stall at Borders Countryside Day, demonstrating organic pest control, compost making and illustrating our activities. We set up games and Q and A sessions for the children. We do the same at our own Potato Day.
- giving away surplus seed potatoes to schools after Potato Day. We send out instructions and encourage the staff to communicate with us about how the crop grows.
- developing a presentation for schools on Organic Gardening and Climate Change.

Informally, members involve themselves with local schools which ask for help with gardening.

ACTION needed

- ***Try to raise BOG's profile amongst young people in the Borders and Northumbria.***

Campaigning

In past we have been reactive, lending support when approached. As the urgency of the climate crisis becomes more and more apparent, we have

- joined a Global Climate Strike organised by school campaigners
- set up a climate change group
- written to all outlets selling peat-based products in the Borders, urging them to use peat-free alternatives instead.

DISCUSSION POINT

- ***The question for us is – do we have a strong enough voice on our own, or should we bring the BOG perspective to larger campaigners?***

The climate change group is a Google group to promote new ideas. Any member can now contribute by emailing Ilona McDowell at climate@bordersorganicgardeners.org.

3. **BOG's commitment to sustainability**

Most members of BOG see trying to mitigate climate change as relevant and important. We started to tackle this issue explicitly in 2018 by taking steps to reduce our carbon footprint. Both as people and as gardeners we seek to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases. We are making sure that the organisation works towards reducing its carbon footprint and promotes ways of mitigating change.

As far as possible we no longer use peat. We have greatly reduced our use of paper over recent years. We encourage and record car-sharing to and from meetings. We have changed the venue for the AGM to it more accessible by public transport. We increasingly meet and host presentations over Zoom, such as Dave Allan's talk on how gardeners can reduce their carbon emissions.

We are producing leaflets aimed at the general public. These include 'Why Garden organically?', 'Gardening and Carbon' and 'Nature-Friendly Gardening'.

4. **Who is involved with BOG?**

Members

BOG has around 500 members: this includes associate members where households share membership. The main **concentrations of members** are around Berwick-upon-Tweed (63 households), Kelso (59), and St Boswells with Melrose (36). Other concentrations north of the Border are around Edinburgh, (which is outwith the Borders), Duns, Selkirk and Coldstream. South of the Border there are concentrations round Alnwick and Wooler. Further members are scattered across the Borders and in other parts of Scotland and England.



We do not collect detailed information about members. There are about 40 members for whom we have a postal address but no email address. The ratio of female to male members is very roughly 4:1. We don't have details of the age profile of members but most come from the older age groups, from those who have gardens and the time to garden. We don't keep records of who attends events or helps out on Potato Days but estimate that there about 30 to 40 more active members.

Data Protection

Our Website Manager/IT Co-ordinator ensures that we comply with legal requirements.

ACTION needed

- ***Seek to recruit a wider range of members.***

Who are our Partners?

Our partners vary from year to year as groups and organisations emerge or change. The pandemic has limited activities in the last two years.

- Work with individual **schools** can depend on the enthusiasm of individual staff members and the constraints of the curriculum. We have developed a presentation for use in schools and donate potatoes for pupils to grow.
- In normal years, we welcome the participation of suitable **stallholders** in Potato Day.
- Members have attended the winter programme of talks of **Greener Melrose**.
- We have had a stall at **Berwick Slow Food Festival**.
- We used to work with **Harestanes** for Apple Day and this year will work with **Woodside Plant Centre**.

- We are members of **Garden Organic** and have made donations to them, for example, to help them improve their online presentations.
- We send the proceeds of Apple Day to **Farm Africa**.
- We have organised Gardeners' Question Times to raise money for **Alzheimer's Scotland**.

ACTION needed

- ***Seek to work with a wider range of partners***

5. BOG's distinctive features

What are the Borders like?

The Scottish Borders and north Northumberland cover a **large, thinly populated** area. The main towns are Galashiels, Melrose, Hawick, Jedburgh, Kelso, Berwick-upon-Tweed and Wooler. Much of the land is hilly, dominated by the Cheviots and the Southern Uplands. This brings the challenge of gardening at relatively high **altitudes**. Winters can be very cold and there is often the danger of late frosts and damaging winds. In the east it can be surprisingly dry. However, the Borders area also has some of the most fertile farmland in the UK, where sheltered gardens flourish. Much of the farmland is dominated by very large estates.

The largest **age-group** in the general population is 45-64 years old, and the smallest, 16-24 years old, with many young people leaving to get jobs or to go to university. The 65-74 group is increasing, with people moving into the area on retirement. The population overall is increasing because of net migration, mainly from 'down south'.

What makes BOG special?

BOG is a friendly group welcoming people of all ages. Members are not required to be fully organic but should be interested in learning about organic methods of gardening. We have no staff or premises and BOG depends on **volunteers**. The AGM is held in the hall of a village or small town.

Other **meetings** normally take place in a member's house and are followed by a shared lunch and garden visit. They are open to all members and there is no formal committee. The meetings are a good

opportunity to meet other people with a shared interest. All members can have their say.

The **shared lunch** is a key feature of BOG meetings, workshops and garden visits. People bring whatever they want, often home-cooked organic food, and we enjoy good food and conversation.

How has BOG developed?

BOG was formed in 1989 in the Galashiels area. From small beginnings it now has about 500 members. It is a company limited by guarantee (no. 279474) registered in Edinburgh. In 1997 it was registered as a Scottish Charity (SCO26903).

With increased awareness of the climate crisis and environmental degradation, BOG's ideas have become more widely accepted. Now that nearly all members have access to the internet, organisation is much easier. During the pandemic members became more confident in their use of Zoom.

For a fuller account of BOG's development, see the Appendix: The History of BOG

6. Communication

How do we communicate with the public?

- Our **website** bordersorganicgardeners.org is the public face of BOG. It was redesigned and relaunched in 2020. The site gives an overview of BOG and has an Events Calendar with details of the current meetings and online talks. There are also pages with information on, for example, gardening month by month and a peat-free directory.
- We have a **public Facebook page** where general information about organic gardening is occasionally posted.
<https://www.facebook.com/bordersorganicgardeners>
- We also have a **Twitter account** @bordersorganic. Currently this is not actively used
- At events such as Potato Day and Apple Day we give out BOG **membership forms** which contain information about BOG. These membership forms are also distributed via a limited number of retail outlets such as Woodside Plant Centre.
- We have two sets of illustrated **display boards** to use at public functions and an expanding cassette display vertical banner.

- We are developing a set of **leaflets** aimed at people new to gardening and specifically to organic gardening.

How do we communicate with BOG members?

- Members on the BOG mailing list receive **BOG enews** about once a month. This is used for announcements to members about events and any other ephemeral news. It also has minutes of meetings and links for Zoom meetings.
- **BOG News** is a printed magazine which comes out three times a year and is posted to all BOG households. It has news and longer articles on organic growing.
- **Google Mail groups**. There are two groups, one for general discussion and the other specifically for matters related to the impact of climate change on horticulture. Any member can join these on request and they can be used for general discussion or organisational matters
- Interested members have access to the **BOG Google Drive** which contains many files. This is BOG's document store where working documents for the organisation are held, as well as images that can be used in BOG publicity.
- A **Facebook group** for members was set up in 2020 to share photos, news and queries. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bordersorganicgardeners>. This is a private group and members can ask to join the group through Facebook.

BOG has a **membership system** called *Membermojo*. This holds members' details and is used for both postal and email distributions. It also deals with subscriptions and renewals. There is an interface onto the BOG website (under the menu option 'members') where members can view and update their membership details.

7. Finance and resources

BOG is registered with Companies House as a charitable company limited by guarantee (**Company number SC279474**). The registered Office of BOG is c/o Andrew Haddon & Crowe WS, 3 Oliver Place Hawick, Scottish Borders, TD9 9BG.

BOG is also a charity, registered with OSCR as the Regulator and registrar for Scotland's charities and our **charity number is SC026903**.

BOG holds its financial assets with Triodos Bank (UK) in a charity account (16-58-10 20049684). As of Oct 2021, cash reserves were around £16,000. We have agreed to retain a **capital reserve** of £10,000 at all times, to cover the high financial risk of Potato Day.

There are three authorised signatories for the BOG cheque account: Michael van Beinum, Keith Knight and Sarah Eno. The use of cheques has become very rare. The same three people can authorise BACS transfers on line, with two needed for amounts of over £100.

We are committed to **spending the surplus** cash in ways that will further our aims. However, this has proved difficult to achieve during the pandemic. We have contributed to Garden Organic. We are seeking to support training in organic methods for horticulture students and staff at Borders College. We are trying to buy a gazebo and furniture to make it easier for us to take a stall to relevant events. We are writing leaflets which will be printed professionally.

ACTION needed

- ***Spend the surplus cash to further BOG's aim of promoting organic gardening***

Income is largely from membership subscriptions (minimum £10 annually). Gift Aid generates approximately £700 pa. BOG has a number of physical **assets** including gazebos, a printer, laminator, display boards and pruning ladder. Details and the location of assets are held in a document stored on Google Drive.

Insurance

We are insured with Zurich Insurance PLC through Conservation Volunteers, which we joined in 2016. The Policy number is XAO1220612883. The cover is for Public Liability (£5,000,000) and Personal Accident. The policy is managed by the BOG secretary with renewal due in May each year.

8. Equality of opportunities and access/diversity

Policy adapted from the model constitution of Scottish Charities

Policy

BOG is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in all its activities. It will take all reasonable steps to ensure that no-one connected to the organisation receives less favourable treatment than others on the grounds of gender, marital status, disability, race, colour,

religious belief, political belief, sexuality, nationality, ethnic origin, social class, age, trade union activity, responsibility for dependents or employment status. Such equality of opportunity will apply to activities provided by BOG and everyone is required to promote this policy. BOG will ensure that the services provided to members, volunteers and the community at large are sensitive and appropriate to their needs and are in accordance with this policy.

Implementation

We try to ensure that meetings are held in places with good access, heating and seating. Our annual membership fee is kept low so that no-one feels unable to afford to take part. We aim to provide a varied selection of talks, activities, visits and events which will appeal to a wide range of ages and experience. Through contact with schools, we encourage young people to have an interest in organic gardening and in protecting the environment. In our contact with schools, we are careful to abide by their policies.

Our Equal Opportunities Policy and the arrangements for its application were reviewed and agreed by the directors and postholders of BOG on ~~the~~ (date).....

ACTION needed

- ***Review and agree the policy.***

9. Health and Safety

We have health and safety procedures covering the potential hazards of visits and workshops. They were updated to include COVID-19. From 2021, programmes took into account Covid-related guidance from the Scottish and English governments.

We ask hosts to carry out a risk assessment in advance. We give members general advice on the nature of the visit or workshop such as distance to be covered, or the use of tools and ladders. There is specific advice on the use of the pruning ladder. At shared lunches, food is labelled in case of allergies. Members are alerted to fire safety precautions when we meet in rented halls.

At Potato Day, there is a health and safety manager at the Border Union Showground. We complete a detailed risk assessment provided by Borders Events Centre.

10. Constitution and organisation

BOG is a **company limited by guarantee** to limit any liability for members. The documents setting up the company are the Memorandum and Articles of Governance. A group looked at these in 2021 and identified a few amendments needed to update them which were ratified at the AGM. The Memorandum and Articles of Governance are available to members on Google Drive.

BOG is also a **registered charity**: the company directors are thus also Charity trustees. The **role of the directors/trustees** is to have oversight of BOG: in practice little is required of them but they are there in case of problems. There was a directors' meeting before the AGM in 2021.

Some **key points** are:

- BOG can carry out any activities in pursuit of its aims
- Funds can only be used to support its aims
- Directors are elected by the members
- We must keep a register of members and a register of directors. There should be no more than 15 directors.
- There are rules for AGMs and for Extraordinary General Meetings. BOG can use a special resolution (with at least 75% of votes cast) to change its name, to change its aims, or to alter its constitution.
- The quorum for an AGM is 15.
- Members elect a Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer and any other appropriate officers. The Chair and Vice-Chair serve for two years and can then be re-elected.

Apart from the Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer, the posts are fluid, depending on who is available and drawing on people's strengths. Some previous posts have been sub-divided to share out the work. We are always looking for new people to share the tasks.

Directors/trustees and officers

Directors/trustees: Keith Banyard, David Griggs, Susan Watts, Keith Knight, Ilona McDowell, John Wylie

Ex officio: Catherine Ross (Chair), Jane Simmons (Vice-Chair)

Company Secretary: Joyce Ambrose

List of posts 2021-2

Post		Description
Chair	Catherine Ross	Public face of BOG. Chairs business meetings. Agrees agendas. Checks and signs minutes.
Vice-Chair	Jane Simmons	Supports Chair.
General Secretary	Margaret Gribben	Deals with correspondence and insurance.
Minutes Secretary	Lesley Blackthorn	Takes minutes at meetings. Circulates draft and makes any amendments.
Treasurer	Michael van Beinum Supported by Keith Knight	Responsible for finances. Sends annual report to OSCR. Makes annual report to AGM.
Newsletter/seed order/compost order	Robert Leetham	Publishes BOG Newsletter three times a year. Organises seed and compost orders.
Membership Secretary	Penny Day-Nisbet	Keeps membership records up to date, supported by IT co-ordinator. Admits new members.
Press and Publicity	Sarah Eno <i>Support needed.</i>	Responsible for publicity.
Programme Secretary	Prue Pullen Supported by Maggie Norman	Researches, prepares and co-ordinates the programme of visits, talks and workshops.
Literature Secretary	John Wylie and Catherine Ross	Runs the bookstall at events. Orders suitable books. Keeps the stock and maintains records.
Website Manager and IT co-ordinator	Nick Prior	Manages website. Supports officers in use of IT.

11. Objectives for 2022-2023

1 Organisation

- Increase membership
- Recruit a wider range of people
- Encourage active participation of more members
- Secure succession planning
- Further improve publicity and communications.

2 Development

- Continue to provide a high quality programme for members
- Continue and extend work with children and young people
- Spend the surplus in ways which 'advance the education of the general public in the principles of organic gardening'
- Strengthen links with community groups and other relevant local organisations
- Encourage local gardening groups to garden organically.

3 Sustainability and climate change

- Reduce our carbon footprint
- Challenge the impact of climate change on horticulture
- Campaign against damage to the environment (peat, neonicotinoids etc).

ACTIONS

We will pursue these points in our meetings during the year.

- Evaluate Apple Day at Woodside and consider future plans for Apple Day.
- Try to raise BOG's profile amongst young people in the Borders and Northumbria.
- Seek to recruit a wider range of members.
- Spend the surplus cash to further BOG's aim of promoting organic gardening
- Review and agree the equal opportunities policy.
- Recruit a new press and publicity officer.
- Ask all office holders to write guidance and instructions for potential successors.

DISCUSSION POINT

- ***The question for us is – do we have a strong enough voice on our own, or should we bring the BOG perspective to larger campaigners?***

12. **Appendix: The History of BOG**

BOG was started in 1987 by a small group of organic enthusiasts. There was less than £10 in the bank at the end of its first year. There were monthly meetings, visits to each other's gardens and a key speaker once a year. They started a recruitment drive, advertising in the local press. Dave Allan wrote a monthly column for the Southern Reporter.

BOG joined HDRA, now Garden Organic, which started holding Potato Days from 1994. Urged by Alan Romans, BOG held its first Potato Day at Tweed Horizons. This was a Scottish first, and Dave ensured extensive publicity for it. There were over 400 visitors. The event moved to Borders College and then in 2008 to the Border Union Showground in Kelso. Although heritage seed potatoes are now available elsewhere, Potato Day remains well attended and has been the key event of the BOG year. In 2001 it was cancelled because of Foot and Mouth Disease; in 2019 it was postponed because of snow and in 2021 and 2022 it was cancelled because of the Covid pandemic.

When membership reached about 200, the treasurer became concerned about the lack of formal corporate structure. BOG therefore became a company limited by guarantee, meaning that each member's liability was limited to £1. There are now other forms of community company but we have decided to keep the existing constitution (see Memorandum and Articles of Association). In 1997 BOG was registered as a Scottish Charity (SCO26903).

Apple Days were held featuring apple identification, expert advice and displays of well over a hundred varieties. The early Apple Days were held in conjunction with Priorswood at Melrose (National Trust). In recent years, until 2020, when it was cancelled because of Covid, Apple Day was organised by Harestanes, which has now closed.

The first AGM was held upstairs in the Salmon Inn in Galashiels. The AGM is now usually held in November in a village hall. In a HDRA Organic Gardening Weekend in 2000, five Borders gardens were opened to the public. BOG used to organise an Organic Fair in October with tasting tables, sales of organic food and a 'disasters table'. David and Marina Catt with Dave and Jane Allan used to run a stall at Gardening Scotland.

Initially BOG News was edited by Jane Allan and published by Blair Cumnock. Over the years it has developed and become a substantial publication.

BOG now has about 500 members. It is run by a core group of volunteers, drawing on a wider group for events, especially Potato Day. We use working groups for specific tasks and activities. In recent years we have developed our use of digital communication.