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| APRIL 2021 |
| ***YOUR PLANET NEEDS YOU! Book Review***  *This month we interviewed local author Amy about her vision of a world where sustainable living is both possible and desirable.*  **Amy Charuy-Hughes**, is a Tooting Bec based author and environmental campaigner from London.  A BA Fashion Graduate, Amy founded her small business, [**Greener Together with Amy**](https://www.greenerwithamy.com/) in 2020. Her personal brand which focuses on sustainable living and environmental issues by spreading awareness through conversations and activism.  Within her local area in the London Borough of Wandsworth, Amy volunteers for [**Refill**](https://refill.org.uk/) at **Refill** **Wandsworth**, a [City to Sea](https://www.citytosea.org.uk/) not-for-profit campaign. The campaign aims to tackle the plastic pollution problem by working with local businesses to ditch single-use items and instead encourage their customers to use reusables. The scheme also encourages and supports the general public to use reusables and challenge and question businesses who overuse single-use packaging.  Amy has recently published her book ***Your Planet Needs You!*** co-authored with Bernadette Vallely, an award-winning environmental campaigner and founder of the Women’s Environmental Network (WEN).  Your Planet Needs You! is the essential beginner’s guide to understanding the environment and the threats to its wellbeing. From plastic waste to pesticides, food production and chemicals, global warming to species extinction, this book covers the topics that you need to know about. Available to buy online via Amy’s online shop, www.greenerwithamy.com   1. **How did you come to write “Your Planet Needs You!”. What has been your journey to this?**   I was contacted by Bernadette, who had been approached by Lennie Goodings, Chair of Virago Press to update and rewrite *The Young Person’s Guide to Saving the Earth*, written by Bernadette and Debbie Silver in 1990.  Bernadette wanted to involve a range of generations in the rewrite, approaching myself and Bethan Stewart-James, a then nine-year-old eco-activist from Wales. My campaign work for Refill attracted Bernadette to work with me, and when we first spoke, it was like catching up with a long-lost friend, it was then I knew I had to be a part of this exciting project.     1. **The subtitle of your book is “An Everyday Guide...” How important is the involvement of ordinary people, whatever their circumstances, in taking everyday actions to address our world's problems?**   Everything you do matters. Everything has a price, and your time is the most important thing you have. The way you spend your time and money is very important; it can literally affect your future.  You can also spend some time looking after the planet. Bringing compassion into your active social world will bring you joy. From gardening to litter- picking, there are so many ways to touch the earth and be at peace with nature.  Reading and informing yourself, campaigning, demonstrating, activism, writing and commenting on social media and on links to companies and government: these are all ways in which you can use your time productively to support the planet and your environmental goals. Volunteer for a local group; if there isn’t one you like, set one up yourself.  It doesn’t matter where you begin, what matters is that you do begin. It doesn’t matter what you know now, what matters is that you ask questions, that you search for answers and that you enquire about the very planet that you live on and need for your survival.  You can take action on your own or in a group; you can take action with a friend, in your workplace, your school or your university. At the end of the day, however, you must make personal choices about what you’re going to eat, how you’re going to live your life, the products that you buy and the books and newspapers you read.  Personal action will empower you; it will allow you to grow and learn, to develop. Whether it’s learning to ride a bike; learning to cook, so that you can decide what you eat; planting a tree or buying second- hand or vintage clothes rather than new, environmental action is good for the planet and good for you.  *Sample extract taken from Your Planet Needs You! Introduction.*   1. **What personal actions have been easy ones to make, and what ones are more challenging?**   I started by looking around me. I looked at the things I do and use everyday, and questioned the impact of these actions or items.  I have always done my bit for the environment, by recycling and not littering, for example, however I wouldn't have thought twice about a short car journey between Tooting and Balham. This has been one of my biggest changes, I have swapped my car for a bike and I’m feeling so much better about it! There are also many plastic-free alternatives to the everyday items which we are so accustomed to using. Such as swapping a plastic toothbrush for a beechwood or bamboo toothbrush and instead of washing up with a plastic sponge I now wash up with a loofah sponge, which is a plant-based sponge, made from the luffa vegetable. Such items are available to buy from my small online website, [www.greenerwithamy.com](http://www.greenerwithamy.com) - I also offer free collections!  The price difference between conventional plastic items and natural, plant-based items is noticeable, and I am sure this restricts a lot of people from making some eco-friendly swaps. This is a great shame, but actions such as petitions help fight this, if the items we use are damaging the planet then they should not be allowed to be manufactured. By petitioning and campaigning, we have a stronger voice and can call for governments to take action and ban these types of products, allowing natural, plant-based alternatives to become the ‘norm’.   1. **There is a list of environmental organisations in your book. Can you suggest some local groups or activities that have inspired you and would be welcoming to all?**   There are a lot of individuals and groups around our borough of Wandsworth taking action to help and protect the environment.  Pre-covid I was volunteering at the **Work and Play Scrapstore** in Tooting, the Scrapstore is a fantastic supermarket-style treasure trove presenting waste as arts and crafts materials to inspire creativity. It’s a fantastic place and I encourage everyone to pop down and have a tour, perhaps you may be tempted into a yearly membership, it is truly worth every penny!  There is also **Transition Town Tooting**, a community-led initiative that seeks to raise awareness locally of the effects of Climate Change and **Tooting Healthy Streets, a group of local residents working together for active, safe, green and social streets.** |
| REGEN SOIL SUMMIT MARCH 2021  This online summit was held earlier in March. In response to the UN recognition of the vulnerability of the world's capacity to feed itself (only 60 harvests left!) these inspiring talks featured international farmers and experts, giving lived examples of how we can replenish the soil sustainably instead of depleting it, as has happened through the wealthy nations' model of overuse of chemical fertilisers, monocultures and compression of the soil. They showed how it can yet be managed to preserve its structure and biodiversity in order to regain its ability to feed future generations.  This message is echoed in CAFOD's campaign, RECLAIM OUR COMMON HOME, to reclaim the world’s land and resources so that they are more fairly distributed and all peoples can live in dignity.  https://media4.picsearch.com/is?DA1h13_l_u0_AiNpGH8OhUcutgm5gAIZ38d2HO_6pWc&height=341  You can still view highlights from the summit on [www.soilregensummit.com/replays](http://www.soilregensummit.com/replays)  The ‘Designing for Life with Permaculture’ by Graham Bell, talking from the Scottish Borders was an amazing example of life being lived simply and abundantly. |
| **BIODIVERSITY**  ENABLE is the organisation that works towards improving health and wellbeing within the Wandsworth community. Their ecologist, Valerie Selby, gave a recent talk to the Friends of Tooting and Wandsworth Commons about the biodiversity strategy that is developing.  ‘Biodiversity describes the variety of life on earth. This variety is usually understood in terms of the diversity of plant and animal species, but it also refers to differences at all other levels of the natural world, including genetics, habitats and ecosystems.  Human activity is causing the loss of global biodiversity at an ever-increasing rate. Species need to be protected from extinction as they are valuable in their own right. We also depend on huge number of plants and animals for our survival as they provide us with resources such as food, shelter and medicine. Additionally, a healthy environment helps protect us from the effects of climate change. At a local scale, parks and open spaces that are rich in wildlife are more enjoyable places to visit.’  12 priority species for Wandsworth to focus on are:  Bats, hedgehogs, house sparrows, swifts, stag beetles, peregrine falcons, black redstart, smelt, brown trout, starlings, tawny owls and pollinator insects (including hoverflies, wild bees, soldier flies and wasps). Keep your eyes open!  Help biodiversity by joining the **Pollinator Paradise**, to encourage the planting of pollinator friendly flowers in and around Tooting. [www.transitiontowntooting.blogspot.com](http://www.transitiontowntooting.blogspot.com) |
| **WE’LL TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT FOOD**  **NEXT MONTH!** |