

Greenslate Community Farm

Project Experience Sheet

Allotments



A small allotment can provide large amounts of cash saving fruit and veg throughout the year. By growing your own, you'll be able to grow things you like to eat and frequently use. The allotments at Greenslate have been in preparation since Sept 2013 when we bought 6 pigs. These pigs have lived on this land thereby helping to clear it of a large quantity of weeds and undergrowth. They've also provided manure to fertilise it (watch your step!!). Current allotment holders seem quite please with the general quality of the soil condition.

Starting:

- The philosophy of Greenslate is to avoid using chemical sprays and artificial fertilisers so the first tasks is to find out about your plot i.e. the soil type, the weeds and what has successfully been grown in the vicinity in the past.

Weeds:

- Initially, it will be necessary to reduce the number of weeds on the allotment and there are several ways in which this can be approached.
 - Digging/Forking: Very effective but also hard work, removing the roots by hand and taking them to the heap to breakdown or digging a deep hole to bury them.
 - Rotovating: Quickly clears annual weeds but can make the problems with deeper rooted weeds even worse since individual pieces of 'chopped' weeds can grow back. Rotovating can also destroy the soil structure.
 - Mulching: By covering the surface, light is excluded and weeds will gradually die. Materials such as cardboard, old carpet or black polythene can be used. Mulching can be used to allow one section of the allotment clear itself while the remaining area is worked upon. It's also possible to plant through the mulch.



Environment:

- Allotments are not just places where production of edible fruits and veg take place. In order to have a successful allotment it is necessary to be able to attract a variety of wildlife from bees and insects to small mammals. By encouraging wildlife to the allotment you will be helping to keep the natural balance of the environment and to stop pests from getting out of control.
- Small trees can be planted to produce crops (apple/pear/cherry) and encourage wildlife.

Planning:

You can make donations to our project at: <https://localgiving.com/charity/botg>

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- Time spent on planning the layout of your allotment will pay dividends with higher yields of crops, reduced access problems, weed and pest control.
- Experience suggests that crop rotation systems should be employed. There are several systems that can be considered and the internet will provide a good choice for you to choose from. The most common systems are the 3 Year Crop Rotation and the 5 Year Crop Rotation.

Fruit:

- Cane and fruit bush crops are considered to be longer term fixtures because of the life span and the time necessary to become established. They will also require supporting & netting. For these reason they are not to be considered as a part of the 'rotation' systems discussed earlier.

Permanent Plants:

- Rhubarb, Asparagus, Herbs

Veg & Annual Flowers:

- Marigolds

Benefits of allotment gardening

- Being out in the open air, home grown produce, healthy lifestyle and meeting like-minded people are some of the benefits of having an allotment. If managed properly, an allotment can produce enough food to supplement a family's weekly food bill (with some hard work and dedication).
- Health benefits include burning off calories, absorbing vitamin D through the sunshine and, given a half decent summer, the chance to top up the tan (don't forget to take precautions and use the appropriate sunscreen)
- Allotments are essential habitats for wildlife with Birds, Bees, Insects and butterflies in abundance down at Greenslate. There have also been sittings of Toads, Mice & Owls. If you see anything else let us know!!

Further Information

Greenslate Community Farm is blessed with a wealth of knowledge on many aspects of growing plants, fruit and veg in the form of its many members. If you are unsure about any aspect of having an allotment please raise your question or problem with one of the members and it's sure to be resolved.

Acknowledgements

Greenslate Community Farm would like to thank the following in assisting us with this project:

- www.gardenorganic.org.uk
- www.nsalg.org.uk

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