

Healthy soil, healthy plants, healthy planet

Did you know that there are more living organisms in a tablespoon of soil than there are people on earth? Healthy, biodiverse soil includes a whole host of vertebrates, invertebrates, viruses, bacteria, fungi, lichens and plants that provide essential services for a healthy ecosystem. In fact, soils are home to more than 25 percent of our planet's biodiversity!

It can be helpful to think of our allotments and gardens as ecosystems, or in other words, a 'bubble of life' where everything is interconnected and interdependent. We often think of feeding our plants to achieve results at the allotment, but what about feeding the soil they depend on? After all, the food we eat is a reflection of the soil it's grown in.

Here are 4 actions to help grow healthy soil on your allotment:

Add compost & other bulky organic materials for nutrients and good soil structure. For more info about composting visit: <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/expert-advice/garden-management/composting/what-can-i-compost>

Minimise digging to avoid disturbing the complex soil life. To learn more about No Dig gardening visit: <https://charlesdowding.co.uk/>

Plan to rotate your planting each year, growing a succession of different vegetables in the same area. Useful info on crop rotation is available here: <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/expert-advice/how-to-grow/how-to-grow-vegetables-and-herbs/planning-your-planting>

Grow certain plants such as legumes (edible crops including peas and beans and 'green manures' such as clover or lupins) to fix nitrogen in the soil which can then feed the next season's crop. Learn more about green manures here: <https://www.gardenersworld.com/how-to-grow-plants/how-to-sow-green-manure/>

By looking after your soil, you'll be contributing to soil biodiversity and increasing the soil's nutrient content, both of which help to create the right conditions to grow healthy and nutritious food for you and your family. You'll also be contributing to limiting climate change, as healthy soils store carbon. Next time you think about feeding your plants, take a moment to consider the bigger picture and remember: *healthy soil, healthy plants, healthy planet.*

Anne—Marie Sanderson, Project Officer

8 tips towards greater self-sufficiency

Making the choice to live simply and become more self-sufficient doesn't have to involve huge life changes. This article will give you eight simple tips to assist you on your journey to greater self-sufficiency.

1. PRESERVE YOUR EXCESS FOOD

If you grow an abundance of a certain food, try different ways to preserve it so that you can enjoy it all year long. Preserving food is a great way to keep your pantry stocked throughout the year. There are many different ways to preserve food items, from pickling to drying, so experiment.

2. SWAP AND TRADE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Wherever possible, trade and swap with people around you for items you may need. It's a mutually beneficial process where you can recycle unwanted items and get useful items in return.

3. MAKE YOUR OWN COMPOST

You can easily use your kitchen scraps to create nutrient-rich soil for your plants. In fact, most organic matter can be composted! Not only does making your own reduce waste, it also helps your indoor and outdoor plants grow better and saves you buying compost for them.

4. UTILISE RAINWATER

Rainfall is free to use and a clean source of water. Rainwater harvesting has been practised for thousands of years as a way of collecting rainwater for later usage. There are many benefits to installing a rainwater harvesting system: it can be used for irrigation, it's available even when there's a hosepipe ban, and it's reported to save up to 50% on metered water.

5. USE PLANT CUTTINGS

Using cuttings to grow food-producing plants is a great way to keep sustainable on your self-sufficiency journey—cuttings are a great way to grow more food for less. Swapping plant cuttings is also an easy way to diversify and expand on plants you already own without having to buy new.

6. EMBRACE NATURAL RESOURCES

Nature offers us sun, rain and wind to use to become more self-sufficient and sustainable in everyday life. You can use natural resources to dry your washing instead of using a tumble dryer, you can capture water for your plants, and you can use the sun to naturally dehydrate herbs, flowers and food.

7. EAT SEASONALLY

If you plan your meals around what fresh produce is in season you can maximise using the plants that you grow as well as cut down on food costs. Seasonal food is cheaper to buy than out of season produce. It takes some planning to eat this way, but it's definitely worth it and it will also mean that you eat the freshest produce available.

8. CLEAN GREEN

Making your own homemade cleaning products is more sustainable, cheaper and healthier. By making your own cleaning products you can control what goes into them and you can reuse the containers you keep them in. It's easy to make cleaning products at home using simple pantry staple ingredients to move towards sustainable, self-sufficient living.

Article by Allotment and Leisure Gardener—Issue 4—2022

Allotments Newsletter

2022



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Chairman's Rambling

It's that time of year again, when we look back and reflect on the past 12 months.

We have certainly had challenges this year - rats and rabbits have blighted a number of sites. We have installed rabbit fences where possible and we have a pest control contractor visiting sites on a monthly basis to keep on top of the rat population. Let's hope the current cold spell helps to kill off some vermin. As always, we are looking at ways to improve what we do and will continue to do so for the forthcoming year.

A personal interest for me is bees and cross pollination. Bees are so fundamental to allotments and growing food. I would like to see you encouraging bees onto your plots. Bees love lavender, blue borage and marjoram to name but a few, so think about including some of those onto your plot next year.

Please share with us, any interesting images or stories from your plot. We would like to use them on our Facebook page or in future newsletters. The allotment community is a thriving place, let's celebrate it!

I really hope 2022 was a successful and productive year. Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year.

Best wishes, Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Alvin Finch



Stan Rigg RIP – Long Standing Castle Hags allotment holder

Stan died in March 2022 at the age of 91 and he lived in the same house at Aynam Place all his life. He and his Father, Myers Rigg originally had a plot on the Jubilee Gardens site. They moved to plots 4 and 9 on Castle Hags as soon as they were opened, which we believe was more than **60 years ago**, and they built the greenhouse that is still standing today. Stan constructed a bench in front of Plot 4 and it was used as a meeting point, especially on a Sunday morning putting the world to rights and even discussing some gardening! You would see Stan on the gardens nearly every morning and he always had a bit of advice for everyone. Over the years tenants came and went but Stan was always there. He is survived by his, son Philip, daughter-in-law Zena and grandson Christian.

David Salisbury, a neighbouring plot-holder of Stan's for many years, wrote the above tribute to him – thanks David!

From a personal point of view I would add that Stan was very knowledgeable and helped all newcomers to the site – even me many years ago. He was a good friend to all of us and the site doesn't seem the same without him.

Gwen Tordoff - Site rep, Castle Hags Allotments

Canal Head Development

Since the first Covid lockdown in March 2020, we have seen an unprecedented demand for people wanting to work an allotment. A recommendation from the Citizens Jury (Oct 2020) was to increase allotment provision across Kendal. Additional land was identified on the Canal Head site and the Committee agreed to develop this. The land has been cleared and the first phase of the development has been completed. Further drainage work is scheduled and we are currently liaising with Cumbria Wildlife Trust about developing a wetland area on site. It is anticipated up to 20 new allotments will be created and be available to rent by March 2023. **Janine Holt, Council Services Officer**



Climate Change and Allotments

Climate change projections for the UK predict wetter winters, drier summers, and higher average temperatures across all seasons, and 2022 has proved that to be true. Being aware of climate change can help you to prepare for likely shifts in average rainfall and

temperature on your allotment but also changing patterns of weather extremes.

Summer rainfall may become more intense, which may increase localised flood risk and soil erosion, even though the overall amount of summer rainfall is likely to decrease. Allotment growers often observe the early stages of drought through their growing. The Drought Risk and You project (DRY) found growers were adapting in creative ways to collect water and reduce water use on their plots.

What Does This Mean for Plot Holders?

There may be a need to store more winter rainfall for summer uses, and to reduce any dependency on public water supply. The growing season may be extended. Warmer winters will reduce the number of hard frosts. This means that aphids and other plant eating insects will not be killed during the winter.

Changing climate might affect crop/plant choice to mitigate climate change. For example, French beans are more drought tolerant than runner beans.

What Can You Do?

- Be prepared for periods of intense rainfall throughout the year. This might include avoiding exposed soils on sloping plots, or ensuring fragile plants are staked or have some protection.
- Collect water when it is wet to prepare for potential drought and possible hosepipe bans.
- Look at planting some drought tolerant plants that can grow with minimal water such as kohlrabi, beetroot and parsnips.
- Focus on winter annual in the areas with mild winters. Grow slowly through the winter to make the most of the periods of damp weather and rainfall and harvest in early spring.
- Most soil types can be improved by adding organic material. Dig in large quantities of well rotted garden com-post, and well-rotted farmyard manure.

Article by National Allotments Association Issue 4. 2022

Allotment Wars? Give peas (and staff) a chance.

We all know how frustrating it can be. You spend a precious weekend prepping the bed, your carefully nurtured seedlings are measured out, last year's compost has come through nicely, and you leave your plot with everything in place. Maybe this year's brassicas will be the best yet, and even the salad leaves are looking promising. You return the next morning, just to remind yourself what a lovely job you'd done and lo - Watership Down is being re-enacted in a live action display. The little blighters scatter in all directions, but mostly under the hedge, and through that irritating gap in the fence. Expletives come thick and fast (faster than you can pick up an old potato to chuck at the furry vermin). Someone must be to blame for this carnage. Someone...

But it's not fair to take this out on Council staff. However frustrated you may feel, it is never justifiable to be rude, aggressive or abusive to anyone on our allotments. The Council will treat any act of abusive behaviour as a material breach of the tenancy conditions. In a serious case, you could lose your plot.

We are working with neighbouring landowners to reduce the numbers of rabbits and rats who may look on our allotments as bountiful larders. You can do your bit by not leaving them easy pickings. But don't take your frustrations out on colleagues and fellow plot holders. It's not fair and it might cost you more than a crop of carrots.

Chris Bagshaw, Town Clerk



Half of butterflies at risk of extinction

The future of our butterflies looks bleak, as a new assessment reveals half of British butterfly species are on a newly formed Red List. Of the 58 regularly breeding species in Great Britain, 24 (41%) are now listed as threatened and a further five (9%) are listed as Near Threatened.

Some butterfly species that have been the focus of intense conservation work are now less threatened, providing hope for the future.

However, the risk of extinction is increasing for more species than it is decreasing. The threatened species comprise eight that are classed as Endangered and 16 as vulnerable to extinction.

The latest red list assessment of butterflies was published on 25 May and it makes grim reading, revealing a 26% increase in the number of species that are threatened with extinction.

Scientists from Butterfly Conservation have put together the new red list using data gathered by volunteers through the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme and Butterflies for the New Millennium recording scheme. It assesses all the butterfly species that have bred regularly in Great Britain against rigorous criteria of extinction risk set out by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Half of Britain's remaining butterfly species are listed as threatened or near threatened on the red list. Even prior to this assessment, British butterflies were amongst the most threatened in Europe, and now the number of threatened species in Britain has risen by five, an increase of more than a quarter.

While some butterfly species have become less threatened, and a few species have dropped off the red list, the overall increase clearly demonstrates the deterioration of British butterflies is continuing rapidly. It isn't bad news for all butterfly species, though. There has been an improvement in status for those that have been the focus of concentrated conservation efforts, offering hope for other species.

The large Blue, which became extinct in Great Britain in 1979 and has been the subject of an intensive, ongoing and highly successful reintroduction programme, has moved from critically endangered to near threatened. The Duke of Burgundy and Pearl—bordered Fritillary, which have also benefited from targeted conservation efforts, both moved from endangered to vulnerable.

The production of the new red list of British butterflies has been led by Butterfly Conservation with input funding from Natural England. Find out more about the red list <http://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/half-of-british-butterfly-species-on-new-red-list>

Article by Butterfly Conservation—Issue 140 Summer 2022

Want to contact us?

You can call Janine Holt on 01539 495793 Monday to Wednesday, 10am to 3pm, but you may find it easier to email. janine@kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk, or pierre@kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk. You can read details about the Allotments Committee at www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk/kendal-town-council/committee-council-membership/

We have site representatives vacancies on Natland Road, Sedbergh Road, Sandylands, Shaws Brow and Town View If you are interested in becoming a site representative please contact Janine Holt 01539 793495 or janine@kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk