

Vale Community Hospital Allotment Scheme, Dursley



We now have 60 Raised Bed allotments, all taken, with a reserve list. During this difficult time of Government restrictions, it's been a secure and restful place to be for tenants, hospital staff, patients and relatives. The relaxing feeling of being on this site is commented on by many visitors. The wildlife is amazing - recently we found a Privet Hawk Moth which was stunningly beautiful. We've managed to stop the

boundary hedges being cut in the summer to protect the nesting birds, so this along with regularly feeding them, means there are plenty living close by.

The volunteers working on the hospital grounds keep it looking bright and vibrant. We've been dividing up plants for new areas being cleared and have plans for a wildlife pond. Thanks to Build It for donating gravel for our prairie roundabout and to Tesco Bags of Help for our new polytunnel - big enough to shelter from the rain.

Food Preservation & Seed Saving Workshops at the Vale



Erin from the Natural Cookery School showed us how to make kimchi. One of our volunteer Seed Guardians took us through the process of how to save seed, storage options, what to look for in terms of quality seed. Helen Pitel who is a local Permaculture teacher showed the participants different methods of propagation.



Cashes Green Community Allotments



We planted a few native broadleaf trees in recent weeks on the area which was previously scrub and brambles. We felt placement was quite important so it was necessary to pretend to be a tree for a while. The photo diagonally below here, you can see a two year old

rowan being planted. I found it growing under a bamboo in my garden, self-seeded. Also, you see a hornbeam being simulated so we could get a good idea of how it might look in a couple of years.

Both will be very good trees for wildlife. It's good to volunteer because then when someone asks "What did you do yesterday?" you can reply "I was being a tree".

We have the base for the anticipated bench overlooking the pond and Selsley Common. We also have a bay for wood compostable material (twiggy stuff, old bushes, prunings) to keep this off the main heaps until they have been processed. Soon we will have nice new composters where a good mix of carbon and nitrogen will be mixed to get really hot and rot down to lovely stuff in a matter of a couple of months.



We do actually do stuff as well as drink tea. The companionable moments are as important as what we achieve materially. Not that we haven't achieved a huge amount in a year: We have a shed, raised beds, mini plots & of course, the lovely pond which served as the setting for Wednesday's tea break. And what I found was so lovely was a discovery I observed which I personally made some years ago with my first pond: Here, under the surface tension, is a whole world which though seemingly serene to our eyes, contains the life-and-death struggles, the myriad interactions and fascinating lives of countless creatures only found in water. You could look into this pond all your life & never get bored such is the wonder of this tiny universe.

Churchdown

We said goodbye to most of the tomato plants, who had finally succumbed to blight, but one of the surgery staff took home the green ones to make chutney!

A huge thank you to The Producers - a group of retired men who build wooden structures for community projects - who built us as an extra four raised beds. They've provided all the wood for free and also built them with no costs. We've filled most of them with top soil and will soon be planting up with autumn crops such as broad beans, overwintering onions and garlic.



New Development: Ebley

Stroud District Council have offered to let us use a lovely, flat, area of land in Ebley. We're not sure what it will become in the longer term but at the moment we're using it as a fruit, native and edible hedging nursery, plant re-homing nursery, bulk growing of seeds for our Community Seed Bank.



Ideas being discussed include a cuttings nursery (people come in, learn how to take cuttings and go away with some) and herb garden. We've been donated some funds to buy a polytunnel - many thanks to Gloucester Helping Hands. We have put in a pond, compost bays and someone has volunteered to build us a potting bench out of recycled wood.



Stroud Community Seed Bank



Spring and Summer is a busy time for seed savers. Propagating, planting out, nourishing & growing veg, herb and flower plants, putting in place the necessary measures for saving their seed before storing ready for the harvest gathering in November this year.

A small group of us have been meeting monthly to discuss seeds and share stories, this has been really useful for planning ahead for events but also to bring confidence in our own journeys of seed saving. Alongside this discussion we have been flowing on Google Groups allowing a chance for information and sharing as and when we need. We hosted a Seed Bank Workshop in September, on Zoom. Seed Guardian, Richard, guided us through the basics of seeds saving with enthusiasm and delight. We hope to hold another workshop in the Spring, to inspire growers to take up the vital practice. Sally, another wonderful Seed Guardian, has been organising a film to be made of our Seed Winnowing machine which was crafted by the Men's Shed in Nailsworth last year, we look forward to sharing this video with you in due course. We are currently planning our Harvest Gathering in November, which, dependent on government restrictions, will be over 2 days, bringing together Stroud 2020 saved seed, sharing stories and discussing how to distribute across Stroud early next year.

