



June harvest: First early potatoes, blackcurrants, strawberries, mange tout.

### **Fruit Garden**

The wild fruit garden has really taken off this year. We have had excellent crops of Honeyberry, Blackcurrant and Strawberry. Raspberries and Blackberries are ripening. The cox apples are forming well. Keeping grass long around the plants has kept moisture in and worked positively with regard to nutrient sharing between plants. We also have more butterflies, moths and grasshoppers as a result and our hay making will provide another year's worth of deep mulch material for the traditional cultivation area.

We have introduced a plum and are waiting for the right weather to plant dwarf mulberry, miniature kiwi, bush cherry, and more gooseberries and currants.

### **Compost and bag gardening**

We have never removed any vegetation from the site. Everything including brambles and bindweed are composted. We use compost heaps to clear ground, moving them around and planting in the bare ground that is left behind. This system is working very well and makes once-a-week volunteering enough to maintain the plot to a suitable standard.

This spring we have moved compost into large dumpy bags and grown first early potatoes in them. Now we have harvested the potatoes they have been replaced by squashes and beans.

### **Grower in Residence**

Our grower in residence has done a fantastic job, bringing on kale, peas, courgette, squashes, sweetcorn and beans. Using cardboard, hay, and sheep fleece as mulch keeps the weeds down and the moisture in.

### **Water and structures**

We have realigned our water butt system on one shed and plan to do the second shed at a point when the butts are empty, and we have sourced a few paving slabs. We are having to import water from home water butts due to the hot weather. Where the wild fruit garden needs little or no water for established plants, the cultivated areas need regular applications for best results. With our current water holding capacity we cannot allocate any further land to traditional cultivation methods.

### **Raised planters**

The early heat has made it harder to get seedlings established in raised planters. We have had to apply shade nets which do not look very attractive, but they help to create a better microclimate. After several sowings we are finally making progress. The nets also keep the sparrows away from beetroot which we have discovered they like the leaves of. Early sowings were pecked away to nothing in a day.

The very deep, oblong planter is proving very good with regard to water and nutrient holding. The manger planter is shallow and plants are more exposed. This means it takes more water and suffers more from fluctuating temperatures between day and night.

### **Volunteers**

The number of regular volunteers at the site sits at seven. This number sounds low, but the site is small and that is enough people to do all the tasks required. We do have weekly drop-ins from people asking for advice and mainly the plot stands as a talking point and positive feature on the avenue that most people say they are pleased to have there.

### **Wildlife**

Slow worms remain on site in high numbers. It is easy to count up to thirty living in the long grasses and compost areas. Smooth newts are also present and breeding. We have one resident hedgehog family. We have not seen any frogs this year. We have managed to attract song thrushes to the wild fruit garden and they have done an excellent job keeping snail numbers low.

### **Climate**

The heatwaves are bringing very early crops and interrupting our planting timetable. This may mean that later in the year we have less than we would like. Salads and leeks have

bolted. It is hard to plan what to grow. Last year we had hardly anything by this time as the spring was so wet and cold. This year we almost have too much. This is why having a broad range of annuals, perennials, and small fruit trees and bushes is important and we are lucky to have room to grow all of these things.

We are growing outdoor tomatoes and hope they do not succumb to blight. Cucumbers are also quite well ahead. Spring was unfavourable for introducing fruit bushes. It was too dry, and we would not have had enough water for new introductions. We shall have to wait until we get more rain, which could be in August. Or we will have to wait until autumn to complete our planting plan.

**End of report**

**Grenfell Avenue Community Allotment**