

Dig In

Community Food Growing in West Lancashire

Organic Veg Club - one year on



Back in March 2014, we reported on a new food growing project that was aiming to get local people pooling resources to grow fruit and vegetables. The project called Organic Veg Club was set up by Neil and Jane Hickson, who are looking at ways of producing food that are future proof and rooted in the local community, on their prime agricultural land between Burscough and Rufford.

The Organic Veg Club is modelled on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes popular in Europe and the U.S. There are currently about 100 CSAs set up in Britain, but this is the first in Lancashire. It works by people buying a 'share' in the crop in the form of a weekly fee and/or a small contribution of labour. In return they get a weekly supply of vegetables and fruit.

Neil and Jane Hickson are now reflecting on the first year of the Organic Veg club: *'The first growing season was the start of our learning process for growing veg on a large scale. We had some crop failures but a great many more successes. It was a brilliant growing season to get us off to a good start. However, the best thing we have grown is a small community of amazing people which didn't exist before.'*

'We now want to grow this community into a much larger one. We want to give people the opportunity to get out into the country and to show them how organic growing techniques and permaculture can preserve and nurture land for future generations.'



Organic Veg Club is planning to launch a veg box scheme in the Spring and to double its membership in 2015.

If you are interested in finding out more, get in touch with Neil and Jane at email: lathomfarm@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/organicvegclub
www.organicvegclub.co.uk

“ the best thing we have grown is a small community of amazing people ”



January 2015

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LOVE POTATOES

Tattie Time

Make sure you don't miss the Allotment Federation's potato day. Well worth a visit to stock up on old favourites as well as choose some new varieties to trial. With over 80 varieties to choose from, plus fruit bushes and seeds, you won't be disappointed!

Free potato kits for schools

The Potato council is offering FREE potato growing kits to primary schools. To register, click [here](#)—but hurry, the offer ends January 31st!

Recipes

And if you're wondering what to do with all your newly grown potatoes later in the year, check out some of the 200 potato recipes here: www.lovepotatoes.co.uk/recipes



WLAFF
WEST LANCASHIRE ALLOTMENTS FEDERATION

POTATO DAY

SAT 31st JANUARY 2015

OPEN 10.00 AM — 3.00PM



THE CONCOURSE
SHOPPING CENTRE
SKELMERSDALE WN86LE

OVER 80 VARIETIES IN 1KG BAGS

+ SEEDS + BUSHES + BULBS +

West Lancashire Allotments Federation

A Happy New Year to you all! Plans are moving along for our third annual Potato Day – this year on 31st January in the Concourse Shopping Centre Skelmersdale (see above). Same spot as last year. Potatoes in 80+ varieties plus fruit trees and bushes, onions, garlic and lots more. We will be open from 10.00am till 3.00pm.

Congratulations to Chris Cheetham who has been honoured with alderman status in recognition of his contribution to life in Lancashire. Chris is Secretary of Skelmersdale Horticultural Society.

The WLAFF **Annual General Meeting** will be on Wednesday 11th February commencing at 7.00pm. The venue, with thanks to WLBC, is at their offices 52 Derby St Ormskirk. After the AGM Alan Hull from the National Allotment Society will give a brief talk and answer any questions. All growers are welcome. Please come along.

Ray Fowler



West Lancashire
Allotment's Federation



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GRow Organic West Lancashire

GROWL (GRow Organic West Lancashire) has been running since 2008 and was started as an initiative by the Soil Association. Its main objective is to encourage and support people who want to garden organically in West Lancashire. GROWL meets at 7:30pm on the third Thursday of every month at St. Marks Church Hall, Southport Road, Scarisbrick, L40 9RF. However, they often take trips out to visit various organic growers and gardens, especially in the summer months, so it is worth giving them a call to check where they are meeting.

Each meeting has a theme such as soil, pruning, vegetable growing, seed saving etc and different aspects of organic growing are discussed. Meetings are very informal and home made cakes and preserves often make appearance as enjoyment and sharing of good food are central to what they are about. A charge of £1 per adult attendee is made to cover room hire, tea, coffee and admin costs.

Gaynor and Neil say: *'We want GROWL to become the 'go to' place for anyone in the area who wants to take up organic growing; we would love to share our knowledge and enthusiasm. We also want to develop the website and create a really useful newsletter that will help connect organic enthusiasts throughout the North West and promote organic growing.'*

If you want any further information please visit their website at www.groworganicwestlancs.co.uk, drop them an email at groworganicwestlancs@gmail.com, or simply call Gaynor 07805 850531 or Neil 07803 925446.



Scutchers Acres

As well as planting 70 fruit trees to create a new Community Orchard near Burscough, Friends of Scutchers Acres have been growing mushrooms!

John Watt writes: *'On one of their weekly visits to Scutchers Acres during the autumn the children from Burscough's St John's Catholic Primary School - as part of their Forest School programme - were able to harvest a decent crop of Oyster and Shiitake mushrooms. These were mostly from logs which had been inoculated a couple of years earlier, in some cases by the children themselves or older siblings.'*

The children were very eager to have the opportunity to use the penknives to cut the mushrooms off their slightly tough attachments, and it also proved good practice for them to learn also to use a clasp knife correctly!



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Free recipe book

The Growing Minds project comprising six schools in Hillingdon, London has produced a lovely recipe book which can be [downloaded for FREE](#).

Each recipe contains at least one ingredient the pupils have grown themselves and all were recipes that the pupils had created themselves or were family favourites.

Thanks to Bryan Irving of Skelmersdale Food for Health for passing on this interesting article about Lancashire's apple orchards and the work being done to restore them—including a project in Ecclestone:

www.orchardnetwork.org.uk/content/lancashire



ORCHARD
NETWORK



And if you've been inspired to plant fruit trees, the Tree Council is offering FREE trees to schools and to community groups involving under 16s:

www.treecouncil.org.uk/grants/orchard-windfalls

Stakeholder survey - Your Council wants to hear from YOU!

West Lancashire Borough Council is inviting community groups and local businesses to give their views about where it should make reductions in spending or increase income.

The 2015 Stakeholder Survey gives organisations a chance to influence decisions that will be made about how services will be provided.

To complete the survey on behalf of your organisation visit www.westlancs.gov.uk/yourviews or print off the [attached pdf](#). The survey will take around five minutes to complete.

The West Lancs Community Food Growing Project aims to get more people involved in growing their own food and eating more healthily. We are working with local communities and schools to set up community food growing initiatives and providing help in finding the land (and funds) that might be needed. **We are keen to hear from anyone interested in growing their own food with others in West Lancs. Please get in touch!**

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Keep up to date at our website: <http://wlcvs.org/index.php/community-food-growing>



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