

Dig In

Community Food Growing in West Lancashire

Schools celebrate growing success at Show What You Grow 2015

A blooming good time was had by all as 72 children from 11 West Lancs schools celebrated their growing achievements at this year's Show What You Grow festival of school gardening

The children brought school grown produce, homemade scarecrows and magnificent displays of drawings, paintings and photos of their gardening work to the event at West Lancashire College on 8th July.

The Mayor of West Lancashire Nikki Hennessey opened the day and the children then enthusiastically took part in activities such as making a Veggie Creature, an Allotment Quiz, Happy Herb identification and a Grow Your Own activity book. After lunch, the children took to the stage to give presentations about their gardening clubs and the day ended with prize giving.

The event was organised by the Community Food Growing Project of West Lancs CVS in conjunction with West Lancs Allotment Federation and West Lancashire College, and was funded by Upholland Tawd Vale Lions. The event was supported by the local business community – M.A Forshaw of Scarisbrick donated all the vegetables and prizes were donated by Altys of Hesketh Bank, L S Systems of Tarleton and Morrisons supermarket.



West Lancs Community Food Growing Project supporting local people to grow their own food

Update from Organic Veg Club newsletter of June 3rd: Neil Hickson writes, 'At last we now have planning permission to put up our barn and poly tunnel. It has been a long slog and it's been a trial but we can now go ahead and build us some shelter and somewhere we can raise our plants. Thanks to all those who have supported us through this'.

OVC newsletter of June 13th: 'We don't let the grass grow under our feet here at Organic Veg Club (not strictly true, there is loads of it at waist height since the sun started shining). What I mean to say is that since my last newsletter announcing the granting of planning permission, we now have a barn and poly tunnel on the field. It has taken a lot of hard work but it has been achieved in less than a week'.



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New Allotment site for Skelmersdale

The Borough Council is moving forward with its plans to develop at least one new allotment site in Skelmersdale. Planning permission for the new site will be applied for this autumn and it is hoped, subject to planning approval, that it will be open by next spring. The new site will provide for up to 35 half plots and be located adjacent to the existing Skelmersdale Horticultural Society's site in Ashurst. The Council are looking to fully fund the creation of the site which will include security fencing and hard standing for car parking.

Stephen Kent from the Borough Council said that the council was pleased to move ahead with this project which will meet the needs of many people from the Skelmersdale area who are currently on waiting lists for an allotment in the town. Ray Fowler, from the West Lancashire Allotment Federation said *"this is great news and just what we have been pressing for for a long time. It is excellent that the Council have not only found the land but also the funding required to make the site a reality"*.



New food growing project in Downholland

Formed in 2013, the Downholland Community Allotment Project was born out of the desires of a number of local residents who wanted some land to grow fruit and veg, to be able to exchange knowledge and to enjoy the sense of community that allotments can bring. Despite some setbacks, 2015 has seen them finally getting "growing" – with some land being offered by a generous local resident under a *landshare* scheme.

Landshare brings together people who have a passion for home-grown food, connecting those who have land to share with those who need land for cultivating food. Since its launch through River Cottage in 2009 it has grown into a thriving community of more than 55,000 growers, sharers and helpers. www.landshare.net



Group organiser, local Parish Councillor Mike Wainwright said *"We live in the midst of Grade 1 agricultural land which farmers are, understandably, reluctant to use for anything other than commercial growing, but the landshare scheme enabled the opportunity to establish a relationship with a local resident who had some spare land ideal for our purposes."*

"As the land was not large enough for every member to have a plot the decision was taken to taken on a number of plots and farm the land collectively. With a range of members including retired residents and people with young families, it's an ideal arrangement - enables everyone to do as much or as little as they want"



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Quarry Bank starting to grow

Big changes are underway in the outside spaces of Quarry Bank Community House. With the help of Dave Ord (Rural Development Officer for Central and West Lancashire Community Restart), the Community Payback team, a fantastic bunch of volunteers and special needs learners with the WEA (Workers Education Association), the outside areas are in the process of being transformed.

The pond is in the process of being re-established with a bridge suitable for disabled access and the pathways around the garden area have been re-established. A range of fruit trees, such as apple, pear and plum have been planted around the pathways to create a small community orchard.

The amphitheatre has had the seating area repaired and the stage area is almost ready to be used by local community groups for shows and concerts. In early September, the drama group 'Dream-makers' are planning to do an outdoor performance of their own unique take of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'

The biggest change is the introduction of a community food growing area at the site with raised beds and a polytunnel that have been built through small grant funding and donations from the local community. The raised beds are now fully operational, growing a range of vegetables from potatoes to pakchoi! Dave Ord, the main driving force behind the rejuvenation, has also helped to establish similar schemes at the Ecumenical Centre and Edge Hill University, all for the benefit of the local community. The Community Restart team, Community Payback, partner organisations and a dedicated team of regular volunteers have removed brambles and undergrowth, removed invasive trees, built raised beds, laid paving flags, erected fencing, erected the polytunnel, planted and watered seedlings, introduced native woodland plants and trees, all for the benefit of the local community to use as a community garden.

Anyone wishing to get involved in helping to maintain the restored gardens at Quarry Bank Community House and the raised beds and plants in the polytunnel should call down to Quarry Bank, during working hours Monday to Friday, contact Quarry Bank on 01695 50446, or Dave Ord on 0780 580 3065.



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Annual Hesketh Bank Allotment Show

Don't miss this free fun family event! **Saturday 5th September** will see the Annual Hesketh Bank Allotments Show being held on the Poor Marsh site on Shore Road.

The 60+ allotment holders get the chance to show off their growing skills by exhibiting their preened and polished prize produce. You could call it the plant equivalent of Crufts. Excellent weather has been ordered for the event, but just in case cover will be available with a large hut, 2 marquees, a poly tunnel and several gazebos available in the unlikely event of dodgy weather. The lovingly groomed cucumbers, leeks and tomatoes etc will be on display from 10am with judging taking place between 12 and 2pm. This will be followed by the award of prizes for best in show and the usual tearful acceptance speeches.

Throughout the day refreshments will be available with delicious burgers and hot dogs etc from our charcoal fired barbecue and there will be the opportunity to purchase home made cakes and food as well as home grown plants from the allotments.

After the prize giving the fun will really start with our very own Poor Marsh Olympiad when we aim to recapture the true sporting traditions of our Greek forefathers by staging some similarly dramatic Olympic Events each with its own horticultural handicap. The Fun Events, which begin at approximately 3pm, are open to all comers and will include the following events with medals awarded to the winners

Hay Jump
Limbo

Spud n Spoon Race
Turnip Toss

Tug o War
Wheelbarrow Race

Sack Race
Rhubarb Relay

Why not come along and enjoy this fabulous free family fun event in friendly Hesketh Bank!

Steve Kirby - Hesketh Bank Allotment and Leisure Growers

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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