

# Dig In

Community Food Growing in West Lancashire



## Potato Day 2018

West Lancashire Allotments Federation (WLAF) is holding it's sixth annual **Potato Day this Saturday 3rd February 2018 between 10am-3pm** at the Skelmersdale Concourse Shopping Centre WN8 6LE.

**For many, the Potato Day marks the start of the allotment year, and it's an event not to be missed!**

Potato Day customers are able to choose from over 100 varieties of potatoes - many of which can't be found in the shops. Also available will be seeds, onions, garlic, soft fruit bushes and fruit trees and the chance to discuss all things related to growing with members of the West Lancashire Allotment Federation.

The event has been organised in conjunction with Brighter Blooms Nursery of Preston. Skelmersdale Library will also be in attendance with gardening books to lend and the opportunity to join the Lancashire Library.



**WLAF are looking for volunteers to help on the day**, so if you could lend a hand it would be greatly appreciated! They need help with setting up (from around 8am) and clearing away (from around 3/3.30pm) - this involves some lifting and setting out tables etc.

If you can help or would like further information, please contact JD by emailing [wlafsecretary@outlook.com](mailto:wlafsecretary@outlook.com)



## Radio Lancashire interview

WLAF secretary John-Daniel together with Steve Martin and Ray Fowler were interviewed on Radio Lancashire last Sunday 28th January on Stephen Lowe's show 'Lancashire' Outdoors talking about the Potato Day and the Federation.

You can hear their excellent interview here:  
[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05td74d](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05td74d)

(The interview starts at 8 minutes in and continues at 21 and 39 minutes)

## Seed kit applications 2018 now open

Do you have a community space that could be transformed with wildflowers this year...? Are you ready to become part of the UK's largest wildflower initiative?

Grow Wild UK is inviting applications from people who are ready to create pockets of wild beauty in their neighbourhood.

Applications are simple and need to be in by end of February: <https://www.growwilduk.com/apply>

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

## Grow your way to health in 2018

With the start of Spring just a few weeks away and a new allotment year on the horizon, we've been taking a look at just how 'growing our own' benefits our health and wellbeing.

A couple of years ago, a study by [Westminster and Essex universities](#) found that those who spent as little as 30 minutes a week in their allotments saw significant improvement in mental well-being, and had fewer weight problems than those who did not garden. They also had lower levels of fatigue, depression, tension and anger - and had higher self-esteem and better general health.

Another study by [Plymouth University](#) found that allotment gardening 'provides a stress-relieving refuge; it contributes to a healthier lifestyle, creates social opportunities, provides valued contact with nature, and enables self-development'.

Allotment gardening is also one of the few activities that encompasses all of the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) - five simple steps to improve your mental wellbeing

as set out by New Economics Foundation (NEF) - see summary on right.

**Food for thought in these dark days of winter?**



### Connect...

Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

### Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

### Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

### Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

### Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

*Five Ways to Wellbeing*

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## Allotment sites update - part 2

In the second of updates from local sites we visited in the Autumn, we look at Roby Mill and Hesketh Bank.

**Roby Mill Community Allotment Group (RoMCAG):** In an idyllic location in the centre of Roby Mill village, RoMCAG was the first site that the CVS Community Food Growing project helped to create. Seven years on and they are still going strong!

Over the coming year, the group are planning to convert three of their waterlogged plots at the bottom end of the site into a fruit orchard so they will then have 9 plots - 6 of which are currently occupied. They are in discussion with a local nursery which may take one of these three plots (currently used as a wood pile) for a polytunnel which nursery children can access to use both in the summer for growing plants and in the winter as a covered and secure play area.

They are also looking to raise funding for creating raised beds, adding additional rain water collection and storage capacity, reclaiming the pond area at the bottom of the site, purchase of fruit trees, a new second hand mower, and perhaps a rotavator.



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## Hesketh Bank allotments

Hesketh Bank Allotment site was set up in June 2010 by the Parish Council with help from the CVS Community Food Growing project. It has been popular since day one and is still thriving, with all 63 plots full and a waiting list.

The site now called Hesketh Bank Poor Marsh Allotments and Leisure (PALS) is firmly rooted in local neighbourhood with strong support from neighbours. A Peace Garden is in process of being created at the entrance to the site. The plotholders hold numerous group activities which help raise funds. The site is very well cared for and organised, and blessed with keen volunteers who look after the main common areas.



**>>> Don't forget:** Although most allotment sites in West Lancs have people on their waiting lists, there are a small number of plots available on sites in the east of the Borough in Appley Bridge / Roby Mill / Up Holland. These plots are available for people to start THIS season, so please spread the word!

If you know someone who may be interested, contact the site direct - all contact details on the CVS website here: [www.wlcvs.org/projects/community-food-growing/](http://www.wlcvs.org/projects/community-food-growing/)



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## Tesco Bags of Help grants Burscough winner

Tesco's local community grant scheme 'Bags of Help' uses the money raised from the sale of carrier bags to fund thousands of local projects in UK communities. Three community projects in each local area are voted on by customers in Tesco stores every two months. The vote winner receives a grant of up to £4,000, second place receives up to £2,000 and third place up to £1,000.

We are delighted to report that following the latest round of voting at Burscough's Tesco store, Burscough Community Farm won the vote and has been awarded £4,000!

Neil, co-ordinator at the Community Farm, says: *'We are so pleased that customers at the local Burscough store voted for us as their winning project! As the Bags Of Help campaign is linked to such a strong environmental issue as reducing the number of plastic bags in the world, we thought that it highly appropriate to ask for money to fund our own sustainability project - a solar panel powered, off grid power supply.'*

*'We are totally 'off grid' at the farm, with no mains water or power. Being able to light the barn, run power tools or an irrigation pump, or to charge a laptop, will open loads of opportunities for us. By having power on site we will be able to extend our season - being able to light the barn means we can work longer into the evenings. We will have the ability to run evening courses and put on film shows and seminars. It will give us the opportunity to do more of what we are doing, for the good of the community. Being able to do all of this just using solar power also sends out a big environmental message.'*

Find out how your group can apply for the Tesco Bags of Help scheme [here](#).

For more information about Burscough Community Farm, check out their new website at: <http://burscoughcommunityfarm.org/>



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!**

**Martin Trengove**  
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Keep up to date at our website: [www.wlcvs.org/projects/community-food-growing/](http://www.wlcvs.org/projects/community-food-growing/)



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