

Dig In

Community Food Growing in West Lancashire



Potato Day 2020

Don't miss the first Potato Day of the decade! West Lancashire Allotments Federation (WLAFF) is holding its eighth annual Potato Day this Saturday 1st February 2020 between 10am-3pm at the Skelmersdale Concourse Shopping Centre, WN8 6LE.

For many of us, 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 (WLAFF). The event has been organised in conjunction with Brighter Blooms Nursery of Preston.

WLAFF 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 8.45am) and clearing away (from around 3pm) - 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

Trees for schools

The Community Food Growing project celebrated National Tree Week by helping local schools to plant apple trees. At the end of November, Debbie, Claire and Rachel (AKA the Tree Musketeers!) delivered Falstaff apple trees to 15 schools right across West Lancs.

Even heavy rain and hard frost couldn't dampen the children's enthusiasm for getting stuck into the digging and making sure their new apple tree had the best possible start.

Well done to everyone for your hard work, and here's to lots of apples for years to come...!

(To see how one school will be using their tree, see page 2)



Appley Bridge



Westhead



Ormskirk



Tareyton



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Newburgh CE school writes:

Thank you for the apple tree! It has now been planted in a pot in our Early Years area so the children can watch the tree develop through the seasons. As you can see from our photos, they have been exploring apples in preparation for getting the tree. This will make a valuable addition to our Early Years area as we have both Nursery and Reception aged children (3-5 year olds) who will benefit from your donation'.



Pie and Patter at Westhead St James

As part of our tree planting in National Tree Week, we delivered an apple tree to Westhead St James school. While we there, they told us the story of their large bramley apple tree which takes pride of place in their expanding school orchard. It is one of only 60 trees which were planted for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and when it fruited this summer, they picked and stewed the apples.

One of the school's values in the Autumn term was community, so they decided to use the apples to reach out into the wider community. The children worked together to bake apple pies and then between them organised a December Pie and Patter event, inviting older members of the Westhead community to come and enjoy eating the pie with them.

What a wonderful idea!



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Appley Bridge allotments celebrate grant

Appley Bridge Allotment Society is celebrating success having secured a grant of £500 from the Eric Wright Trust. The grant will go towards refurbishing the old and rotting pathways and plot boundaries as part of their regeneration of the site. Following a recruitment drive by the new committee last year, the new ploholders are getting stuck in and have worked together through the Autumn and Winter to start transform the site. The grant will give them the boost they need to get set up for the growing season ahead.

The Eric Wright Charitable Trust Small Grants Fund is open to applications from any small voluntary and community group and is focused on the following priorities: elderly people, health, education and training, carers, or youth. Funding is up to £500 - just fill in the simple application form available from CVS on 01695 733737 or email enquiries@wlcvs.org



New Barnes Road allotment site - update

As reported in previous Dig In editions, a new 12 plot allotment site is being planned in Skelmersdale as part of the new housing scheme at Barnes Road.

The development is progressing, with West Lancs Borough Council working with Lancs County Council to finalise details and planning approval has recently been secured. However due to delays in engaging the developer for the site, the Council is now not expecting the new allotment site to be ready until Spring 2021.

A preliminary waiting list is being developed and anyone living in Skelmersdale is invited to register their interest at this stage by emailing your contact details to: Stephen.kent@westlancs.gov.uk



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Dates for your diary

Hesketh Bank

> **Saturday 30th May 2020:** Don't miss the next Mikron Show, being held at the Poor Marsh Allotments in Hesketh Bank starting at 7.30 p.m. This annual event is sure yet again to produce a top quality performance from a hugely talented cast who always manage to combine a unique blend of musical and acting talent with an incredibly clever storyline and script to deliver laughter and entertainment by the bucket load.

For those who are new to the event, this is an outdoor performance held within the lovely setting of the Community Garden at the Centre of this award winning Allotment Site. Entry to the event is free, but a collection is taken after the show. Bring your own chairs and picnic food / drinks. You can also reserve a well placed VIP table and chairs for just £10 by contacting Steve Kirby on 07766 367550.

> **Saturday 5th September 2020:** You are invited to the 10th Annual Allotment Show at Hesketh Bank Allotments. To celebrate this special anniversary, there will be lots of special events and exhibits to mark the occasion as well as the usual hugely popular family fun day, which always follows the presentation of prizes for the best endeavours of their award winning allotmentees. They are planning to make this year's show even better than ever, so watch out for more details!

Calling all school Gardening Club leaders...

Do you run a school gardening club in West Lancs?

Do you want to:

- get some Gardening Club guidance?
- find out the best crops to grow?
- find out what resources are available?
- look at other elements to put into your school garden?
- develop links to the curriculum?

Come along to our Training Day on Monday 2nd March!

We are delighted to have enlisted RHS trainer Anne Gunning to help us get off on the right foot for the year ahead. The day is open to any teachers/T.As/parents running gardening clubs and is FREE!

The training day will be held at CastNW near Newburgh. For more information, email debbies@wlcvs.org



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Resources

Recycling garden tools trains prisoners

An interesting new national project is equipping the next generation of gardeners, teaching prisoners new skills and reducing waste all at the same time. The Tools Shed project from the Conservation Foundation repairs broken or unwanted garden hand-tools and gives them free to local schools and community volunteers to help create and maintain green spaces. The tools are refurbished in prison workshops, providing training for prisoners and supporting them in finding occupation post-release.



Photo credit: [Pleuntje on Flickr](#)

To find out how you can donate your garden tools or to register to receive refurbished ones for your school or group, go to: <https://conservationfoundation.co.uk/projects/tools/>

Grow Social

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) has a brand new project for 2020 which is aiming to bring people together using the power of plants. If you are looking for ways to link with the community around you, the Grow Social project could be just what you need!

In seeking to address the growing health concerns around loneliness, the RHS is inviting groups, schools and people to host an event where others in your community can feel comfortable to join in, try new things or just have a good chat. Events can be whatever you want - all they ask is that you try to involve plants in some way.

To help with your planning, they have created a Grow Social pack containing top tips, posters, stickers, conversation-starter cards and seeds, to help you make your event a success. For more information and to register for your free pack, go to: <https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/Competitions/Grow-Social>



Active West Lancs grants

Find more ways of getting people involved in your growing project and apply for an Active West Lancs grant. Active West Lancs is providing small grants to groups to help them get people in West Lancashire more active and by so doing help to improve either their mental or physical health. For more information, go to: <http://activewestlancs.org/grants>



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Burscough Community Farm news

Neil Hickson writes: 'Yay, we're organic! We have been since we started out over 5 years ago, but without certification we couldn't call ourselves 'organic' when selling our veg.'

'We officially became organically certified by the Soil Association back in July, but we recently had our latest inspection. I'm pleased to say we didn't have any compliance issues and the inspection went perfectly. The Soil Association organic symbol can now be proudly displayed on all our labels and boxes.'

'This has been a long term ambition for the farm, and special thanks must go out to Gaynor for all her help in setting up the procedures we needed to get our organic status.'

'This is a new era for us, being certified will help with wholesale and direct sales.'



Photo credit: Neil Hickson

BCF organic veg boxes



'Would you like to order an organic veg box? We are seriously thinking of re-starting our veg box scheme next year, so is there a market for it? The best place to start asking is here with you, our supporters.'

'I've started a small survey to see if there's any interest. If you think you might like a veg box please fill in the form [here](#)'.

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!**

Debbie Shepton
Claire Cooper
Rachel Wheble

CVS Community Support
CVS School Mentor
CVS School Mentor

Email: debbies@wlcvs.org
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Keep up to date at our website: www.wlcvs.org/projects/community-food-growing/



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