

On the plot



A Sanctuary from Covid

Our plots have most certainly been a place of refuge during this stressful time, but they are also creative and productive spaces. For families having to home school they have provided an outdoor classroom, be it a mud kitchen for toddlers, learning about ecosystems from a bug hotel or mini pond ecosystems by investigating the bug hotel or mini pond, using maths skills to plant out seedlings or being inspired by the flora and fauna for an art or literature project.

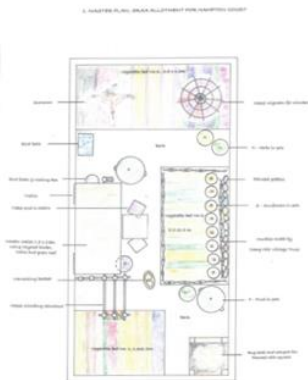
Being connected to nature at the allotment during the pandemic has also given many of us great solace. Many of us are passionate about



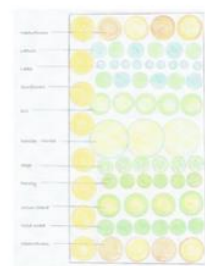
gardening organically, for example putting up a nest box for bluetits or using environmentally friendly barrier methods as recycled coffee grains to protect our produce. After an hour or two of serious weeding or digging it is wonderful to take ten minutes to sit quietly, pick up the binoculars and connect with the nature around us. As

one member said, "whatever is going on in the world an allotment reminds you that nature doesn't stop".

There has been much to reflect on over the past year and, as anxiety levels went up, growing our own fruit and veg proved to be not only good for the environment but also of great physical and mental benefit to us all.

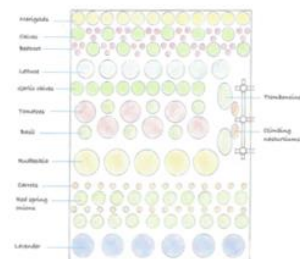


The design of the plot was a joint effort, with Chris masterminding the overall design and three of us each taking responsibility for a bed. In keeping with the theme, we aimed for a spread of rainbow colours across the three beds. It includes a shelter as a place of rest, with a green roof made courtesy of the



children of Abbey Primary School, under the watchful eye of Martyn. The scarecrow is being made by children from Bernard's Heath School while Maple Primary School are growing strawberries in Wellington boots for us. Fellow allotmenters from Camphill are producing the willow hurdles and painted pebbles to mark the borders of the beds.

As project lead Tricia told 3 Counties Radio, the project has really brought the community together.





Working with Nature

There is a small water feature to attract wildlife as well as a bug hotel.

The planting includes flowers to encourage pollinators and companion plants to help control pests and diseases.



A member of the Growing Team, keeping an eye out for slugs and snails.

We have re-used, recycled and upcycled as much as possible - old planting trays, tables and chairs, a washing-up sink for the bird bath, locally sourced hazel for climbing supports, tin cans for plants. We have, of course, used only peat-free compost.

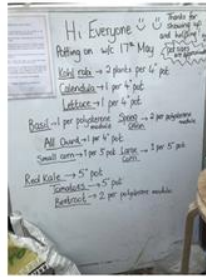
Top tips for the Summer

Now that the sun has finally appeared, keep watering, ideally early in the morning. Have a regular routine for watering tomatoes.

You can still sow chard seeds, and it's less likely to bolt than spinach. You can also do successional sowings of salad crops such as lettuce, radish, salad onions and beetroot.

Give your plants a light feed.

This would not be possible without the enthusiastic and amazing help from the Sandridge Road Allotments community.



The Growing Team

Every day, the team have turned up to open and close the polytunnel doors, water the seedlings, pot them up into



larger containers, and cover tender plants with fleece while we waited for the warmer weather to arrive. People have brought along extra seedlings and much-needed surplus pots. Under the supervision of Growing Team leader Joy, the plants have been nurtured into RHS show quality standard.



The Construction Team

Among the items our Construction Team, led by David, have created are a shelter, and a composter/bug hotel. All have been made using recycled materials, and the shelter is sturdy enough to support the green roof.



With thanks to our sponsors and supporters:

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