

## **St Cuthberts Allotment Project 2021.**

A gardening green revolution has started while Covid-19 has been with us – with increasing scientific evidence highlighting the critical importance of garden plants, gardens and gardening benefiting our physical, mental, and social wellbeing. There are very few, if any, other activities that can achieve all the things that horticulture and gardening can – in particular, the measurable beneficial impacts on active lifestyles, mental wellbeing, and social interaction.

There have been plans to make raised beds for a few years since my arrival as Vicar but since Covid- 19 began as a church we felt there was a real issue with the wellbeing in our community and although many have gardens some only have small patches or lack the skills, they need to be able to grow vegetables and have large areas of wildflowers. As a Eco Church which is in the process of going for Gold award; Managing the gardens within St Cuthberts is of vital importance and we could envision how the church might take this forward. When Arren Dodd age 12 approached me to talk of the possibility of having a vegetable patch we both felt that the time is now right. Due to this we are also making Arren the Lead for the youth areas as its his idea on how to plan the Sunday school areas. We feel this will help build leadership skills as well as learning from more experienced gardeners and the skills he takes forward into life will be useful.

### **Wellbeing Garden**

The act of gardening helps us to keep fit and connect with others, to enjoy and be part of nature and to revel in colour, aroma, wildlife, and beauty. Simply contemplating nature helps to rest and recharge our brains. Aside from cultivating beautiful plants that delight our senses, we can also grow food and even cures for minor ailments in our gardens. Gardens and plants also improve our environment, protecting us from noise and particulate pollution, as well as cool us in extremes of temperature and help mitigate against flooding linked to a changing climate.

Following a recent four-year scientific research project, which was a collaboration between the RHS and the universities of Sheffield, Westminster, and Virginia, Researchers have found that just making a greener front garden can make you feel happier, more relaxed, and closer to nature. They also examined the effect on participating households of adding ornamental plants to previously bare front gardens in economically deprived streets of Salford in Greater Manchester. Before the experiment only 24% of residents had healthy cortisol patterns. (known as the stress hormone) Over the course of the year following the plantings, this increased to 53% of residents. In addition, residents' perceived stress levels decreased by 6% once the plants had been introduced. More than half (52%) of residents said their front garden contributed to them feeling happier; 40% said it helped them to feel more relaxed and a quarter said it helped them feel closer to nature. This is equivalent to results following 8 mindfulness sessions! A front garden needs only a handful of plants to promote improved health for residents. Dr Lauriane Suyin Chalmin-Pui, who conducted the experiment as part of her PhD research and who is now an Royal Horticultural Society Wellbeing Fellow, said:

“We now have further evidence of the vital need to incorporate plants into our front gardens and domestic spaces. The stress reduction data is startling, in that there was such a

significant response with a relatively small number of plants. Now we know that access to a tiny patch of nature has beneficial effects for our health.”

Because of this we are ensuring we also engage in planting up the garden with sensory plants and bee friendly plants which will help both human and bees wellbeing.

The Wildflower area is to be increased, from behind the large right back bed and is to be one lawnmower width along the back margin so as not to take up a huge space but which will have a big impact on our area. This is to allow pollinators and bees to be able to survive and have a good source of nectar and pollen it will also help the vegetables grow well. The seeds will also make food for birds and the longer grass areas encourages wildlife into the garden including the much-loved hedgehogs which moved in last year thanks to our small area of longer grass, as well as possible voles which would feed any owls that are nesting in the near by Croxteth park. The Wildflowers are also to improve the mental health and wellbeing of our community both as a sensory area and a area of beauty.

As well as our small pond area, small ponds using Washing up bowls will be dotted into the hedgerow so that they pose no threat to the children who use the garden, and the main small pond will be gridded so that small children cannot fall in.

**Lavender** – The humble lavender both French and English which will prolong the flowering season, has a mighty role in wellbeing both for its sensory effects the seeds of which can be collected to make small bags that can aid in people relaxing and sleeping better and helps keep moths off clothes. Lavender is also Antibacterial, and its essential oil is used in balms. Some lavenders can also be used in cooking. The Lavender can help in sensory gardens for people with dementia or those with poor sight with the aroma being soothing to the senses. The Bees and other pollinators such as hoverflies also adore it. These will be dotted into the areas that have died away in the small privet hedges that make up the Cuthberts cross in the garden. For sensory reasons we can alternate with Rosemary.

**Dads and Lads** as part of the ‘Big Build Project’ will help build raised beds and do preparatory work for this year growing season. Four large, raised beds approx. 2m x 1m raised beds (made from recycled pallet wood) will be placed behind the community room area. These will be in different heights to allow people with disabilities and the elderly to have areas where they too can grow vegetables and pass on valuable skills to the younger generation. Two smaller beds made as part of our Eco project will also be put into use. The beds will be divided into thirds making a total of 11 beds. These will be given out on a first come first served bases to the Parishioners of Croxteth park estate. We will then place people on waiting lists. People then can maintain the beds taking responsibility for the areas. Vegetables grown will be used by Aplace2B when its back up running and surplus could be sold to allow the project to have funds in the following years. We also hope people will do seed swaps and young seedling swaps to ensure no waste.

2 beds will be placed outside the church, on church front garden so that people can help themselves to organic veg and harvest when ready. This will be provided free of Charge. They again will be different heights to allow people of different ages and abilities to join in and we will maintain them. We are aware of vandalism in the past, but we hope by providing these to our community that they will feel proud to have them.

In the future we hope to include mental health and wellbeing groups and the local school to help and encourage a greener space which our earth so desperately needs.

We will encourage the Sunday school Children under Arrens lead to plant up and paint the Pots already made and to grow vegetables and flowers for the church to use and enjoy; and by doing so educate our Children for the need of green spaces. We will also include the uniformed organizations and we can arrange gardening evenings teaching them how to garden and hopefully inspire gardeners of the future as well as teaching them about Gods amazing world.

We are hoping to make the beds from as much free if possible, pallets and scaffolding boards, we will also be approaching local businesses to see if they can contribute to this fantastic project.

We will ensure all are weather proofed in an Eco-friendly way. Dads and Lads as well as building beds etc as part of their project will fund the beds being started by providing 6 tonnes of soil and compost, tools, spare wood, brackets etc as well as Eco friendly wildflower seeds bought from Liverpool's National wildflower centre and buying from local suppliers for all products, hopefully allowing business in our area to stay open during these difficult times.

### **List of Flowers**

Violas – ensure bee friendly

Snowdrops bought in the green.

Daffodils that again are bee friendly and not hybrid sterile varieties – we hope to do these in the Autumn and the bulbs can be bought by families in remembrance of loved ones.

Crocuses.

Lavender – French, English varieties

Rosemary

Comfrey and borage to help make liquid feed and Borage is pollinators friend refilling with nectar every 15 mins

Wildflower seeds bee friendly varieties.

Nasturtiums

Marigold – English

English primrose – not sterile primulas.

Cosmos

Scabious

Buddleia

### **Herbs –**

Basil Greek and European

Oregano

Marjoram

Sorrel

Rosemary

Mint in pots only (different varieties)

Lemon balm.

Lemon verbena  
Thyme  
Comfrey

### **Fruit and Vegetables**

Fruits:

Strawberries different varieties and wild alpine.  
Blueberries in pot only needs acidic soil  
Blackcurrants  
Redcurrants  
Tomatoes (Cherry & Beef)  
Apples x2 cordoned  
Cherry (miniature only)  
Pears- cordoned  
Gooseberries though to be aware of spines.  
Autumn fruiting raspberries as they can be pruned hard each year.

Allotment jam can be made with surplus of any fruits not sold during harvest time.

### **Vegetables:**

Potatoes Early 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. Helps to break up ground  
Carrots (all colours) in high raised bed only needs sandy loose soil plant with Garlic which helps reduce carrot fly  
Radish  
Cabbages  
Cauliflower  
Broccoli (Normal & Purple Sprouting)  
Lettuce different varieties cos, cut and come again radicchio.  
Kohli rabi  
Leafy Greens (Spinach, Kale, Lettice, Arugula, Bok Choy, Mustard, Swiss Chard)  
Onions  
Garlic  
Leeks  
Beans (Broad Beans, Runner Beans, French Beans especially good in small beds)  
Peas  
Chillies to be grown by people in own homes until we manage to make a eco green house  
Peppers (Bell Peppers, Sweet Peppers)  
Sweet corn

Other ideas:

Water butt one already organised to be placed on Sunday school building collecting water from the church & Sunday school roof.  
To look to put one on Church building but faculty required and permission from Water board.  
Small green house made from plastic bottles (eco bricks) to harden off plants.

Compost bins (recycled pallet wood to be made near the tap area with three main bins one to use/turn/ and make  
Environmental issues to grow as organically.  
Recycling Pallets (Heat Treated HT not MB Methyl Bromide)  
Pond Great for Wildlife and teaching children re amphibians and pond life.

**Fundraising & Keeping Funding Down:**

**Dads and Lads Big build** project to start us off.  
Approach gardening centres & building yards for help and support.  
Looking for funding from Local councillors  
Heat Treated Pallets (HT) from recycling centres & building yards.  
Making Own Compost from vegetable scraps and waste from garden.  
Look for grants!  
Sell the veg surplus and re use the money in the scheme.

References

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/health-and-wellbeing/articles/greener-gardens-promote-healthier-residents>