



# Blackford Community Vegetable Garden

Extended article from the Blackford Cares May 2020 Newsletter

Mark Nixon and I (Nicki Sinclair) have been talking about a Community Veg Garden/Community Garden/Allotments for at least a year; little did I know that after a throw-away comment to Sandy Marshall and Gordon Roy (the church Session Clerks) we would be tending a fully functional garden just one month later. Mark has the enthusiasm of a large number of people when it comes to this project and we owe him a large thank you for his knowledge.



I still can't quite believe how quickly this all came together and how much support the project has from so many people in the village and from local suppliers of all things gardening.



- Zed, our local angel, arranged for a number of pallets to be delivered so we could get started.
- Ella McEwen gave us some weed suppressor.
- We have had 'Pledged Veg' from all corners of the village.
- David Wallace arranged for a wonderful mixture of mushroom compost and soil to be delivered and McNaughtons lent us a forklift to get it into place.
- Sandy and Rita Marshall weeded and tidied the area... and made sure things are straight and true.
- And, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May an army of people arrived at the church to fill the pallets with compost and plant up the veg we had been given and construct our wee greenhouse.



During the following week we collected more plants and 'stuff' from Crieff Garden Centre (who donated plants to our cause) and from Stockbridge Nurseries in Dunblane.

The church, without whose generous support this couldn't have happened, applied to the Blackford Community Fund to get an outside tap for us and for the whole area to be re-gravelled to keep the weeds down and smarten up the area around the pallets; it promises to be a very good-looking space



The pallets are now all full – we have Swiss Chard, radishes which are delicious, cauliflower, beetroot, onions, broad beans, mange tout, sugar snap, borlotti, carrots, celery, brussel sprouts, lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes and courgettes. The Herb Bed... yes a proper bed with herbs in it is full... and the border has corn, sunflowers, rosemary, bay and blackcurrants.

The idea is that we will be able to supply anyone who wants veg and also supply the church for meals they provide for the village.



Some of the veg is cut-and-come-again, some will be available when it ready to harvest.

We would love it to be self-sustaining and already have a great supply of seeds for next year. If anyone would like to be involved just let us know through the Blackford Cares Page – although it might be that we should create a page for the garden... and we will try and keep



people up-to-date in other ways if they are not “interweb savvy.”

If anyone wants to grow veg but doesn't have the space come and join us and you will have a wee supply for yourself – or just come and sit and enjoy the sights and smells and sunshine.

There is a watering-rota created and an outside tap is to be installed so again, an opportunity to be involved should you want to.

And now a word on the funding situation from Mark Nixon: The community vegetable garden has relied a lot on the help of the community, which has donated materials, seedlings and seeds, and time. However, given the short time frame, we did have to spend a bit of money (some of which was covered by cash donations) on compost, extra plants, and a mini greenhouse. We had missed the application round for the Community Fund, but with the help of Foundation Scotland and the support of Blackford Community Council, we were allowed to put in a late application to the Fund, and we are delighted that the panel agreed to support the garden. Thanks so much to everyone involved!



And some words from some of our Garden Team

Laura Peacock: We are so lucky to have a community veg garden where we can all work together to make something for the benefit of the village. I love the way we have come together on this project sharing resources and expertise and lots of laughter.



Mandy Reeman-Clark: The beautiful garden created by Blackford people embodies our community spirit showing generosity, kindness and love during this difficult time. Gardening is so good for our health and wellbeing, looking forward to the fruit, and veggies, of everyone's labour!



Lorna Davidson: The community garden has seen villagers come together with others they might never have known. It has brought together all areas of the village and I believe the connections will last long beyond the COVID crisis. And lots of people now have easy access to free fresh vegetables and herbs.



If this project works and develops it would be great to find a place where we could create allotments and develop and community flower, have a polytunnel and still have a community veg garden...

I am not a fan of platitudes but in this case great things really have come out of a very trying time for so many and again I say thank you and we can look forward to some tasty results and meeting new faces and making new friends.



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