



Annual Report 2023-2024

Introduction

It is our 8th year at the garden and as in recent years the weather has been challenging at times with long dry spells during the summer that has restricted the growth of the outside vegetables. However, we continue to try new organic gardening techniques and the volunteers are learning all the time and enjoying their time at the garden.

Activities

In early March packets of seeds were taken home by the volunteers and sown where conditions are warmer than in the Polytunnels at the garden.



Tomatoes, Peppers, Chillies,

Leeks and Cucumbers were sown. These were then taken to the garden for pricking out and growing on. To prevent as much frost damage and loss as possible we used a mini hot bed technique. This was used last year with a lot of success. For those that are unsure what this is, plastic bread trays are lined and filled with fresh compost (usually horse manure) and this continues to rot, producing heat. Seedlings are then stood on this compost and covered with garden fleece, thus retaining the heat and helping ward off the cold. This system protects the seedlings down to at least -8c.

Later in the spring Beetroot, Onions, Dwarf Green Beans, Runner Beans, French Beans, Cabbage and Broccoli were grown. The seed Potatoes were placed in egg boxes in the caravan to start them growing (chitting).

The east side of the lower polytunnel was cleared of perennial weeds and potatoes planted in order to break up the soil. This plot is where the fruit tree rootstock will be planted, to use for grafting new fruit trees.

During early 2023 we had a regular attendance of about 12 volunteers and by May 2023 this had risen to 24 volunteers in a week. A group of 3 started to come from Pathways of Chesterfield, a local charity to help the homeless improve their lives. They painted the sheds for us and helped with the weeding and planting in the Spring and early Summer.

We had a stall at the May Day market and sold plants of Tomatoes, trays of Strawberries, Cabbages, Leeks and Chillies. A total of £273.50 was raised and thanks go to the volunteers who helped out on the day with the transport of the plants to market and for taking turns standing at the stall for sales and giving gardening advice to customers.

The first Strawberries were picked on 14th June followed by Raspberries and Blackcurrants on the 28th

In the summer Courgettes and Runner Beans were a bumper crop, Tomatoes, Cucumbers and Chillies also did well. Peas were a failure due to the pigeons eating the new shoots and then suffering in the drought and weeds overtook the netted bed. The Onions were a poor crop due to the dry conditions but the Beetroot was a good crop and the Cabbages, Sprouts and Broccoli grew well that season. The first new Potatoes were dug up in late July and a few Peaches and Nectarines were picked.



Above photo: The Runner Beans and Courgettes in the foreground

In the Autumn the plots were cleared and green manure was sown to keep the soil active over the following months. In November we started to lay the new water pipe which was buried about 10 cm below ground and runs from the water tanks at the top of the garden to both polytunnels. The taps were installed and the project completed in February 2024.

A paved area was built next to the tool shed and some steps leading down to the lower polytunnel.



The future of the garden

I am optimistic that the Inspire Community Garden will continue to have a regular team of volunteers through all seasons and we have enough funds to maintain the infrastructure at the garden. A collaborative has been formed with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Community Growth and Hunloke Community Garden with a vision of having individuals or small groups of people being involved in projects with DWT or to visit the gardens to help out. Some people will come from Green Social

Prescribing which is the practice of supporting patients to engage in nature-based activities as a way of improving their general health.

We would like to encourage anyone who is interested in community activities in a safe environment to get in touch and come along and see what the garden has to offer by way of a peaceful, calm environment. If you would like to be involved in growing and sharing produce, then perhaps we could persuade you to join our team of volunteers working on the plot.

Contact can be made via email to InspireCommunityGarden@gmail.com or come to look around on Sundays 10am to 3pm or Wednesdays 1pm to 3pm. During the Summer, Thursdays 6pm to 8pm. Access is via the footpath that is between Chester Street and Alexandra Road West. First gate on the right from Mecca Bingo or last gate on the left if coming from Chester Street. Just push the gate to see if we are open (it looks locked), then wander up the site where you will find us working or just chatting. No commitments, just come and look. Inspire are also open for new or returning volunteers to come and join us. There is no set requirement to attend, just as and when you can spare some time on a Sunday or a Wednesday afternoon.