

# Belgrave Community Allotment and Garden

On the 14<sup>th</sup> April I went to visit a marvellous lady called Etheline Deer, who took over this project in 2020 and is instrumental in maintaining it with around 10 regular volunteers.



The land belongs to the Senior Citizens of Belgrave with the project starting around 11 years ago. For various reasons and Covid everything slowed down until Etheline got a grant from Re-Start.

The allotment and garden is open to the public and anyone can pop in and help or just pick fruit and veg. There are benches dotted around the open space for people to just take time out and were bought using a grant from the Coldfield Regeneration fund.



There is a compost toilet on site which was funded from the Public Health COMF funding. The toilet has improved accessibility, enabling more people to participate.



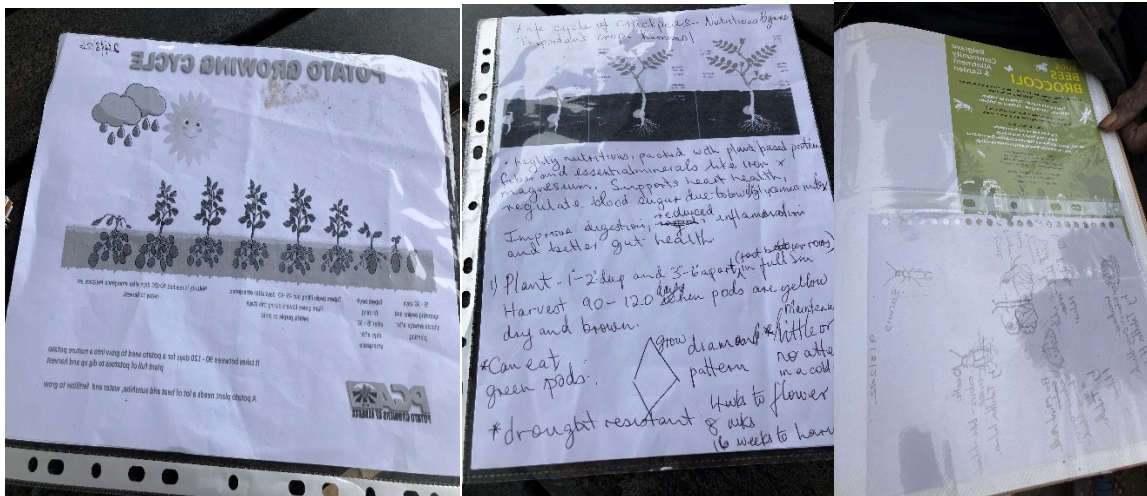
At the heart of this project is a kitchen area where local people can gather to make a drink and chat, enjoy a BBQ and eat fresh food using the portable stoves.





The children from the school next door visit the allotment on a weekly basis to learn about plants and wildlife, help plant seeds and crops, maintain some of the borders as well as painting pots for use in the garden. The shed is full of information about plants and some of the work the children have done is kept in a folder in for reference.

The pre-school children attend the allotment and are studying the life cycle of veg which I think is a brilliant way to get children to understand where their food comes from.





Etheline is a very resourceful lady and is constantly looking for funding and improving this community space and nothing that is donated goes to waste. Here are some examples of how upcycling and repurposing have been used. As you can see in the photos there are Manikins, used as scarecrows, an old toy car used to plant flowers along with the base of a Hoover, and the large planter which now has strawberries in was donated by Tamworth Borough Council where it used to be used by the council and an old shopping trolley full of flowers. It goes to prove that you can use anything to plant flowers, fruit & veg, it doesn't have to be costly or purpose bought, and I think it adds more character to the allotment and garden.





There is also a great water system set up to water the plants

which was partly funded by the local co-op store to the tune of £500. It's a gravity fed system with pipes around the grounds which were donated by Travis Perkins, and they feed the taps dotted around, which is a great economical system. Here are some photos demonstrating its use.



The rainwater is captured through the down pipes attached to the school next door, it feeds into the big green tank, then the white tubs and is gravity fed through the pipes to the taps.

There are some raised beds which currently are having the ground levelled to make the space more accessible to wheelchair users as shown in these photos. They also have a set of garden tools donated by Asda designed for people with disabilities and struggle to use straight handled tools.



Travis Perkins donated all the stones that will be used to level of the spaces between the raised beds and have volunteered to come and help do the work.



One of the sheds used to house the garden equipment was painted with flowers by some volunteers from the HS2 project.

Many of the plants and seeds used in the garden and allotment have been donated by: Homebase, Asda, B&Q and the Co-Op and Etheline goes to the supermarkets to collect them along with plants due to be thrown away. She will bring them back to the allotment and bring them back to life. Here are some examples. Homebase donated the cooking apple tree. The Polly tunnel was funded by Asda.





The allotment has some new Hot Compost bins which were funded by Staffordshire County Council Climate Change project.



When there is nobody around to water the greenhouse the team have installed a Solar panel irrigation system which I think is a brilliant idea as allows the plants to stay watered and healthy. Rainwater runs in from the greenhouse roof into the barrels and the solar panel puts power through the watering system inside the greenhouse.



There is a website being build for the allotment and community garden which was funded through the VCSE grant fund.

I found this to be a very inspirational place to be, and through the dedication of Etheline and the volunteers it's a very happy calming place to spend a few hours of your day. It is sustainable and the Food grown here is handed to the local residents, supporting families to eat fresh fruit and veg they may not otherwise be able to buy.

This is a great example of how an accessible allotment and community garden is helping community to take more exercise and multi-generational families to support each other to move more for free.

What is there not to like 😊

If you would like any more information about this project, you can contact either of the following people.

Etheline Deer - [e.deer@btinternet.com](mailto:e.deer@btinternet.com) or [tamworthbcag@gmail.com](mailto:tamworthbcag@gmail.com)

Completed by – Ann Gray [ann.gray@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:ann.gray@staffordshire.gov.uk) on behalf of better health Staffordshire South Staffordshire partnership.

Please get in touch if you have a story to share at

