



GROWING PROJECTS AROUND THE CITY

Food growing schemes encompass a range of projects, growing for retail, schools growing projects, growing on allotments, training and therapy projects, and community gardens. There are various reasons why growing projects are developed and they are often part of a wider community project. They can provide cheap, fresh, local, home-grown food, as well as training and skills building, companionship, therapy and other benefits. Here are few working in Brighton and Hove to inspire...

GOOD FOOD FOR ALL

Brighton & Hove Organic Gardening Group (BHOGG)

BHOGG is a group for gardeners in Brighton and Hove who want to practise, promote and learn more about organic gardening. Throughout the winter months BHOGG organises talks and workshops on issues of interest - for example pest and weed control, planning, planting and permaculture. BHOGG also arranges visits to various gardens - ranging from the Apple Festival at Brogdale Fruit Garden to tours of working allotment plots. They have social events ranging from allotment/garden barbecues, to plant and seed swaps and they hold pub meetings

during the winter on the first Thursday of the month.

BHOGG aims to promote organic methods in gardening. Open meetings and talks give anyone the opportunity to come along and find out more. They also participate in local shows and events. There is a quarterly newsletter and this, with regular mailings, will keep you up to date on topical gardening tips, organic developments and BHOGG activities.

To find out more email bhoggroup@yahoo.co.uk or visit www.bhogg.org

Stanmer Organics

Between the small-scale community growing projects within the City and the farms on the urban fringe, the traditional middle layer of smallholdings, market gardens and horticulture holdings have almost completely disappeared from the local food system within Brighton and Hove. Traditionally these would have been the means by which local produce reached local consumers through markets and small local shops.

An attempt to recreate this vital layer of the food supply chain and to bench mark a more sustainable small scale system of farming can be found in Stanmer Park on the edge of the City, where Stanmer Organics have leased 17 acres of land from Brighton & Hove City Council. Some of the projects sited here are attempting to be commercially self-sustaining, while others are run as educational and charitable organisations.



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Moulscomb Forest Garden and Wildlife Project

This project runs as part of the Moulscomb Place allotment site, behind Moulscomb railway station in Brighton. The project was set up in 1994 by a group of friends and has grown steadily in size and now incorporates seven of the allotment plots.

Everything on the site is grown organically and in particular traditional types of vegetables and fruit trees that were once common on the chalk lands of the South Downs are grown. The project has created a dedicated 'outlawed vegetable garden' where varieties no longer listed on the seed register are grown.

The highest part of the site has been planted as a forest garden, now reaching maturity. Like natural woodland it has three layers of vegetation: trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. Once established it requires minimal work and provides fruit, nuts, salads, herbs and other useful plants and fungi.

Outreach work is an important part of the project. Staff give talks, training and practical help to local groups and schools and put on events at the site such as medicinal herb walks, bug hunts, pond dipping, moth nights.

There is an emphasis on schools and children coming to visit. 'Pick and Cook' sessions teach children about different foods and how they grow and then how to cook them and make delicious food. The children are also given scavenger hunts and nature trails, which when experienced first hand rather than taught, helps develop a deeper understanding and respect for wildlife.

Tuesdays, Fridays and Sunday afternoons are regular work days, when anyone, regardless of gardening skills is welcome. Moulscomb Place Allotments, Queensdown School Road.

For further information contact Warren Carter on 01273 707656 or email info@forestgarden.fsnet.co.uk (www.seedybusiness.org)

Whitehawk Hill - Race Hill - Sheepcote Valley

Whitehawk Hill, Race Hill and Sheepcote Valley are open public spaces on the urban fringe to the immediate east of the City. They are in the freehold ownership of the City Council. Ideas are currently being considered within the Council on how to best manage these areas to maximise their environmental

needs and to enhance the opportunities for public appreciation and involvement. One of the proposals for discussion is the creation of an organic conservation-led farm in the area, sustaining a viable extensive sheep and beef grazing enterprise. This would be run as a commercially viable operation.



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Care Co-ops Community Farm

Care Co-ops Community Farm, based at Stanmer Park, Brighton provides a green space for local people to be involved in fruit and vegetable production using organic methods. Originally the Farm was set up in 1993 by Care Co-ops, a Brighton based agency, to provide a range of services for adults experiencing mental health and learning difficulties, but in the intervening years the farm has grown and works with people of all abilities across the community.

The site, leased from the City Council for a nominal rent, consists of five acres and includes greenhouses, polytunnels, a fruit and vegetable field, community allotments, a wildlife garden, a green

woodworking area and a 'quiet garden'. Land is available for different community groups to use - these include Mind, Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project and the North Laines Gardening Group.

The Farm runs regular and well attended open days, as well as at least one other community event a year. 14 different groups from the extended community come and tend allotments on the site. The project relies heavily on volunteers from the community to support its work.

For more details contact Jenny Bell, Community Farm Team Leader, on 01273 696153 or email jenny.bell@careco-ops.org.uk

Whitehawk Community Food Project

This project is situated at the allotment sites on Whitehawk Hill in East Brighton and was developed from a discontinued council funded project that had been set up ten years ago. It has been running as Whitehawk Community Food Project since January 2001 and covers 16 allotment sites, on approximately one acre of land.

The main focus is to raise awareness of the many benefits of organic food, including nutrition, and to provide access to fresh produce. This involves informal teaching about different vegetables and herbs, together with various

cultivation methods and techniques used to overcome the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The training is best achieved by encouraging a 'hands on' approach by volunteers, learning through practical experience.

Workdays are Thursdays and Sundays from noon until dusk. Anyone is welcome to join in and participate and to take home some of the food they have helped grow.

For further information and offers of help contact: John Fryer 07900 126817 or Jacob Nowinski 07751 076395 food@gardener.com or thefoodproject@yahoo.co.uk



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North Portslade Community Allotment Plot

The North Portslade Community Allotment Plot was started in 1989 as part of the Playlink programme of community activities. It is situated on Mile Oak Allotment site, a beautiful setting on the edge of the South Downs. It is a fairly small plot, measuring 90ft by 30ft, but manages to provide fresh produce for a surprising number of local families. Originally the plot was sectioned off into smaller plots for families to tend. This had limited success: for the inexperienced grower even the smallest empty plot can seem like a giant task.

A growing club was developed on Thursday mornings, starting with a 'Dig-in' in the spring, when families were invited to come and dig and plant an early crop of potatoes. A core group of seven or eight families now attend regularly, with very productive results - potatoes, courgettes, tons of tomatoes, as well as aubergines, peppers, kohlrabi and more.

Open days are held throughout the summer when families are encouraged to work on the plot and then to enjoy the fruits of their labour. The plot is an ideal place for children and the benefits are enormous - fresh air, exercise, develop-

ing an awareness and appreciation of nature from an early age and above all having fun.

Craft activities such as stone painting or nature collages are organised, as are bug hunts. The toy shed is full of buckets, spades, wheelbarrows and the children can dig away in their own digging area. At other times Playlink staff take families to the plot and growing club members attend throughout the week whenever they wish to.

An indication of the success of the project is that some people have gone on to take on their own plots and others have attended Get Cooking courses held at Playlink to further promote healthy eating. The North Portslade Community Allotment has now taken over a plot next door and is also supported by Playlink. There is mutual support and help between the two sites. From the beginning of the project the local allotment holders on the site and the wider community have been very supportive, with constant help and advice, which has allowed the project to develop successfully.

For further information contact Lorette Mackie 01273 295199 or email lorettemackie@yahoo.co.uk

How to get involved

Most of the projects above have volunteering opportunities. Contact the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership for more information and contact details for individual projects on info@bhfood.org.uk or 01273 766650.