

South Wonston's Community Allotment



A South Wonston Sustainability Food Action Group project learning about growing food sustainably.

SWS's Food Action Group are interested in the connection between our choices around food and climate change.

March 2023

Helen and Nickey, from SWS's Food Group arranged to meet the then Chair of the South Wonston Allotment Committee, Grant. We were hoping we would be able to work on some joint projects with the allotment community. Something we were certain about was that neither of us had any extra time available to start a new project!

South Wonston's allotments are on private land and whilst it's very generous of the landowner, it isn't a permanent solution. There's no water supply and permanent structures aren't allowed. Even though most houses in the village have generous gardens. All the plots are taken and there is a waiting list for new members. Most have compost bins, water butts and an array of resourceful ways of growing vegetables, fruit and flowers.





Some ideas we discussed between us were, could we raise funds for a hot composter? A seed swap box or event? Maybe some way of sharing surplus crops? Could we learn some tips about gardening to benefit the planet? One day perhaps, some community growing?!

We'd nearly finished chatting when Grant explained that there was strip of land that isn't the right dimensions for a standard allotment. It's 4 x 19 metres. He told us that if we wanted to have a go at growing some things we could!. A few things had been grown on it by allotmentees' friends and families the previous year but now it was very overgrown. It seemed too good an opportunity to miss! So despite our previous promises of not taking on any more projects, we thought we'd give it a go! We'd give it a go over the summer and if we couldn't make it work at least we'd have tried.

April 2023



Grant started digging the plot and had nearly finished it before we'd found some volunteers. Huge thanks! Without that help the two of us would never have managed to get it started..

A visit to Winchester Incredible Edible's allotment was really helpful. Kitty and Jim kindly shared their tips and ideas for getting started as well as a copy of their risk assessment.

We advertised for volunteers, had a video chat and arranged our first group session. Between us, we found some waterbutts and compost bins, a storage container for tools, a fork, spade and rake, bamboo canes. All were sourced for free, secondhand.

There were ground rules from the allotment committee and we drafted some of our own, made sure our risk assessment was appropriate and arranged a first aid kit.

May 2023

We chose a Sunday to meet and get started. The weather was good, 8 adults and 5 children turned up with some of their own tools and seedlings. Some had no experience. There was more digging and a lot of planting. We should have had a better plan but we got a bit carried away with the excitement of starting! We planted courgettes, butternut squash, potatoes, french beans, runner beans, peas and oca and sunflowers. We had a first go at [Plant Your Pants!](#)

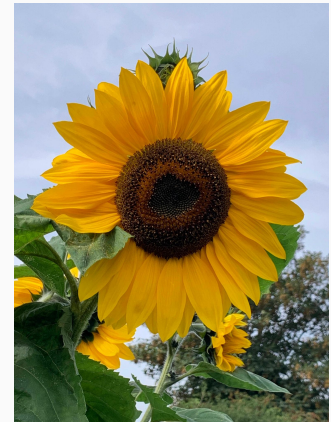
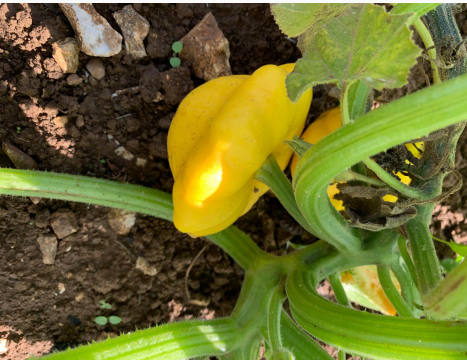
From that day we had no rain for nearly a month! The realities of lugging water up to the allotment became very real. We set out a watering rota between us and somehow managed to keep things growing.



Over the following months we added more beans, squash, onion, raspberries, strawberries as well as a couple of log benches repurposed from the recreation ground.

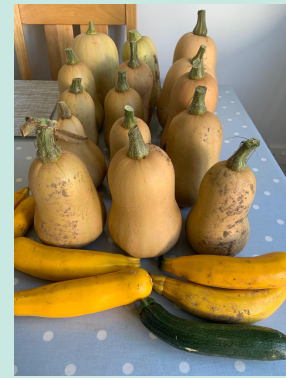
We've been scorching hot and got soaked!

The village and allotment community have been kind and generous. We've had donations of plants, seed potatoes, tools, water containers and gardening books. We've had help with strimming the edges of our plot and hoeing as well as lots of tips and advice.



We've had a few plant casualties but we've learnt a lot! We planted our first lot of courgette plants too early, before they were a little bit hairy, and they were eaten by something overnight! Our peas didn't make it. Some things should have been planted further apart and we need to get better at weeding! We're noticing the biodiversity in and around our soil.

All the produce we've grown has been shared amongst us, SWS volunteers and in the wider community. Some of us have discovered we like vegetables we've never tried before and others have found new recipes to cook.



In our first year we've
harvested **101.3kg** of produce,
saving the equivalent of **£319.42**
and **58.06kg** of CO₂

Calculated on [Good to Grow's Harvestometer](#)

Over the winter we're going to concentrate on planning our space better, hopefully finding some help creating beds and footpaths between them, and deciding what we're going to grow next year. Our aim is still to be no dig and we've started to cover the ground with cardboard to prevent weed growth.

We've really enjoyed our first year! Thanks goes to:

The allotment committee for letting us use the space and for agreeing that we can continue.

South Wonston Parish Council who've enabled us to purchase a rechargeable battery strimmer so that we're able to keep the edges of our plot tidy.

Everyone who's dedicated any spare time to coming along to help!

THANK
YOU



Are you
interested in
joining in?

Contact us to find out how to
take part:

swsfoodgroup@gmail.com

All children must be accompanied by an
adult.

