



COMMUNITY FOOD GROWING REPORT

2021/2022



COMMUNITY GROWING REPORT



Scottish Borders Council launched 'Cultivating Communities' the region's first ever Community Food Growing Strategy in March 2021. The Strategy covers a 5 year period - 2021-2026 - a timescale set by the legislative requirements of Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. Here we provide an update on Year 1 of the Strategy.

In recognition of the importance of supporting community food growing as part of sustainable, resilient communities, Scottish Borders Council appointed a Greenspace Programme Officer in September 2021, with a specific remit of supporting the delivery of the Community Food Growing Strategy. This post was established to support the creation of a network of Community Food Growers in the Scottish Borders, supporting and facilitating community growing in all its guises by providing guidance and resources for anyone who is interested in starting, or already running, a community growing project.

So far we have:



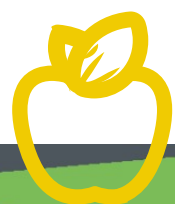
Scottish Borders Community Food Growers Network (SBCFGN)



This network was founded in May 2021 as a direct response to the consultation feedback received during the creation of the Food Growing Strategy. There was a need for community growing projects to feel more connected, have a place to come together to share best practice and discuss the wider needs of community growing. The SBCFGN currently meet online every quarter, with monthly newsletters sharing case studies, events, funding opportunities and relevant growing information. The network is also supported via a dedicated online forum, managed by the Greenspace Programme Officer, to share resources throughout the year. The Network received a Bronze Award at the APSE Excellence in Service Awards, awarded to Scottish Borders Council's Parks & Environment Service in recognition of the Network as a new initiative for the region.

So far we have:

- Hosted **5** Scottish Borders Community Food Growers Network Meetings
- Built a dedicated secure online forum (called a SharePoint site) for members of the network to access, upload content to, share stories, ideas and resources.
- Published **6** Community Food Growing newsletters
- Currently we have **40** members of the SBCFGN and **28** people signed up to Community Food Growing newsletter mailing list.
- The network is growing monthly, with new community growing projects requesting to join or requesting to be added to the newsletter mailing list.
- Acquired **100m3** of free compost to be distributed to members of the network and wider community food growing community after a direct request from SBCFGN member.



What's on in December

- Peebles CAN Community Garden**
Peebles CAN offers inclusive gardening activities for the whole community to get involved with. All ages and abilities are welcome, there is something for everyone to get involved with.
Booking is essential for these free activities listed below, please email rachel@peeblescan.org to find out more and join our mailing list to receive the latest updates.
- Friday 10th December**
Wreath Making | 11am-12
Make your own festive wreath with natural materials.
 - Tuesday 21st December**
Winter Solstice Evening | 5-7pm
An evening celebration of the Winter Solstice, with local traditional performers and catering by Food Punks - Soups and Stews.

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DECEMBER 2021

In this issue ...

- The Edible Garden, Innerleithen
- St Ronan's Wells Community Garden
- Funding Opportunities

The Edible Garden, Innerleithen

This year, The Edible Garden kept going in the grounds of St Ronan's Primary School despite school closures and ended up providing a safe, socially-distanced, outdoor venue for summer activities with families.

We had a great fruit crop and also did well with tomatoes, onions and cucumbers, so the volunteers got busy turning the bumper crop that couldn't be eaten fresh into jams and chutneys. Shirley made her famous Spicy Courgette Chutney which is always a favourite, and Jean made delicious plum jam from the bumper harvest. Most of our preserves sold out on our stall at the fair held in October by The Food Foundation who run Neighbourhood Peebles (photo attached). Our chutneys are still for sale through the Neighbourhood website (<https://www.neighbourhood.co.uk/markets/peebles20>) and we look forward to supplying more products next season.

The garden has partnered with Innerleithen Community Trust to provide planting schemes and seedlings for the flower beds on the High Street. For two years we have created spring and summer displays in the hopes that the ICT can take on more civic garden spaces.



Nature based solutions

The 'Space to Grow' garden/plotment project is based near Melrose, within the Borders General Hospital campus. It is fairly close to Huminturn ward which is an acute mental health admission unit. This project is an innovative concept that allows patients, visitors, volunteers and staff the opportunity to leave the boundaries of the ward or community to spend time in the natural environment.



We all know this environment impacts positively on mental and physical wellbeing and has contributing to the patients' recovery and return to independent living. This green space environment allows patients, staff and volunteers to be active outdoors and engage/explains/absorb the natural environment.

patients to spend time out with the confinement of the clinical and office environments to look after their mental and physical wellbeing. The area has provided a safe space for patients to meet relatives, staff to meet face to face and for much needed restoration from hours of full PPE wearing as well as digital consultations. During lockdown it could be said that our gardens looked after us, it became apparent that it was almost essential to have an outdoor space when our lives were restricted in so many other ways. This garden resource was seen as something positive and an oasis within the chaos of Covid



The project is an additional resource to complement the existing ward program and community supports allowing an alternative to the traditional ward based activities/therapies and community services that are available. This 'space' offers patients from 'all walks of life' with varying degrees of illness/disorder the opportunity to access the natural environment, benefits also extend to staff who have been more frequent visitors.

During the onset of the global Pandemic the garden truly became an essential asset for staff and

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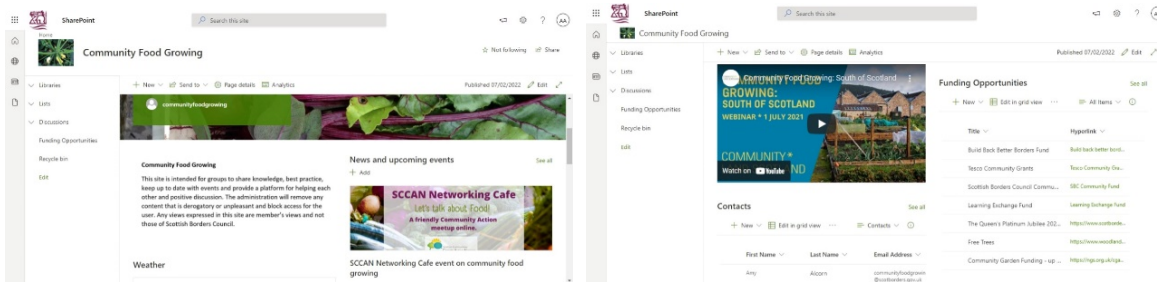
In this issue ...

- The Swap and Share Shed, Innerleithen
- Other Opportunities, Get your free Trees...
- Funding

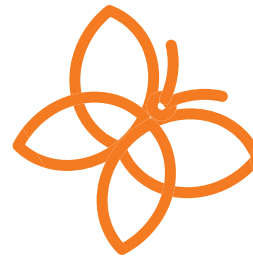


The raised beds produced a variety of vegetables which have been either eaten on the ward or shared among the volunteers (those that survived the rabbit attacks that is!). The courgettes took the prize for the biggest yield this year although we did alright without beetroot, spring onions and turnips too. One bed used for a 'cutting' garden another a herb bed, these have added some sensory stimulation as well as providing lovely fragrant blooms for patients rooms or for volunteers to pick for their homes.





Community food growing support and site visits



Site visits to community growing projects, meeting with groups who have an idea for a growing project, and meeting individuals who want to discuss a growing project are all key elements of delivering a successful Community Food Growing Strategy. Since the adoption of 'Cultivating Communities' we have had many requests for information, advice and site visits.

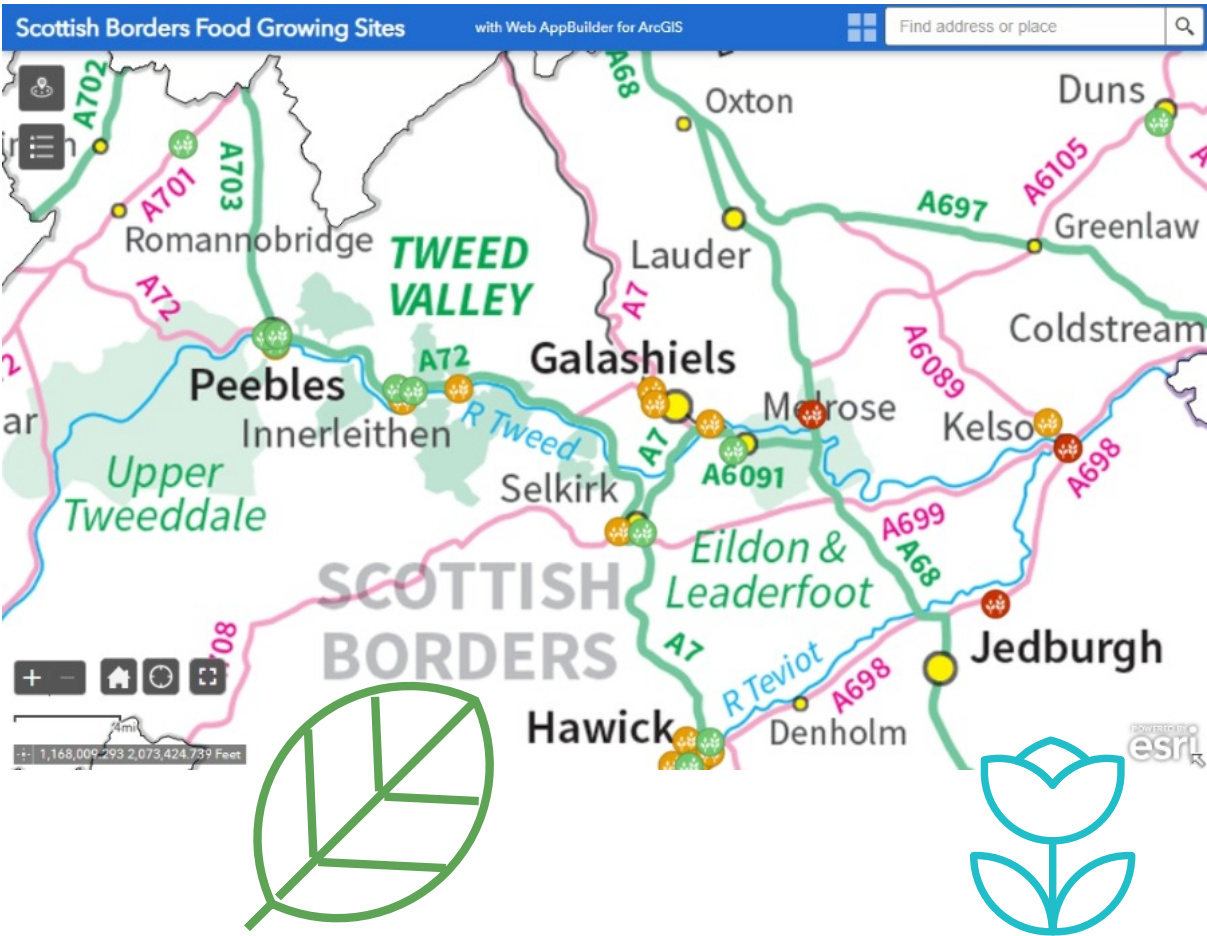
So far we have:



Virtual Map

We have built and populated a virtual map on the dedicated Community Food Growing pages of the Scottish Borders Council website. The map, illustrated below sites all of the community food growing projects that we are aware of in the Scottish Borders as well as allotment sites. As well as adding to this continually, the longer term aim is to include potential sites for community food growing, as a resource for communities and organisation who want to get started. Users are able to click on an icon to find out contact and site information of the growing projects.

This resource is a useful asset for individuals and groups who are looking for a growing project near them to get involved with.



Partnership working with Community Engagement Team

As community food growing is becoming more popular and supported across the Scottish Borders there is a stronger emphasis on working in partnership with the Community Engagement Team who are facilitating funding requests for community growing projects and community orchards. The Greenspace Programme Officer has become integral in overseeing applications for funding that involve any area of community growing. Supporting both the community groups who are applying for funding and the Community Engagement Officers who are processing the applications. This can be evidenced by site visits to potential food growing projects and advising on funding applications.

Case Study of How the Food Growing Strategy works in practice



This is a case study of the Food Growing Strategy in action, where the Community Planning Partnership members, in this instance the NHS, were supported by Scottish Borders Council through the Greenspace Programme Officer and Community Engagement team to bring a potential project to fruition.



Background

During an introductory meeting between members of the NHS Mental Health Team, and the Greenspace Programme Officer, a site in Burnfoot, Hawick was mentioned as a low quality greenspace, where the NHS staff member had tried to run jogging classes with a primary school but had to abort due to the poor quality of the greenspace, which had sadly become an underused area for the community, with dog fouling problems. A discussion followed of how high quality greenspaces improve mental health for residents and how this area could be regenerated for the local community.

Next Steps

The Greenspace Programme Officer took the site in Burnfoot to the Community Engagement Officers to discuss how it could be improved, with an emphasis on community food growing, and engagement for local people. Strong partnership working internally at Scottish Borders Council saw the Community Engagement Officer and Greenspace Programme Officer meet with two community groups in Hawick to develop ideas for the greenspace.

Both community groups were interested in taking the project to the next stage of developing a community orchard on the site, and worked with the Community Engagement Officer to source funding and write a bid. The Greenspace Programme Officer worked on the planning/estates/landownership side of the project ensuring the project could go ahead.

Results

Permission has been granted by SBC to use the greenspace to plant a community orchard on the site, with two community growing projects working together to take the orchard forward. Funding from SBC has been granted, and the local primary school is involved with the planning and planting of the orchard. There are now further plans to develop more of the greenspace around the orchard into a community growing project with plots for families to take over.

STAGE
1

Greenspace Programme Officer meets with NHS staff

STAGE
2

Greenspace Programme Officer takes ideas to Community Engagement Officers

STAGE
3

Greenspace Programme Officer and Community Engagement Officers work with partners to formalise a plan

STAGE
4

Community Engagement Officers help partners create a funding bid to bring project into fruition



The Edible Garden



Next steps – Looking ahead to 2022/23

Building on the work done to date, the Community Food Growing Strategy will continue to further the expansion of community food growing opportunities across the region. Some key activities for 2022/23 are set out below;

Support and facilitate more food growing in school settings, helping schools realise their growing potential, helping them secure funding and building relationships with local growing partners.

Work with Scottish Government bodies to explore the creation of a new officer forum across local authorities for those involved in the promotion and delivery of Community Food Growing and allotments.

Develop further opportunities through Planning to secure potential sites for food growing in new developments where appropriate.

Work with Community Planning Partners to develop community food growing opportunities across the region.

