

Welcome to the AEG allotment

Our vision is to show how fruit and veg can be grown in a sustainable, wildlife-friendly way, working with nature not against it and encouraging healthy soil:

- no weedkillers, pesticides or artificial fertilisers
- veg grown from organic, open-pollinated seeds
- no dig beds
- pond to attract frogs and invertebrates (to help control pests like slugs) and to provide habitat for pollinators, dragonflies and aquatic plants
- weeds, cuttings and kitchen peelings used to make compost
- peat-free compost bought in for seeds and potting on
- edges left undisturbed, then cut back in late winter

Story of the plot

We took on the plot in July 2019.

Not much had been grown on it for a few years, so there was a lot of long grass, three pretty tall trees and a greenhouse that had more gaps than glass – but we could see its potential. There were still raspberry canes, rhubarb and strawberries, and the outline of a pond, as well as wildflowers in abundance.





There was also a lot of rubbish, and clearing that up was one of our first tasks...



...as well as pulling out the old liner and carpet from the dried-up pond:



In Spring 2020 we created no-dig beds by putting cardboard down over the strimmed grass and adding compost on top:



Cardboard suppresses the grasses and weeds, and we were able to plant straight into the compost. The cardboard breaks down over time and helps to feed the soil.

We kept in mind permaculture principles such as working with nature not against it, producing no waste and using small and slow solutions. Rather than making big changes or having detailed plans at the beginning, we observed what unfolded over the seasons, made the most of what was already there and made gradual changes (such as extending the beds in autumn 2020).

First growing season 2020

A small team of us managed to keep working safely during lockdowns (by coming up at different times). We grew a range of veg plants from organic, open-pollinated seed (supplied by Vital Seeds in Devon), including:

- kale
- chard
- beetroot
- rocket
- celery
- courgettes
- three types of lettuce

We also gave away a lot of plants (we'd sown more than we could grow on the plot), to people in the village who hadn't grown vegetables before, or who didn't have much space. By mid-summer our courgettes, kale, chard and beetroot were happily growing all over the village!

Pond

In March 2020 we put in a pond using a butyl rubber liner and filling it with rainwater from the water butts.



We put in aquatic plants such as king cups, brooklime and lesser spearwort, and a patch of sweet galingale reeds. The pond quickly became home to a range of life including water boatmen, pond-skaters, water beetles and snails.

The pond overflows into a tiny bog garden which has flag iris and meadowsweet, and the pond edging is a mixture of rescued local slate.



Plans for 2021

We are hugely grateful to Nick Godber for completely renovating the greenhouse over last winter, which means that we now have lots of seedlings growing there, and we're looking forward to getting on with planting in the beds as the weather warms up.

We have plans to build compost containers at the back of the plot, using old pallets, to kit out the greenhouse with recycled shelving and eventually to get a shed.

If you'd like to join our team contact us on aeg@addingham.info.

Links:

Vital Seeds: <https://vitalseeds.co.uk/>

No dig: <https://charlesdowding.co.uk/start-here/>

Permaculture: <https://www.permaculture.co.uk/what-is-permaculture>