

V Full On Group, Salisbury



Out on the rolling countryside near Salisbury, half-a-dozen young men are busy growing mouth-watering crops of organic vegetables. As most have never done this kind of thing before, the sight and smell of fresh runner beans, potatoes, courgettes and spinach specked with Wiltshire loam is a novel experience.

All are unemployed people taking part in the v Full On project run by BTCV. They had volunteered to take part in the project following a series of 'taster days' for 16-25 year olds in the Salisbury area.

The group were involved in setting the direction of their work from the outset. Given the opportunity to cultivate an allotment rented from Alabaré Christian Care Centres, they decided which crops to grow and researched how to do it. The group were then able to plant, tend, harvest, and cook the food themselves.

By growing their own vegetables, the project participants not only benefited personally – through extra physical exercise, healthy eating, new skills and qualifications – they benefited others. Their families have been able to enjoy fresh vegetables, as have the residents of a local refuge for the homeless and people with alcohol and drug dependency issues, to whom they donated part of the crop. Everyone else also benefits with a little more food grown and eaten locally, not packaged up and shipped in from around the world!

Read the full story...

The v Full On Group is a food growing initiative run by BTCV with funding from v, an independent charity that supports voluntary organisations for people aged 16-25.

The aim of the Group is to give disadvantaged young men from the Salisbury area the benefits of the experience of growing their own vegetables. All were unemployed, but doing some physical activity every week such as playing football.

They were inspired to join the group by a series of 'taster days' for young people in the Salisbury area organised by BTCV.

The group takes control

For 13 weeks, with the support of a BTCV field officer, the group grew their own vegetables on land provided by Alabaré Christian Care Centres, a charity which runs drop-in centres, accommodation and support services for vulnerable young people across Wiltshire, Hampshire, Bristol and North Somerset.

For most of those in the group, it was the first time they had had the chance to grow their own food. Nevertheless, right from the start they had control over the direction the project would take. They decided which crops they would plant and carried out research into the techniques necessary for growing them successfully.

Sowing the seeds of health

The land was an allotment plot next to fields near Salisbury. Once the Group had decided where to plant everything, they fertilised the soil where required with recycled compost purchased from the local recycling centre.



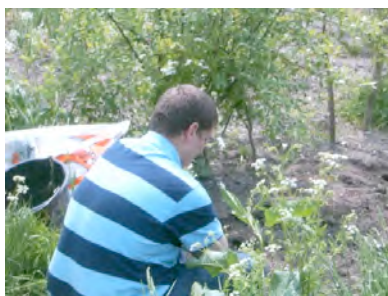
They then sowed seeds into pots indoors or planted them directly into the seed bed. Once the seeds had germinated, the participants got to work on the whole range of activities necessary to raise a healthy crop: planting seedlings, weeding, making a support for beans from coppiced branches, watering and harvesting.

A bumper crop!

The result was a bumper harvest of fresh vegetables – and more!



- Lots of extra exercise with a purpose out in the fresh air
- Four of the participants took and passed a NCFE course in 'Introduction to growing vegetables organically'.
- Potatoes, spinach, courgettes, runner-beans, French beans, and beetroot shared among the Group
- Food donated to residents of Damascus House, an Alabaré hostel for homeless people in Salisbury.
- Participants started growing vegetables and plants in their own gardens or window boxes.
- Whole families became involved in growing and eating fresh vegetables.
- Vegetables grown locally and organically



Following its conclusion, the project continued to inspire the young people who took part. One volunteer gained so much confidence from the experience that he has set up his own allotment project with Protocol Skills in Salisbury.