

Veg Out
Patch



VEG OUT PATCH

These briefing papers describe sustainability actions at the University of Bradford as part of the development of our Ecovercity programme.

These papers are developed through The Sustainable Education Directorate together with the University staff and students featured inside, and are part of our commitment to improving communication around Ecovercity.

Comments and feedback are welcome and should be sent to: ecoversity@bradford.ac.uk

What is the Veg Out Patch?

The Veg Out Patch is a collaborative Permaculture garden development project which involves both students and staff in its design, creation and development. This collective group is known as the Growing Group. It is located on the north facing grassy bank between Phoenix Building and Shearbridge car park.

Whose idea was it?

Five individuals from the University first met in the Tree House Cafe at an 'Introduction to Permaculture' course. Inspired, the five were keen to create a space on Campus to grow food using the the new skills, knowledge and perspective that they had gained on the Permaculture course.

What does Permaculture mean?

The term Permaculture was coined back in the 1970s by Bill Mollinson. Bill was responding to what he saw as a fast approaching food crisis and his aim was to try and develop a more sustainable model of 'permanent agriculture' and human settlement design.

Permaculture is based around a number of ethics, which are: earth care, people care and fair shares (fair shares translates as 'limit consumption and redistribute surplus'). These ethics are used to guide the projects' aims, direction and focus.

The design methods are based on principles and considerations which have been gleaned from observing patterns of natural systems (i.e. successful elements of sustainable ecological systems) without human intervention, e.g. the tendency of plant and animal communities to cooperate rather than compete for resources, demonstrated by the use of stacking techniques in cultivated poly cultures. The general principles can be used in both designing a landscape or garden as well as choosing the planting schemes and methods.

Permaculture design is the approach of observing and working with the existing patterns of nature, rather than expending energy working against them in the long term. The considerations encompass aspects such as, gradient soil type and condition and the micro climate, as well as the observation of what grows well in similar circumstances. The aim is to maximise yield and the energy return on investment. The observations will include those about the people involved and their wants and needs. Their involvement can be considered in the same way, what do people want to do naturally? Then, as if designing with nature in mind considering the interaction between the environment and the people improves the quality of their engagement and chances of success.

About the Veg Out Patch

The Veg Out Patch is located on a north facing grassy bank which is partially shaded by mature trees. Not the 'traditional' aspect and conditions that you would normally think of when designing a new garden. This is where the benefits of using the principles of permaculture come into practice. A design and planning session mapped out these areas and helped to think of the 'Patch' as different areas or compartments, each with its own specific conditions and each suited for growing particular kinds of plants. The plans for the Veg Out Patch consist of:

- Food growing on the sunny flat area adjacent to the car park
- A series of terraced raised beds on the slope
- Water capture and storage facility
- Swale and ditch
- Food forest area incorporating seven layers of the canopy
- Wildlife area
- Mushroom propagation area
- Willow arch
- Sheltered seating area and BBQ space
- Herb spiral



Base map design

Working together

The design and development of the Veg Out Patch is carried out by students and staff through practical volunteer activity days. These take place on the second Wednesday of every month from 12noon – 4pm where everyone is welcome to turn up and join in. Activities include practical workshops and skill shares.

The first phase of the Project has involved demonstrating what can be done at no cost but by working together. This has included the re-use of resources; using collected seed and cuttings to plant raised beds, tool pools, volunteer's time and enthusiasm, food shares, donated items and materials, use of the internet Freecycle and WhyWaste.

Time Frame

March/April- July 2009	August – December 2009
Design group formed Base mapping, site observation and design Created raised beds from re-used materials Made a BBQ area Workshop: Herb spiral construction Workshop: Raised bed making for annual vegetables and flowers Workshop: Open Space Technology use in communal design Workshop: Companion planting methods to improve yields and local bio-diversity. Workshop: Using the scythe and sickle on grasslands	Harvesting! Create some raised beds made from re-used pallets and plant/sow for overwinter crops Complete the BBQ area Make signs for elements in the garden Tree budding workshops Freshers' Fair stand Arrange tool storage Workshop: Contour Measurement tools and techniques Run trips to local Permaculture projects (Ongoing) (Cobden Rd, Hollybush, Bardon Grange, Offshoots) Hard landscaping work Begin tree planting (Nov) Workshop: Mushroom growing (Oct-Dec) Planting garlic and any Spring bulbs (Nov-Dec)
December – April 2010	April – July 2010
Continue tree planting Plant hedging Construct cold frames Create rainwater capture and storage systems Distribute vegetable & flower seeds for volunteers to grow at home Run some workshops indoors: Ethnobotany, local conservation volunteering, Permaculture theory, visioning/ open space sessions to plan for next year Tree grafting workshops Workshops: Vegetable and herb growing Hard landscaping work and creating paths Willow arch work	Planting out the home grown vegetables, herbs and flowers Workshops: Vegetable and herb growing Workshops: Building and protecting the soil for improved yields; soil ecology Weeding & mulching (ongoing) Perennial herbaceous plantings Shelter construction

The benefits of the Veg Out Patch

We believe that this is a unique project in the UK, as other Universities have conventional allotments on campus, but this will be the first permaculture area on a University campus. Some UK schools have a permaculture garden through Education for Sustainable Development as part of the curriculum. The benefits of having the permaculture garden at the University are wide. They include:

- Making full use of a currently under-used space on the Campus.
- Meeting a need for informal outdoor social activities at the University.
- Providing a small food and herb garden for the students in Bradford and University Halls.
- Providing formal and informal volunteering opportunities for both staff and students.
- Improving bio-diversity on Campus by creating a range of different habitats for wildlife.
- Providing informal outdoor Education for Sustainable Development.
- Assisting in the promotion of the University, Ecoversity and Students' Union through Campus tours to national media.
- Using the garden as a gateway for bringing members of the community onto Campus
- Creating a flagship demonstration project
- Promoting well-being by providing a balance to the indoor formality of University education culture.
- Bringing students and staff together in an informal, open green space on Campus. It is hoped that this will remove some cultural barriers and promote discussions relating to sustainability and education.
- Providing the University with a food forest (edible perennial plantings of fruit trees and bushes), outdoor seating area designed and built by the people who will use it, in addition to perennial herbs and climbers.

Further Information

This briefing paper is written with many thanks to the Growing Group. To find out more about what is going on contact Ros on r.j.c.coulton1@bradford.ac.uk

Or visit the Growing Groups Facebook Group:
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=87889201967&ref=mf>

Flickr photos to look through:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/roscolton>

Or come along to the Veg Out Patch, second Wednesday of every month, 12noon - 4pm. Bring your wellies!

For further information or communication on Ecoversity or this briefing paper email ecoversity@bradford.ac.uk

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