



Roots & Shoots

Intergenerational Gardening Project

A brief toolkit for intergenerational gardening projects





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Introduction

The aim of this toolkit is to sow a seed of thought and give some basic tips on developing intergenerational relationships through gardening.

Roots & Shoots is an intergenerational gardening programme that has worked with several community allotment projects by bringing young people and volunteers together with isolated and lonely elderly people in Leicester.

We want to share our experiences and inspire others to set up their own intergenerational gardening projects.

Why have a Community Allotment?

A community allotment offers a way for a broad mix of people to work together, sharing tasks and skills. It also creates opportunities for extra benefits such as educational workshops, social gatherings and enjoyment of landscape and nature.

A priority for us has always been to make the community allotments accessible to all regardless of age, background or ability.

Community allotments are set up for many different reasons, but producing vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers can easily dovetail with social, educational and environmental ambitions and aspirations.







Who will be involved?

Spend some time thinking through some questions that will help to shape your membership.

- **What do you hope to achieve by having a shared allotment?**
- **How many people do you hope to involve?**
- **How are you planning to decide how the allotment is laid out, what gets planted and who will have overall responsibility?**
- **How are you planning to finance the allotment?**
- **Where will you go to find volunteers? Who will train them and what will their main responsibilities be?**
- **What plans do you have to ensure it remains sustainable?**

At this stage, let your imagination run wild, like the weeds you'll be pulling from the ground very soon. Record your ideas, views and opinions so that it can be shaped in to the beginnings of a development plan.

You might not want to manage the project, but you could look for someone who will. You may not know much about gardening or constructing raised beds, but someone will know.

There are plenty of volunteer groups, such as the National Citizen Service, University Volunteers or visit your local volunteer centre that can promote or help to develop your space.

You will also need to consider ways to build trusting relationships between the various generations that will be part of the group.



Building intergenerational relationships.

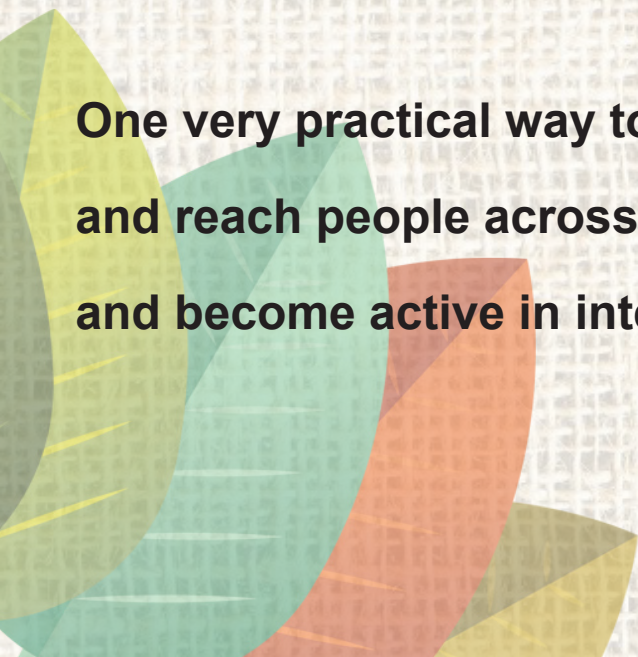
Few people are willing to admit that elderly and young people share many common characteristics, including:

- **Changes in development,**
- **Need for companionship, and**
- **The desire to be understood.**



These two groups are connected mostly through direct interaction with middle-aged adults. Even so, we tend to segregate our communities by age, which allows each generation to see itself as a separate entity rather than an integral part of a larger community.

One very practical way to build a greater sense of community and reach people across the human age span is to develop and become active in intergenerational programmes.



Benefits of Intergenerational Relationships

According to Erik Erikson, one of the first psychologists to describe social development across the lifespan, the final stage of emotional development is experienced around the age of 60 and older. During this stage, people seek to find meaning in their lives and make sense of the lives they have lived. Developing connections with a younger generation can help older adults feel a greater sense of fulfillment. In fact, linking older adults with youth can provide advantages for both groups. For example, such relationships can:

- Provide an opportunity for both to learn new skills
- Give the young person and the older adult a sense of purpose
- Help to alleviate fears young people may have of the elderly and visa versa
- Help young people to understand and later accept their own aging
- Invigorate and energize older adults
- Help reduce the likelihood of depression in the elderly
- Reduce the isolation of older adults
- Fill a void for young people who do not have grandparents available to them
- Help keep family stories and history alive



The Spark

Tips on finding the spark that lights up intergenerational relationships.

- Share yourselves and find common ground. Being open is a great way to build trust.
- Be realistic and don't make promises you can't keep.
- Invite young people to become part of the community allotment management committee. Be mindful that these roles aren't tokenistic and that young people's views are equally valued.
- Run a skills audit workshops to bring out the best in all members. For example; elderly people may have knowledge and experience of gardening that can be shared. Equally young people could be physically fit or have the fluent ability in using technology and social media (Equally the opposite may be true, don't make assumptions). Find your strengths and they will become the catalyst to building on your community allotment.
- Learning that can be shared should become a norm on the community allotment. Be open to new ideas and ways of doing things. A simple idea could become the foundation of a great project.





One of the local residents at South Lodge Residential Home showing our young volunteers how to grow tomatoes.





At South Lodge Residential Home for elderly people with dementia, our young people started the day by having tea and biscuits with the residents.

We asked South Lodge residents what they wanted in their community garden. As well as a tidy up of the weeds and overgrown foliage.

They wanted to plant vegetables they could cook. They also wanted it to be a place that they could come to relax and enjoy.

Here we see our young volunteers preparing the community garden for planting runner beans.

The most important part of the day was for young people getting to know the residents, their needs and wishes (as well as tea and the scrumptious homemade biscuits).

One of our young volunteers supporting local elderly members on a community garden space in St Matthews. This community garden has over 15 raised beds, each dedicated to a local family or community resident so that they can grow their own vegetables and herbs that will help reduce the cost of their weekly shopping.



Where could it be?

There are many places where you could find land to begin your community allotment. Look around your area for:

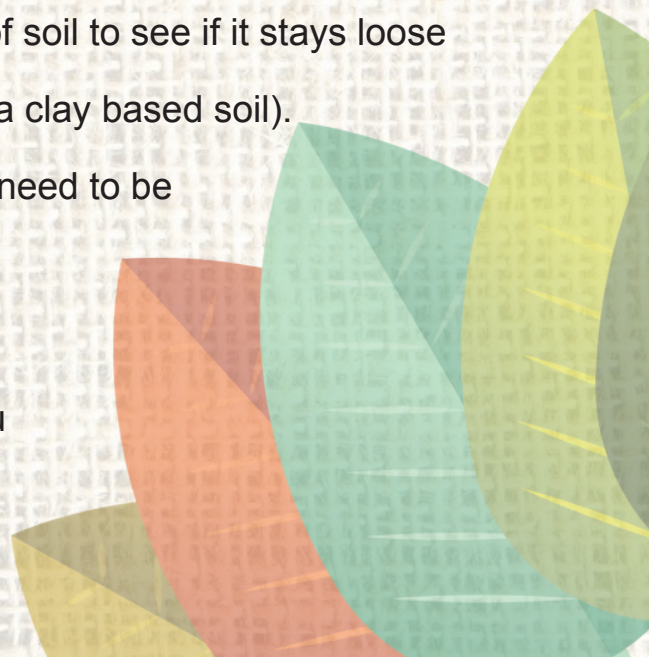
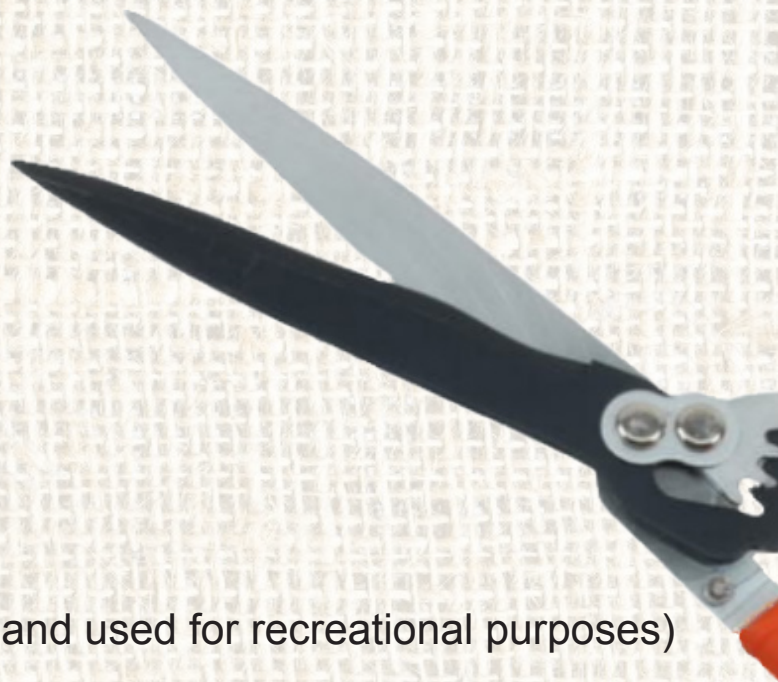
- A council allotment
- A disused piece of land
- Waste land
- The grounds of a community centre
- A stretch of land in a housing estate
- At a school or college
- In a residential care home
- On a pocket park (small sections of land used for recreational purposes)

Prior to setting your sights on a particular piece of land, find out who owns it and begin a conversation for permission to use it. Survey the land to find out what happens at different times of the year. A plot that looks great in the summer, could be a frost pocket in the winter, or have a pernicious weed problem that is not visible at the time of your first visit. Try and talk to neighbours to get as much information as possible.

What is the soil type? Do a pH test. Hold a handful of soil to see if it stays loose (good soil) or sticks firmly together (which suggests a clay based soil).

What is the access like? Are there any hazards that need to be cleared? What is the prevailing wind direction?

All these things will have a bearing, and will help you decide where is best.



Paperwork

A constitution

When establishing a group, it is a good idea to draw up a constitution. This will ensure that the community allotment has clear aims and objectives that are agreed by its members.

As part of the constitution, your group will need to form a management committee. Again, ensure that the committee has a diverse age group to maintain balanced views and decisions. A committee is also a good way to settle disputes.

If you apply for funding, funders will request a copy of your constitution.

Tasks on the allotment

Put together seasonal tasks when on site. This helps everyone to know what's happening and choose their own role. Find some ply wood and paint it with blackboard paint.

Risk assessments

Assessing risk and hazards to

prevent future accidents makes for good practice. As a group begin to look at your site and assess any risks, hazards or potential accidents that could occur whilst on site and negate against them.

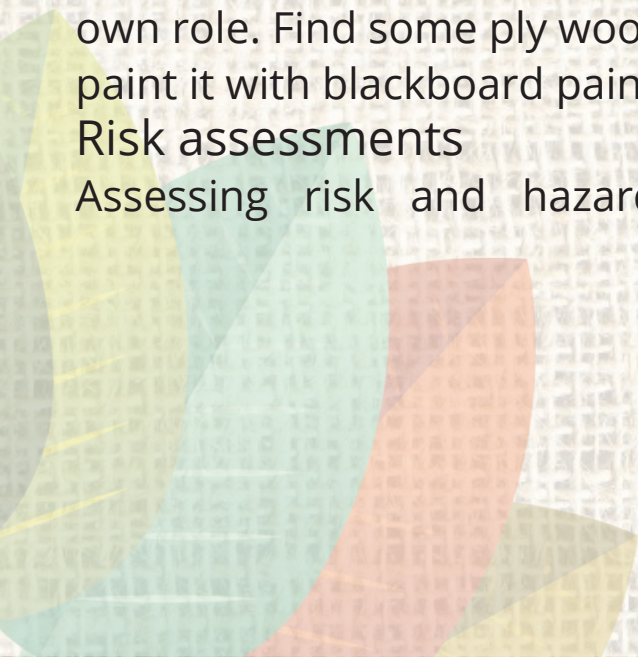
A working rota

There should always be an adult present on site when other members are present. Ensure you put together a fair rota schedule in order to fulfil the groups demands on the site.

Contact details

Keep a list of key contacts on site so that if you run in to any problems, you'll be able to phone a friend for advice.

Please be mindful that you will need parental consent to maintain any details of young people and that you follows UK safeguarding and data protection guidelines if storing the information.







Some local children in Belgrave spending the day volunteering with other local residents. On here we built some community raised beds on a pocket park for the local community to grow their own produce and bring life back in to a run down green space.

Paperwork Cont...

Policies

Policies and procedures provide clarity to the reader when dealing with accountability issues or activities that are of critical importance to the group, such as, health and safety, legal liabilities, regulatory requirements or issues that have serious consequences. As such, you might want to consider policies that reflect the age spectrum of the group, such as a safeguarding policy.

DBS

If you do have young people that are part of your membership, to ensure best practice of your group, anyone over the age of 18 years old need to be DBS checked.

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) helps to make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children. It replaces the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA).



Some simple intergenerational activities that build social connections and improved well being.

Outdoor activities

- Wildlife hunt. What lives and grows on the community allotment
- Building habitats for local wildlife
- BBQ
- Apple scrumping and pressing
- Making jam from the berries you grow
- Sunflower competitions
- Developing a rota of jobs to do
- Mindfulness workshops
- Garden gyms

Indoor activities

- painting pots
- seeding
- lavender bags (from lavender you have grown on the community allotment)
- Make and paint signs for your vegetable patches
- Painting signing to tell the world who you are and what the community allotment is about
- Cooking from the produce you have freshing grown





Roots & Shoots

Intergenerational Gardening Project

About Roots & Shoots

Roots and Shoots is an intergenerational programme designed to bring teams of young volunteers (aged 13 - 25 yrs) together with isolated older people who live within the 5 wards identified under the Leicester Ageing Together partnership.

We will do this by using gardening as an approach to connect people back in to the community. Activities as part of the programme could include tackling unused and overgrown communal green spaces, improving gardens around older people's communities, and creating better habitats for wildlife in Leicester's parks.

Outcomes for the Community garden programme.

1. We are working within the 5 wards to identify, establish and support grass roots gardening programmes. These could range from growing groups, allotment projects, to growing schemes and pocket park projects.
2. If gardening programmes already exist in any of the 5 wards, we will endeavour to build a supportive and proactive partnership to develop sustainable approaches for community inclusion.
3. The vision of creating/supporting these projects are for beneficiaries to become connected back in to the community, feel useful and wanted in their community and feel less isolated and lonely.
4. We also endeavour to certify the programmes are co-designed and co-delivered by LAT beneficiaries to ensure projects are suited to their needs and the needs of their local environment.



Leicester Ageing *Together*

About Leicester Ageing Together

The Leicester Ageing Together partnership, hosted by Vista the local sight loss charity, is a £5 million Big Lottery funded programme aimed at reducing social isolation amongst older people in Leicester.

Since it launched in October 2015, Leicester Ageing Together has worked with over 5,000 socially isolated older people. Focus is one of the 17 voluntary sector delivery partners of the Leicester Ageing Together programme, Roots and Shoots is one of the 23 projects delivered.

Leicester Ageing Together is part of the National Lottery funded Ageing Better programme set up by the Big Lottery Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK.

Ageing Better aims to develop creative ways for older people to be actively involved in their local communities, helping to combat social isolation and loneliness.

It is one of five major programmes set up by the Big Lottery Fund to test and learn from new approaches to designing services which aim to make people's lives healthier and happier.



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INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE, CREATING CHANGE



Roots & Shoots
Intergenerational Gardening Project

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