

Two taster sessions ran at the **The Friends and Family Community Allotment** in Alcombe, West Somerset. The plot is run on organic and Permaculture principles using various methods of crop protection and lots of mulch and compost. The no-dig tour was attended by 10 people, half new to the allotment. The second session involved discussion of pest control, plus mulching and using green manures to keep down the weeds. Successional sowing tips were shared and it was discovered that peas of the right variety can be sown in every month of the year! These sessions drew in new volunteers and growers have also connected with a local organic gardening group in Watchet.



The 'Use Less, Share More' BIG LUNCH took place at the **Eat Cary Community Garden**, Ansford, where around 30 people, of all ages, gathered to enjoy the gardens and a barbecue. Activities for families included watering, weeding and planting and also covering plants with fleece to deter rabbits. The garden was looking productive and beautiful with mulched potato beds, companion planting and the willow arch starting to get established. Somerset Community Food were on hand to answer gardening questions and tips were shared with families on vegetable growing in small spaces and with small children e.g. easy to grow veg, container growing and what to sow now.



The smallholding tour and soft fruit workshop at **Dragon Willows Farm**, demonstrated how to grow a wide range of produce on an exposed site with a high water table. Karin Shaw utilises a variety of strategies including raised beds, wind breaks and pigs to clear wild ground. Inside the productive fruit cage (surrounded by scaffolding nets), Karin shared tips and techniques for cane and bush fruit, including taking semi-ripe cuttings from redcurrants when pruning in early summer. Visitors were interested to see water butts inside the polytunnels used as a heat-store. Produce from the farm is available from the farm gate or Glastonbury Country Market.

Healing Gardens, Glastonbury was in it's prime on the open day, with an array of vegetables, herbs and flowers in the mandala beds. A steady stream of visitors arrived to appreciate the beauty and gardeners were on hand to answer questions. A lovely summary of the day can be found on the Healing Gardens blog. The co-op is open to new members who can help in the garden and a enjoy a share of the produce.





Healing Gardens kindly gave permission for Somerset Community Food to hold an awards ceremony for **Growing Resilience** participants, who completed their community and sustainable horticulture course last year. It was a fitting setting and a chance for people to celebrate and catch up, with people travelling from across Somerset to re-unite.

Charles Dowding led an informative tour of his productive $\frac{1}{4}$ acre garden, run on no-dig principles. Charles shared his methods for creating vegetable beds from scratch by adding a compost layer, with further advice on using sheet mulch on more weedy ground. Experimental beds comparing dig versus no-dig methods, show no-dig crops yielding slightly higher (and with much less effort!). Charles was also generous with his recommendations on productive varieties e.g. Red Grenoble lettuce is a favourite and Sarpo blight resistant potatoes. Saving your own seed was also encouraged, as freshness means rapid germination and vigorous growth.



N.B. An online 'Easy no-dig gardening course' is now available via his website, alongside a range of useful gardening tips and seasonal advice.



Get Set Grow and Cook celebrations took place at the Rhode Lane community raised beds in Hamp, Bridgwater with certificates awarded to those who have participated. This was followed by tea and delicious cake baked by Get Set Cook attendees, at the Sunnyside Up Cafe. The group have made regular pickings of peas and salad so far, with potatoes and beans now ready to be harvested. The final bed is being planted up with over-winter vegetables – broccoli, cabbages and leeks. Get Set Grow and Cook were run in partnership with Mind in Sedgemoor and the group will continue to meet to tend the garden.

Somerset Community Food took part in the grand garden opening at Waterside House, Taunton as part of the community fete organised by Knightstone Housing residents. The community garden has been initiated and designed by residents and includes raised beds for fruit and vegetables. The Get Set Grow series is well under way with plants raised from seed transplanted into the new beds on the day. Further sessions are planned, topics include using mulches to improve soil and control weeds, managing pests and diseases and setting up a compost bin.

