



Chair's Report - Warfield Grow and Share Feb 2017

2016 was the fifth year of operation for Warfield Grow and Share (Wargrow).

The weather was somewhat changeable with a mild winter (little frost) and a fairly cool summer overall but reasonable rainfall to keep down the watering burden. Autumn was very mild so some crops went on well into the autumn.

The polytunnel, again helped us get the crops started quickly in spring.

Achievements

We have achieved the following in the last year:

- Grew a wide variety of fruit and veg, most notably:
 - Onions and garlic
 - Need more garlics and they were not as hearty as last years
 - Lots of runner beans
 - Potatoes showed little eelworm or slug damage and due to good watering from Barry were of a reasonable size. Next year we need to grow more maincrops. Some people felt they did not get hardly any potatoes at all. Having a 'ready to pick' sign was a good idea
 - Rhubarb - not as prolific as year before but Gun has now planted a whole bed of new rhubarb
 - Sweetcorn – not very successful this year – something keeps eating the cobs
 - Poppies, cosmos and other wild flowers and nasturtiums and new dahlia tubers grown from seed
 - Strawberries - better crop than previous year due to better weeding. Now have established two new beds so the others can be retired. Also two bags full under glass (need to protect against slugs)
 - Currants – fantastic crop again this year – around £350 worth of fruit
 - Squash - good selection. Butternuts were very good - let's grow more of these in 2017
 - Gooseberries – better crop this year and with minimal sawfly
 - Raspberries – cropping was reduced from previous year. Possibly due to weather but also less maintenance now Terry has left
 - Carrots – reasonable crop
 - Kale - good crop from Gun and Eleanor
 - Brussels sprouts - green ones did better than reds
- Poor success with the following:



- Courgettes - not as prolific as 2015
- Cucumbers – no-one allocated to grow them
- Broad beans – didn't crop that well
- Goji berries - next year prune hard to encourage new shoots (berries grow on one year canes)
- Asparagus – a disaster due to Terry leaving. Have allocated beds to people but they are very high maintenance due to the care they need when weeding. Newly planted ones mostly died off due to root exposure
- Got the second greenhouse fully glazed but wind has blown more panes out
- Washed down and cleaned both greenhouses and had a massive tidy up
- Engaged with the JHCL steering group and regularly attend the meetings
- Held a pumpkin growing competition in conjunction with other groups. Eleanor smashed it with two huge pumpkins
- Had a couple of picnics, including a wonderful tea party organised by Gun
- Continued creating a picnic area
 - More free turf off cuts from Warfield Turf
- Continued harvesting comfrey to make comfrey tea to boost crops
- Created a permanent set of supports for the raspberry canes, no wires attached yet
- Refurbished the fruit cage posts
- Put a new brass splitter on the tap
- Got some free materials from Freegle (some shared with David Putt)
- Had a blitz on the compost heaps and added better signs to try and encourage good practice when adding materials
- Achieved an Outstanding rating from the RHS Its Your Neighbourhood scheme (part of Britain in Bloom). A level up from previous years' Thriving rating
- Claire kept a rough log of produce and calculated the equivalent shop bought would have been about £253.00 (boosted by all the currants again)
- Had some group leavers and two new joiners (we now have 12 full and 6 associate members)

Looking Ahead

- We have now cultivated almost the whole plot which is quite an achievement, very much helped by Fangming's endless digging :-)
- We need to get the paths levelled and made wide enough at the end and between beds for mowing. This should eventually result in proper grass paths which are much tidier. Priority is to flatten area by the compost heaps now they are turned round
- Plant out the lavender plants by the new picnic area
- Finish off the mini copse by the picnic area (some trees added, the donated fruit trees could go there)



- Continue to create mixed planting beds, rather than monocultures (add catch crops, flowers and herbs between the primary crops)
- Continue to grow tomatoes in the greenhouse and polytunnel this year, away from the blight
- Get some more (less dried out) willow and have another go at an arbour around the seat
- Rig up guttering to drain greenhouse water into the water butts
- There is a lack of manure to be used on the plot which will eventually affect the fertility of the beds. Buying in bagged compost is way too expensive
- Encourage people to harvest thyme, rosemary and oregano and dry them for use at home
- Figure out how to get the asparagus beds well maintained (this is an expensive crop so worth growing)
- Rejuvenate the globe artichokes and wild strawberries

Thanks

I would like to thank the following for their help:

- Eleanor Bateman (Secretary) and Monika Lloyd (Treasurer)
- Craig McCaslin for sorting out the insurance
- Syngenta for making the site available for the community and all the free water and manure
- David Putt for supporting the infrastructure on site
- Mike Godfrey for mowing the paths on the plot several times a year
- And of course, our members who have worked well as a team ensuring everything has been kept watered and weeded throughout the year

Claire Wallen

Chair Warfield Grow and Share

22nd Feb 2017