

The Outcomes of the Kid- Friendly Allotments Discussion

GAF May 3rd 2018

We had a number of speakers who told us about their experiences of creating a child friendly environment on their particular sites. The discussion highlighted that there are broadly two approaches to engaging children and young people which have quite different requirements.

The first is working with groups of children who are supported and supervised by adults from other organisations.

The second is providing facilities for plottolders with young families that will help them to keep their youngsters happily occupied whilst they are working on their plot.

INVOLVING CHILDREN - NEW VICTORIA GARDENS Liz McKinlay

- 1 We included children's exhibits in the Annual Show –
 - 3 - 6 olds drew a picture
 - 7-10 made a posy or a necklace from flowers or a painting
 - 11-15 displayed vegetables or flowers
 You need to make sure they all get medals for entering and winners get cups like the adults (can be painted plastic ones)
- 2 Organised events for children - Halloween party and Christmas party. Decorated our hall, and had table mats and special party food, games and activities. Needs to be really fun and enjoyable.
- 3 We have made an area for children with a willow tunnel where children can play.

If the kids enjoy the allotment then they return when they are older with their own children.

THE INTERGENERATIONAL PLOT: WESTTHORN - Andy Forrester

This was an allotment plot set up as part of Playbusters project which was active at weekends and over the summer. It involved paid workers and volunteers from the association working together to support children.

It started with a green house and raised beds. Then the group put in a sand pit, table tennis and french boules to provide extra activities for the kids.

The annual show with the kids competing allows them to show what they can grow. Birthday. Halloween and Christmas celebrations create a happy atmosphere.

These activities bring allotments and growing to wider community and some families decided they would like a plot for themselves. Unfortunately involving groups of kids needed supervision and when the funding stopped the project folded.

ALLOTMENTS AND KIDS – SOUTH WESTERN Celia Bonner.

1 Working with Schools

(i) Half-Day Primary Seven Visit -

The topic covered was Growing for Victory as part of the World War 2 topic that they were doing at school. The children were accompanied by two classroom assistants.

- a) The children were given a walk round the site with an explanation of why allotments were important during wartime and invited to ask questions.
- b) A worksheet with 15 to 20 questions was provided focussing on plants, flowers, buildings, re-cycled materials and bio diversity.
- c) There was great amusement when we visited the manure pile.
- d) A small empty raised bed allowed the children to "dig" over some soil.
- e) We took some plug plants out of their pots to show roots and invited children to plant them.
- f) Juice and crisps were provided.

It was a very worthwhile afternoon . The children were engaged in accessing the outdoor curriculum, health and well being, working co-operatively and problem solving. Not to mention mathematical calculations , graphs, and design.

(Allotments can also provide materials for children doing the Victorian topic, Romans and even The Clearances.)

(ii) A Secondary Nurture Group.

A group of 8 senior 1 pupils with a variety of Additional Support Needs. ADHD, Aspergers' and Attachment Disorders.

These children have difficulty concentrating in the classroom environment therefore visits like these allow them freedom of movement to practice large and fine motor skills, to work collaboratively, and develop team building and communication. Also responsibility for growing.

These visits are not on a regular basis due to transport however, we will resume the visits in the next school session and talks are in place with the schools to allow future visits.

2. Open Day Activities and Community Space:

One of our allotment members provides a space for children's art work and other fun activities at our Open Day and we will have several "children's planting areas" in our new community garden as well as a children's collage on one wall of the Community Hut.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES HAMILTON HILL – Katie McKillop

GAF should explore the possibility of offering a Childrens' Cup?

Activities for kids which might be part of this:

- (i) Mapping the allotment- what trees are there? What types of roots do they have? Do they bear fruit? Nuts? Other resources? Do they need companions to fruit? How close must they be?
- (ii) Make a black and white or colour poster of some activity at the allotments or any art work (drawing, collage, sculpture) that represents your allotment.
- (iii) What to do with an out grown welly or boot with a hole?
- (iv) Make a sign for your plot
- (v) Its a bug life - draw, photograph and insect. What is it? Is it useful or a pest? Explain five things that are positive ways of encouraging the right insects.

- (vi) make a bug house
- (vii) grow and record a mini-garden on the plot.

CREATING PLAY AREAS KELVINSIDE – Kate Smith

- 1 Somewhere to play, ideally with a climbing frame or slide, or something to play on (there are lots of lovely wood-based play things these days that might not look out of place amongst the greenery – (like the ones they have in Kelvingrove Park)near the duck pond)
- 2 Provide ponds and wildlife habitats - organise sessions to help youngsters understand what's going on in the ponds etc e.g the RSPB on birds.
- 3 From a parent's point of view, there are two things that can make us jumpy. One is that the allotment is so very quiet (one of its great appeals!), and the other is that our site is so very neat. More parents might think allotmenting is for them if we could somehow make it clear that both a little noise and a little less-than perfection was possible. Otherwise keeping an allotment going whilst raising younger children is pretty hard.

SETTING THE BOUNDARIES: - MERRYLEE - Derek Livesey

Youngsters bonding and playing together is good for them and their families but there have to be boundaries and it is deciding and communicating the boundaries which can be a difficult issue for an Association.

We have a Community Hut which is open to all our members but had a problem when one of the children knew the passcode for the hut and opened it up to a gang of kids. Problems can also arise because people complain about noise levels.

PART OF THE CURRICULUM: - MANSEWOOD – Jan McDonald

Mansewood Allotments has been involved with the local Tinto Primary (TP) school since 2011. The first meeting was organised through New Shaws Housing Association. Plot 133 was designated 'the Community plot' and is assigned to Mansewood Community Centre - a short distance away across Mansewood High Park. The project has established itself as a regular part of the P5 year curriculum. Mid Spring term, a small band of 3 or 4 volunteers from the 133 group of adult gardeners goes into school to do some 'in-class' sessions - the weather isn't good enough for them to see or do much at the plots, so we start off with basics:

- Why have an allotment, what's a healthy diet, why grow your own
- Basics of a plant - root, shoot, flowers etc
- Sow seeds - get ready for growing
- Sew something for the banner (Sally created a banner for Mansewood Allotments, displayed each Open Day; the children make felt motifs which are added each year)
- Plant potatoes in bags on the class balcony

Summer term arrangements are made for small groups (about 10 at a time) of P5 students to walk from the school to the plots. They arrive about 9.45am have an introduction to plot 133, then go off 'exploring' - armed with an 'eye-spy' list to walk

the site observing, tasting, smelling, listening and chatting about everything! After snack time we do a few gardening jobs before the group returns to school at about 11.45am.

At the end of the term the classes (usually 2) come up to the site on 2 separate days for a 'celebration' The children will do some gardening jobs, have some home-made cake (usually rhubarb) a drink (usually elderflower cordial) and then play a game - hopefully if it's a nice day the hose is hooked up to add a little frisson to the activity! We invite children to come along to Thursday sessions over the school holiday & to come to the Open Day in August.

Autumn term; last year's P5s are now P6. Arrangements are made for whole class sessions again, to harvest at the plot. On the day children will harvest, do gardening jobs, harvest related craft activities, have a big harvest pic taken and then take their 'booty' back to school. Some is taken home, some goes to the staff and some goes to the kitchen for the children to have soup-making session.

So that's what we do; a full seed-to-plate experience which seems to have become a P5 tradition :)

Experience:

- Important to build a relationship with the headmistress & teachers, school office & teaching assistants - they need to be able to trust you and know that rules are being adhered to particularly in relation to disclosure. Not all volunteers have to have it, but at least one or two key/ regular volunteers must. The school were supportive and paid for this.
- Important that the children enjoy it and want to do it - the word will soon spread round the school - allotment visits are fun.
- Important to do a risk assessment of the place and activities. We aim to have no more than 4 children per adult gardening volunteer, even less is better and that does not include teacher or assistants - they are there to help and observe. This way adult gardening volunteers are not stressed or put off, children learn better and their safety is assured; they can't get up to mischief and endanger themselves.
- Planning and organisation are required. The shed and plot of 133 have been set up in such a way as to make it easy for groups to use and to be able to find equipment. We have some communal space; could do with more!
- It is not possible to accommodate a whole class on one plot; too much risk of getting in each others way & accidents, so on these occasions we split up, possibly using a volunteers plot, the communal patio area and the wildlife plot.
- Wherever possible we try to link gardening with many other subjects - spelling, writing, maths, science, history, geography, crafts, working together. The STEM challenge activities at school have been good fun and teachers like to know what the children have learned and include it in their own work.
- None of this would be possible without the support and dedication of a band of volunteers, several of whom are regularly committed.
- Whilst the children do grow and cultivate a great deal of their own plants and the adult group which meets on a Thursday also helps to keep the garden, there is a need for a 'Garden Co-ordinator' to ensure all tasks are done, materials & equipment available, to promote and record the life of the plot for interest & funding. This could easily be a funded position through Mansewood

Community Centre, but I doubt the allotment association would want to take that kind of responsibility on!

- The full circle of growing would be meaningless unless the children were able to harvest and eat their crops; that's definitely the highlight for all of us.

Plot 133 has also had groups from Mansewood Community Centre youth group/ holiday club visiting in the summer holidays, but eh wide age range of children is challenging to manage; needs lots of helpers who know the children. Louise Smith from Froglife plans to bring a group of children + their parents, from the TP Eco-Garden Summer Club up to Mansewood's wildlife plot and pond. Again this needs professional expertise, organising and plenty of volunteer helpers.

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE DISCUSSION

What GAF could do:

1. Set up prizes for youngsters with a trophy and medals to be awarded at the Celebration of Allotments. Bring children on different sites together to organise this for themselves.
2. Highlight to GCC the need for play spaces for kids on new sites and maybe in the regeneration of existing sites? - together with incorporation into rules and regs about responsibility of parents for their children.
3. Work with GCC on funding and support for education and allotments - nature reserve, school/community group plots, visits and input into school and college curriculum noting that external groups need support workers or teachers to take responsibility for overseeing activities.

What individual sites could do

1. Make children feel welcome and included in all events - allotment shows, open days, parties.
2. Work with local schools and youth groups on visits, plots, and talks from organisations such as RSPB and Frog-life
3. If possible have a space with appropriate structures for kids to play on