

Grow North Project Co-ordinator report AUGUST

Participant recruitment & participation levels

The number of recruited households is now 74

The numbers signed up to the training sessions this month were 28 in total, although numbers of those actually turning up to some sessions has been low, with only 2 at the first session at Poyntzfield (of 4 booked), and 2 at a “core” session at Culbokie Community Garden (of 4 booked). Numbers at the remaining sessions at Poyntzfield were better. Four attended at Fortrose (of 5 booked, however an advance apology was sent), and of the 9 signed up for Loch na Mhoid, only 4 attended, with a community gardener joining in for some of the session.

I would expect that during the course of any project like this there would be a natural drop in numbers, and of course we have just had a holiday period, so I'm not overly alarmed at the numbers for now. It would be worrying if all the sessions were to have just 2 - 4 people attending.

There have been some people attending the “specialist” sessions who are not signed up for Grow North, so we do not have a record of these people on the Participant sheet. We have records of those who “doodled” and the register taken from the July pests and diseases session.

<http://www.doodle.com/vwmtmk87d52fnmax?adminKey=79a6c8yv>

I don't have a record of those who attended at Poyntzfield – Duncan said right from the onset, that he “doesn't do paperwork” or words to that effect. I have a rough idea of those who went, and have sent out feedback forms. Wendy attended on the last session, and took some photos.

Feedback from the session by Audrey Littorick on pests and diseases was overwhelmingly positive.

Publicity/promotion

There was a feature about grow north in the latest edition of the TBI newsletter, stating that people can still sign up to take part.

I am planning to publicise the preparing the garden for winter aspects of the next sessions, with the hope of attracting a few new people. I believe that a drop in numbers it so be expected, however, the sessions are more enjoyable for all if there are more people present, so if a handful of new people can be persuaded to start up with a view to getting their garden going for over the winter and for next year, then this will be a boost.

Events

Training

The training this month consisted of an evening session at Poyntzfield and a half day at each of the study gardens.

At Poyntzfield, while it was discussed that we wanted a session on growing herbs, cooking with and using herbs, Duncan ran a slightly different session each time – the first on cooking, the second on herbs in homoeopathy and the third on seed saving. I didn't realise that Duncan was going to do this until it was already happening, and I decided to let him continue. I think that he may have changed his plans following low numbers on the very first session, and he and his wife had put some work into preparing food (2 out of the 4 booked turned up). However, the verbal feedback that I have had is that people enjoyed the sessions, and the opportunity to view the herb nursery.

This months core training was delivered by myself (Fortrose), Maggie Sutherland (Netherton) and Daniel Ross (Loch na Mhoid). The notes covered the topics of Enjoying your First Harvest, and covered what to be sowing and planting out for August, how to tell when your crops are ready for harvesting and green manure. Notes on preserving were also made available, as while this is the topic for September, it seems useful to have these available sooner.

Tasks in the training garden this month included harvesting salad, thinning carrots and beetroot, harvesting peas and beans, protecting brassicas with insect mesh, setting up dripper irrigation systems, turning compost, planting out overwinter cabbages and onions.

Practical help day

We had the first practical help day in Fortrose at Carola Martin Smith's garden where 4 extra pairs of hands were available to help build some raised beds. 2 others were signed up, but had to cancel.

Garden Visit

The first garden visit was also held this month – and to coincide with the practical help day, so that people could do both while they were in Fortrose. Lunch was provided with food from the garden. The same people attended the garden visit as attended the practical help day.

Maggie Sutherland has invited Grow North participants to attend the harvest open day at her site, as a garden visit. This will be 4th September.

Contact with tutors

Daniel Ross has confirmed all the dates that he has been allocated. Maggie Sutherland has said over the phone that she can do all but one, and would e-mail which one. Maggie Wormald has said she would check over the dates that she was e-mailed, and can do the September date.

Les Bates to be contacted regarding the session on fruit in November. Toni has plans for a hedgerow at Loch na Mhoid, so it would be useful to get discussions going about what will happen on the day at all sites.

Questionnaire for participants

Richard has had 13 responses to the questionnaire. A reminder was sent out 27th August.

Preparation for next training days

The next session will be on the topic of preserving – which I will deliver at each site. Different methods of preserving food will be covered with plenty of tasters available. The core sessions will be delivered by other “core” tutors.

Expenditure / income:

August participant payments - £0

Staff costs - £1060 SW, + 2 x £144 (DR & MS)

Expenses - £29 travel SW + £186.34 SW + DR travel & expenses + MS travel & expenses

Maggie Sutherland and Daniel have still to send in invoices and expenses. I will remind both, and also ask for an update regarding the training they delivered, including the list of participants who attended.

Actions for following period

- contact Les bates
- Garden visits / practical help days
- Timetable core tutors for rest of year – tweak as necessary
- topics for winter & tutor – only one suggestion so far – polytunnels – follow this up
- dine at mine – suggestion by Vanessa Halhead
- Publicity for Winter sessions – press release and new poster.
- Follow up participants who attended early events, and have not returned

Other

Dine at Mine – Vanessa Hallhead – Grow North & TBI members sharing meal using garden produce. Originally discussed as 28th or 29th August, now may be 4th or 5th September. I am a little anxious that without much notice, people will not commit to taking part, however I know of at least one participant who is quite keen.