

Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society
ANNUAL SCOTTISH ALLOTMENTS CONFERENCE
21st CENTURY ALLOTMENTS

WORKSHOPS REPORTS:

4. Working with local communities

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The group participants shared their experiences on working with communities. There was no “one size fits all” in getting communities involved in growing.

A chance encounter of some Musselburgh teachers with some local ploholders led to groups of primary school children visiting the Musselburgh allotments watching how things changed through the seasons, how compost was made etc. This led to the school making its own garden, and some of the allotment ploholders helping there on a regular basis. It has worked very well.

Sunflower competitions on Bute were popular in getting local children involved in growing something.

We heard about the Kelty Families Initiatives. Local nursery children were given seeds and they visit the plot at least three times a year – to plant, to watch how they are growing, and later on, to harvest. Cookery classes for adults were started using produce grown on the plot. Surplus produce was also distributed to local housebound residents made up in handy selection bags. The big bone of contention was that the local council wanted to charge £100 rent to the Kelty Families Initiatives for their use of the land which seemed like a kick in the teeth given that they are all volunteers and obviously providing a valuable service in the community.

We also discussed community orchards. Newburgh did not seem to suffer from too much vandalism on their community orchard. It was felt that the local children had grown up with the orchard and treated it with respect. This was not the case in an area of Glasgow where the fruit trees had lasted about 2 years before being damaged.

A word of caution was raised about buying cheap fruit trees from supermarkets and such like – these were rarely on dwarfing stock and would grow into very large trees needing a large area of ground and making it difficult to pick the fruit. Mandy urged us to seek out fruit trees on M27 stock roots from a reputable nursery.