



Cyrenians Farm

Newsletter Summer 2009

Rain Stops Play...

"If you plan for a year, plant a seed. If for 10 years, plant a tree. If for 100 years teach the people. When you sow a seed once, you will reap a single harvest. When you teach the people, you will reap 100 harvests."

Lo Kuan Chung

I've been sitting in the office today getting on with the administrative tasks that can only be done at this time of year when rain stops the harvest. You know the usual stuff like updating records, filling in databases, printing labels and writing plans. One task that has been long overdue, as some of you will be aware, is the production of a spring/summer newsletter... so here it is.

While thinking of what to write I have been trying to avoid a dark and miserable story about how the rain we have had over the past week or so is, yet again, turning our raspberry crop to useless red pulp. Instead, I would like to focus on the quote above which I feel neatly summarises what we are doing at the Cyrenians Farm.

If you plan for a year plant a seed...

Last year was one of the wettest summers I have ever experienced and according to some, one of the wettest ever. We had a lot of problems picking our raspberries, even more so than this year and that created a direct hit on our income. So this year to alleviate these problems we have placed greater emphasis on growing other crops such as salads, alliums and roots. We have also developed good business relationships with some fruit and veg wholesalers and retailers in the Lothians who are buying loads of our produce; Grow Wild (Bathgate), Real Foods (Edinburgh) and Earthy (Edinburgh). Soon we will be selling more produce to fruit and veg co-ops in West Lothian too.

So planting the correct seeds and creating brand new relationships with key wholesalers has spread our risk this year so that the impact of wet weather is much less and our sales of produce are well on target.

We have also had some great help with the harvest from West Lothian Criminal Justice teams, Bridgend Allotments, Reunion, The Rock Trust and HBOS although rain has stopped play many times when they have been here too! Other team challenges this year include one from McVities who

will be building a bike shed for us, RBS who will be upgrading our propagating tunnel and some hedge planting from HBOS.

If you plan for ten years plant a tree...

One of the biggest and most fruitful (pardon the pun) projects we have undertaken at the farm, since we have developed the social enterprise, is the planting of our orchard. The first trees were planted around three years ago and this year it seems we will have a fair amount of fruit from them. The good weather throughout April, May and June has meant that our hard working and long suffering bees were able to pollinate the flowers and we are looking forward to some Egremont Russet, George Cave, Katja, Discovery and many other varieties of apples. The orchard won't be fully matured until 2016 or thereabouts when we should expect apples by the tonne. Careful planning and a bit of long term vision from previous managers means that the orchard will help move us toward full sustainability by that time and provide a valuable local source of food. Not to mention the honey and beeswax lip balm (available in our new on-line shop) which provide good income now.

If you plan for a hundred years teach the people...

From now and for the next three months we welcome Tim Hendry to the farm; Tim is with us on secondment from Standard Life. His project is to look at ways of bringing in more young people from external agencies to the farm to learn about horticulture, good food and the skills needed to work. Tim is pictured in the middle of the photo below. The chap on the left is Keith who is one of our residents and now also a full day volunteer (and that's me on the right!).



As the farm enterprise develops, we hope to reach out to the community and teach as many people as possible how to grow their own food. Whether it is residents like Keith, folks with their own gardens or other

community groups; we see it as very important in these times to ensure food security for marginalised communities. There is no doubt in my mind that the combined effects of global warming and imminent fossil fuel shortages will make food more expensive and harder for some people to survive. Projects like our farm will help people to help themselves by teaching basic principles in horticulture and permaculture.

Other news in brief...

- **The slug army destroyed our first batch of kale seedlings overnight. If anyone has any foolproof organic slug defences, drop me a line.**
- **A developing relationship with BOE Café will see our produce in extra farmers markets this year, watch this space.**
- **We are just starting to plan for our Christmas hamper sales again after the initial success last year. This year there will be a more streamlined ordering system through our website; although we won't have a carnivore option**

Rob Davidson
Enterprise Manager



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