

School Eco-Club Climate Repair Activity: Community Gardens and Orchards

AIM: To Design a Community Orchard or Garden

BACKGROUND

The carbon footprint (a number that sums up the harmful gases which go into the atmosphere) associated with the food you eat, depends on how the food is produced, processed, transported and packaged. Eating locally grown food which is in season is a good way to lower your carbon footprint. Community gardens and orchards are spaces where anyone in the community can grow and harvest food. Community gardens are not only a source of food they are also a space where the community can come together to socialise and share food growing skills.

ACTIVITY

Letchworth has two publicly accessible community orchards and one community garden. These are:

- The Wynd Community Garden – Owned and managed by the Heritage Foundation
- Croft Lane Orchard - Owned and managed by the Heritage Foundation
- Wilbury Road Orchard – Owned by North Hertfordshire District Council

Visit one or more of these locations to find out what is grown there and when it is in season. The site owners or Transition Town Letchworth could be contacted for a written briefing or perhaps to arrange a short talk as part of the visit.

Following the visit ask students to make a plan for a community garden or orchard in your local area. Consider:

- What crops to grow.
- Features needed, e.g. fences, paths, shed, greenhouse, raised beds, seating, water, tool storage and shade.
- How to get materials and equipment without having to buy new.

Students could have a tasting session of foods that could be grown locally (including different varieties of the same food), to help them decide what to grow.

Community gardens are most successful if there are events which will encourage people to join the volunteer team. Students should include in their plan a list of events that will be held each year. Some examples of events / workshops that could be held are:

- Preparing the ground for the growing season.
- Seed swaps
- Cutting and grafting workshop
- Composting
- A harvest celebration
- Apple pressing

POSSIBLE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- If the students find there are inadequate community food growing spaces in their locality they could write letters to the local council making a case for land to be made available for a community garden, community orchard or fruit tree walkway in the locality.
- Visit other local food producing gardens to collect ideas, e.g. the Kitchen Garden at the Wimpole Estate or Triangle Community Garden in Hitchin.
- Host an event to show the students' plans to the local community and find out how much interest there is in supporting an existing, or building a new, community garden or orchard.

Transition Town Letchworth delivers community projects to support more sustainable lives
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