

DSH Vegetable Garden Project

Report from Brona Dore

The additional working area at Burton Hall, eight raised beds, lean-to glasshouse and two cold frames have been cleared of all weeds and debris and the soil is ready for sowing and planting. Suggestion forms for the use of these areas have been given to the students and 32 of these returned. These forms have been thoroughly digested and a vegetable growing plan drawn up for each class. There are 21 students listed for each class and all have been allocated three seeds to buy and an unusual vegetable or fruit to research. All growing areas will be divided equally between both classes. Surplus seed, transplants and produce will be shared by everyone.

The first sowings of five crops (broad beans, garlic, spring onions, radish and beetroot) took place at the February classes. At the early March classes it is planned to sow over thirty different crops/varieties and the same again at the April classes. During all this work priority will be given to the skills and standards required by the R.H.S. examination board. Already students are showing a better understanding of the skills they have learned to date as they put them into productive practice in the raised beds and lean-to.

Though it is hoped the weather will be favourable for the March and April work a "wet weather" contingency plan will be available. This will include seed tray sowing of many of the crops. Many of the students do not have "growing" facilities at home so a test seed tray of lettuces with see through propagation lid has been sown by me and left outside under kitchen window. The seed tray is in a blank tray to avoid water logging from rain and two elastic ties hold the propagation lid in place. So far the results are excellent after just two weeks.

From the seed allocation lists it is noted that some students are not scheduled to sow their allocated seeds at the March class. This came about as a result of paying close attention to the vegetables listed on their suggestion forms. It is an area of the overall plan that could be enhanced for next year, i.e. allocating a student an early sowing vegetable and a late sowing vegetable. But these students will be involved with all aspects of the March work.

Decisions will be required on the use of various pest controls, e.g. slug pellets or organic methods. From the paw prints in the February snow there is either a rabbit or hare living at Burton Hall. Thought should be given to protecting the produce from this pest! Other questions come to mind, can Growmore® be used?

So far the project has certainly "fired" up the students with such enthusiasm that can only benefit all areas of the RHS Level 3 Practical Course at Burton Hall.

25th February, 2009