

Feed Leeds Launches Seedling Campaign Sow A Row Xtra!



Feed Leeds' Tom Bliss gets some advice on how to "Sow A Row Xtra."

One happy 'green shoot' emerging from the stress and sadness of last summer's restrictions was a big increase in people growing their own food; a physical activity which benefits your mind and body as much as your taste buds.

The Royal Horticultural Society reported an unprecedented surge in interest during the past year*, with an estimated 3 million new gardeners picking up their spades.

But even in good times not everyone can afford to buy seeds or successfully grow them into plants ready for the veg plot. And the lockdown's made times even tighter for many.



So Feed Leeds, the local food growers' network, are taking a leaf out of Aberdeen and other cities' books by encouraging experienced gardeners to **Sow A Row Xtra**, and then bring the extra seedlings to Drop-off and Xchange Sites, which are being added to a map at [feedleeds.org](http://www.feedleeds.org) (click the Sow A Row Xtra tab) as more people offer to help. [Direct link to map page: http://www.turnstone.tv/NEW_FL/getgrwoingleeds.html]

The project has two targets; one supplying specific in-need groups, and the other applying to anyone with a keen interest in growing food but no way to get started.



Many of the seedlings will be added to 'Friendship Boxes' also containing donated tools, compost and advice on how and where to grow, and then handed to asylum-seekers, refugees and families in hardship. This part of the project, called **Growing Friendship**, is being funded by National Lottery Community Funding, and managed by Feed Leeds member Season Well, in partnership with Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network (LASSN).

Becky Mears from Feed Leeds and Season Well said,

"We knew from LASSN and similar organisations that there are plenty of people in Leeds desperate to grow their own food but who lack the funds or a suitable place to plant. So as well as providing seedlings and tools, we're running food-growing workshops with LASSN, and also finding, or even creating, new veg plots close to where people live - even if some may need to be just pots or tubs, which can actually deliver a surprisingly bumper harvest!"

But the team hope and anticipate that many more 'Sow A Row Xtra' seedlings will be grown than will be needed for the Growing Friendship hubs.

So, because Feed Leeds are also working with FoodWise Leeds under the **#getgrowingleeds** banner to promote the consumption of fruit and veg in the city using funding from Veg Cities, anyone who lacks the funds, space or skills to grow from seed will be welcome to collect excess seedlings and, when available, spare Friendship Boxes from the Xchange sites.

Tom Bliss, from Feed Leeds and FoodWise Leeds, said,

"We just love this idea. It helps us to share the joy that seeing those first tips poking through the compost always generates. It provides tangible help to people in real need, and it gets everyone thinking about the multiple benefits of getting out in your garden, allotment, community plot, school - or wherever you can poke in a trowel, and start growing your own delicious food. We fully expect to see even more people getting into gardening this year than last - booting out those lockdown blues with a spring burst of greens! Anyone willing to Sow A Row Xtra of veg seeds, and/or donate tools, seed trays, pots, compost or anything useful to new growers, or even host a Drop-off or Xchange site for us, should please drop me a line at tom@urbal.tv."

The map at feedleeds.org also shows the emerging network of **Little Veg Libraries** and **Leeds Hedge Veg** where surplus harvest and more will be available for free later in the year.

NOTES FOR EDITORS



Feed Leeds is a network of individuals and organisations working in partnership to support local food growing (at home, in allotments, at schools, in community projects or commercially) for its social, economic, environmental and health benefits, and to promote healthy, sustainable and affordable food in Leeds. <http://feedleeds.org/>



Season Well is a member of Feed Leeds. Based in Guiseley, it's a social enterprise that inspires and enables people to grow, cook and eat local, seasonal fruit, herbs and vegetables. <https://seasonwell.co.uk/>

Leeds Asylum Seekers' Support Network (LASSN) is a registered charity set up in 1999 to respond to the pressing unmet needs of refugees and asylum seekers living in Leeds, many of whom have limited English, experience acute isolation, poor mental health, and prolonged uncertainty over their asylum claim. LASSN helps more than 300 volunteers to support 400 asylum seekers and refugees each year. They also provide destitute asylum seekers with the emergency financial support and accommodation they need to survive over the winter months. <https://lassn.org.uk/>



FoodWise Leeds is the driving force for good food in Leeds; encouraging people to grow, buy, serve and eat healthy, sustainable food - and to help build a locally-focused, high quality / low carbon, zero waste, and above all fair food system for the city. <https://foodwiseleeds.org/>



Veg Cities is a feature campaign of [Sustainable Food Places](https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/), [https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/], led by food and farming charity [Sustain](https://www.sustainweb.org/) [https://www.sustainweb.org/]in partnership with the wider Peas Please initiative. It calls on cities and other local areas to coordinate activity and action. <https://www.vegcities.org/>

BACKGROUND LINKS

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/24/how-coronavirus-has-led-to-a-uk-boom-in-community-food-growing>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-gardens-idUSKBN2220D3>

<https://www.cfine.org/keep-growing-aberdeen-seedling-sharing-project>

* <https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2021-01-26/winter-wonders-gardening-continues-to-prove-popular-in-the-latest-lockdown> "The Royal Horticultural Society has seen a surge in interest during the past year. Chief Horticulturist at RHS Wisley, Guy Barter, said: "It absolutely is unprecedented ... The trade reckoned that there's been about 3 million new gardeners in the last year. At the moment, it's mid-winter, but gardeners and people interested in gardening know that, very soon, the sun's going to come up and we've got all the excitement of preparing and planning and looking forward to something."

<https://www.hortweek.com/bord-bias-value-garden-market-research-reports-sales-%E2%82%AC12bn-record-year-gardening/retail/article/1709775>



Feed Leeds' Tom Bliss gets some advice on how to "Sow A Row Xtra." (Image cleared for publication).



Becky Mears and Vivien Hargreaves of Season Well getting ready for planting.

