



Reap what you Sow!

Recently I uttered words that I thought would never pass my lips, "I didn't sleep well last night, I was worried about planting my potatoes". This I believe is the final stage in becoming a bona fide "Allotmenter".

Three years ago, standing waist high in weeds, I offered to help my daughter on her newly acquired plot. On good advice, gratefully accepted, we planted as we cleared the land. The sight of our onions rising from the ground filled us with enthusiasm and there was no looking back.

I'm not sure when the bug bit, maybe somewhere between the serenity that accompanies weeding, and harvesting. Nothing beats the proud satisfaction derived from feeding friends and family organic produce that you have grown. The appreciation for flavourful vegetables cultivated naturally, not forced and shipped across the world. With increasing awareness of the effect of mass production on the environment it is a real connection to earth and Earth. Growing your own is simply ecologically sound and you only have to stroll around the allotments to marvel at the ingenious recycling of everyday objects.

An allotment changes your attitude. That sweet misshapen carrot previously discarded is a testament to your time and effort. There is something truly magical in sowing a seed and watching the transformation into a healthy productive plant. A process that not only feeds your body but also your mind and soul.

Despite being immersed in a bustling town with the M25 a stones throw away, the sense of tranquility once you enter the gates is palpable. It has been proven that soil contains a natural anti-depressant, *Mycobacterium vaccae*. Inhaling these microbes as you work has been likened to Prozac without the adverse side-effects. Combine that with the physical act of gardening which maintains mobility and strength whilst reducing

stress and the benefits of working outside in the fresh air. Research has shown that it improves our brain health and can reduce the risk of dementia by 36%.

Allotment ownership is undoubtedly one of the most overlooked pleasures in life. No longer the domain of retired gentlemen escaping their spouses, it is now a wonderfully diverse multi-cultural community with each gardener as unique as their plot, all ages encouraged. Friendships abound with helpful advice when requested.

Working on an allotment is a labour of love, but you don't have to dig too deep to reap the many rewards.



The Potters Bar Allotment Association established in the early 1900s is a thriving community with over a 100 south-east facing plots. Located off Highview Gardens it is a statutory allotment site with devolved management and a long term lease to the Association from Hertsmere District Council. There is currently a short waiting list. Anyone interested in renting a plot should visit the site on Sunday mornings between 09.30 and 12.00 or email: pballotmentassoc@btinternet.com.