



Manager's message

Traditionally, autumn is the time when we bring in the harvests; when we enjoy the fruits of all our hard work in the months before. We've been putting a lot of work into our food projects in the last six months, and we're starting to see just how much we can achieve. In August we launched a new food co-op in Warwick, based on the success of the Lillington co-op, and we also hired a project manager for the allotment at Dobson Lane. Louise is steadily bringing the exciting plans to fruition.

Eating good, local food is important for us all, and here at Action 21 we want to help people to do this, whether it's through food bags or allotments, community supported agriculture (CSA) like Canalside or sharing knowledge. We want to see people eating healthily, to see healthy gardens and a healthy planet. Your membership donations make it possible for us to work towards this vision.

New Food co-ops

Lillington food co-op, which operates out of the Children's Centre on Mason Avenue, has been running for four years and now distributes around 35 food bags on 50 weeks of the year. That adds up to a staggering 1750 bags of fresh fruit and vegetables every year.

This August we opened up a new co-op in Warwick, taking the model to a new community. On the first day Judy, our food officer, and volunteers distributed 25 bags filled with good fresh food. The launch was a huge success, particularly considering that this was during the summer holidays when many families are away. We'll be building on this success later this autumn, launching a third co-op in Sydenham.



The food co-ops supply fresh and local or British fruit and vegetables to families at an affordable price. A recent study carried out by Warwick University students found that our food bags can be as much as three pounds cheaper than a comparable bag of fruit and vegetables from a supermarket. Working together with local children's centre, we also provide advice on cooking the food. Through the food co-ops, we can help a wide range of people to access fresh, locally grown food.

Co-op F.A.Q.s

Q. Where does the food come from? It's local where possible, or British if not.

Q. How much does a bag cost? £3.50 for a large bag or £2 for a small one. A small percentage of the cost goes towards the running of the co-op.

Q. What do you get in a food bag? It depends on the season, of course, but there'll always be some potatoes, carrots and onions.

Q. What makes it a co-op? Everyone, when they buy their first bag, automatically becomes a member of the co-op group. It means that the customers have joint ownership and contribute, through buying food bags, to the continuation of the scheme.

Q. Who runs it? It's operated primarily by volunteers, under the guidance of Action 21's Food Officer Judy Steele, in partnership with the Children's Centres.

Allotment Alert!

Around fifteen years ago there used to be allotments on a piece of land at the end of Dobson Lane in Whitnash. When these fell out of use and were under threat of being built on, Action 21 saved the land and took ownership of it. This summer we've finally started a project to re-establish the land as allotments and get Whitnash growing.



With allotment waiting lists at an all-time high and people more keen than ever to start growing, it's an ideal time for us to be implementing this project. As ever, our aim is to help people live more sustainably, and this includes growing food. Dobson Lane is an excellent opportunity for us to really get involved, and get others involved, in local, sustainable food production. The huge space allows us to involve corporate teams and have space for demonstrations.

We've already been helped out by some great corporate work parties on the site. On July 15th a team of nine people from the local Conoco Philips office spent a day painting and repairing the perimeter fence as part of their 'Re-Fuelling the Community' project. In early September volunteers from Jaguar Land Rover spent two days working on the communal area, creating hazel work and doing other tasks.

There'll be more news on the developments in months to come, but if you'd like specific information, please email louise@action21.co.uk.



Meet the new project manager... Louise Male answers some questions posed by Eleanor, General Assistant.

EP: How long have you been working with Action 21? What's your job?

LM: Since the 21st July, although I volunteered at the Recycle Warehouse for a year when it first opened. It's my job to turn the scrub land into allotments - setting up the allotment society and all that's involved with it.

EP: Tell me a bit about Dobson Lane – what's the site like?

LM: The allotment site is right at the end of Dobson Lane and currently has no water supply or any structure to it at all other than some hard standing and some lovely trees in the middle of the site.

EP: What's your vision for the site?

LM: We plan to have various-sized plots, keeping the natural wooded area. Eventually we hope to have compost toilets and an area with raised beds for those people with mobility issues.

Canalside Community Food

Action 21 is proud to promote other groups growing food locally. Here's an update from Caz Ingall from Canalside:

"Canalside Community Food is now well into it's third growing year and everything is blooming. Whilst we hear stories of other box schemes losing members and others going bust completely, our membership numbers are still slowly but steadily rising. At the current time of writing, we are supplying around 105 local households with weekly shares of lovely fresh organic vegetables, all grown here on our farm in Radford Semele. We can't help but feel that the added community supported agriculture component of the whole project being a shared responsibility is making the difference for us remaining successful.

"We have an exciting few months ahead of us now. We are currently working on plans for a new fruit CSA, having applied for funding for an extensive fruit field/forest garden. All being well, we are planning to start planting this winter and hope to be harvesting at least some soft fruit as soon as next year.

"We do still have a number of vegetable shares available, so if you're interested in getting more involved, please contact Caz at mail@canalsidecommunityfood or on 01926 423939."

Do you want to get growing but haven't got the space?

Landshare connects people who have land to spare with the people who want to grow on it. You (the landowner, grower or helper) post a listing to the group telling others what you're looking for, and you'll get a response through their mail system. It's a brilliant way to make full use of the land that we've got in this country, and to enable more people to grow their own.

Landshare is a venture in partnership with River Cottage, set up by TV chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. He and his team are committed to the principles of self-sufficiency, food integrity and the consumption of local, seasonal produce. This lifestyle is more accessible to us all thanks to *Landshare*.

<http://landshare.channel4.com>

Herbs galore

The National Herb Centre in Warwickshire, just outside Warmington Village, stocks over 500 varieties of herb plants for chefs and gardeners alike. The Centre offers demonstration gardens, relaxing country walks, gardening supplies, workshops and just about everything you'd ever need to start growing herbs.

www.herbcentre.co.uk

Organic gardening

Although a recent Food Standards Agency report claimed that there was no nutritional benefit to eating organic food, there's no doubt that growing food organically is far better for the planet and our bodies than using oil-reliant chemical pesticides and fertilizers.



The Garden Organic centre at Ryton in Warwickshire is your first port of call for all things organic. What's more, Action 21 members can receive a brilliant 10% discount off Garden Organic membership, giving you access to a whole host of resources. Email eleanor@action21.co.uk or call 01926 456076 to find out more.

Events update

Recent events - It's been a summer of shows and festivals this year

- Peace Festival – this year we helped to recycle a whopping 1.8 tonnes of rubbish thanks to the dedication of our volunteers.
- Royal Show and Warwick Folk Festival– Action 21 were invited to have a stall at these two local events where we had the chance to enthuse lots of people about our work.
- Latin Festival – we did such a good job at the Peace Festival that the Latin Festival asked for our help too!

Upcoming events

- Garden gang project to transform the outside space at the Re-Useful Centre in Sydenham. If you're interested in helping out, contact Amy Footer, Volunteer Development Worker. amy@action21.co.uk / 01926 456072.
- 9th – 13th November 2009, *Switch it off* week. Keep an eye on the website for details of what's going on.

Activity Page

Wild food

Now it's autumn, there's absolutely loads of food you can get for free the next time you go on a country walk (or even a not-so-country walk). All you need is hedgerows.



Blackberries – good for crumbles! Pick them when they're black and juicy. You can also have stew them and eat them with porridge

Elderberries – the tiny berries are good for jam. Pick them when they're black and make sure you cook them before eating.

Sloes - a bit sour to eat raw, and you need to watch out for the stones, but they're good in jam (or sloe gin for the grown-ups!)

Hazelnuts – there are lots of these in Warwickshire. Take off the hard outer shell and eat them raw or roast them. Hazelnuts go particularly well with chocolate...

Sweet Chestnuts – the Romans ate these, so we can too! Take the spiny shells off to reveal the glossy brown fruit. Don't eat it raw, but roast them in an oven or over a fire, remove the brown shell, and it'll be delicious.

Hunt for life!

What can you find living near you? How many different species can you see? Mark out a square metre in your garden or in the park using string (stick a pencil in the ground at each of the four corners and wrap the string around this).

Look really carefully at what you can see. Is there grass? What's living underneath it? Are there different types of grass? Look for all the different types of plants and minibeasts, and describe what you can see in your own words.

Why not send in a list of what you've found? We'll award a free junior membership (5-12yrs) to whoever sends in the longest list!

You'll need to include: Your name, address, where you were hunting, and a list of what you found.

Send your results to: Eleanor Perkins, General Assistant, Action 21, Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 5HZ. Closing date: 15th October 2009.

Action 21 promotes sustainable living to people in Warwickshire through positive, practical action. We seek to make greener living easier to do in ways which create a better quality of life for people at a local level, working in constructive partnerships with other organisations and individuals. Our activities centre on food, transport, waste, energy and education, all supported by our thriving volunteering programme.

www.action21.co.uk | 01926 456067 | info@action21.co.uk