
ALLOTMENT FORESTRY PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT

2002

SUMMARY

This report presents an overview of the work undertaken by the Allotment Forestry Project during 2002. A total of 19 work parties were held during the year representing 198 volunteer half days. In addition 140 hours were spent developing the web site WWW.allotmentforestry.com, which had 30096 visitors in 2002, an average of 81/day. The texts of articles written about the project's work are given in the appendices along with a project proposal for preparing an allotment forest strategy for 'Greater Ipswich'. The preparation of this strategy will be undertaken in association with the Greenways Project and will form the basis of future development of the project in the area. Financial support for the project work in 2002 came from **Suffolk Environment Trust, Shell Better Britain Campaign, Countryside Agency, Forestry Commission, BT and COVER**. The **Greenways Project** and **Ipswich Borough Council** provided much appreciated practical and logistical support through the year

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INTRODUCTION

The Allotment Forestry Project is a community project dedicated to helping gardeners to choose locally grown woodland products. It is a joint project between Ipswich Wildlife Group and Ipswich Organic Gardeners Group and is wholly organised and run by volunteers from these two groups.

2002 has been a turbulent time. The collapse of BTCV's insurance scheme resulting in woodland work parties being cancelled and other activities being curtailed. The Beanpole Festival only went ahead once we took out separate insurance for £150. Despite this the following report shows that we have been busy working to promote Local Woodland Products in our area. An increasing amount of effort has gone into the unseen activity of developing the website which has been incredibly successful. Finally, many individuals in the Project have been distracted by the need to campaign against the proposed East Bank Link Road, which cuts a swathe through Orwell Country Park. This is likely to be a continuing distraction for a year or so yet for many of the Project's supporters.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

A total of 19 work parties have been organised this year representing a 187 volunteer ½ days. Using the standard rate of £50/vol day suggested by the Countryside Agency this represents £4950 of work. In addition many hours of volunteer time has been used in supporting the work parties, eg tool maintenance attending meetings and running the Web Site. The details per site and the Web development work are given below:

Spring Wood

No work Parties held: 8
Average attendance: 14 people
Total number of vol half days: 111
Total value of labour: £2775

Tree Nursery

No work Parties held: 11
Average attendance: 8 people
Total number of vol half days: 87
Total value of labour: £2175

Website

Webmaster Mark Dowling's time: 80 hours
Geoff Sinclair's time: 60 hours
Average no of people visiting web site per day = 81
Average no of people visiting web site per month = 2508
Total number of people visiting the web site in 2002 = 30096

EVENTS

Xmas Tree and Card Recycling

Our first attempt at this event that coincides with the first work party of the year, 6th January 2002. 40 Xmas trees recycled and one planted to grow on! A very full car load of Xmas cards was also collected and put into the Woodland Trust recycling bin at Tesco's.

Beanpole Festival

The fifth annual beanpole festival was held on Sunday May 5th 2002. Attendance was constant with previous years at 300 plus. We sold out of peasticks and most of the beanpoles. Remaining stock was converted into tree stakes for the Greenways Project and used for rustic work at the Tree Nursery. Displays and demonstrations showed people how to use local grown wood in the gardens and also how they could grow their own. New for this year were Rustic Garden woodwork master classes featuring:

1. Brian Cohen on rustic furniture making.
2. Jo Hammond on willow rustic plant supports (the pyramid type)
3. Will Wall on rustic bentwood garden structures
4. Geoff Sinclair on rustic wattlework for the garden.

These proved popular but presented logistical issues that need to be addressed for the future.

Shell Better Britain Campaign Conference

The Allotment Forestry Project was selected by SBBC to host one of twenty national conferences as part of their 2002 Project. The conference, which was held on Friday May 17th 2002, was based on the allotments by the Tree nursery and had delegates from around the Eastern Region. The conference looked at the Allotment Forestry Project and how the experience could be developed elsewhere. Workshops presented a range of ideas on how to take both community participation project forward and how the Allotment Forestry Project can be developed. The project and conference outputs were included in the SBBC's report present to the Johannesburg Earth Summit.

Spring Wood Planting Event

500 hazel plants were planted at a planting event at Spring Wood on Sunday 17th February 2002. A guided walk of the wood to see the work being carried out by local volunteers followed the planting.

Otley College Training Event

A half-day training event for 14 Students from the Otley College Permaculture Course was given. They visited the tree nursery and demonstration area and were shown the projects work. Training on how to grow beanpoles and use them in the garden was given.

Guided Walk Spring Wood

A guided walk on 19th May 2002 to see the stunning display of bluebells of Spring Wood. Attendees were shown the work of the volunteers along with displays of local products.

Silver-Smithing Workshop

The local Ipswich Druid Society hosted a Silver-smithing workshop at the Tree Nursery. Participants made beautiful silver torques from twisting silver rods into a barley sugar twist. For the use of the tree nursery facilities the Druid society offered volunteer help in exchange on one of our woodland work parties.

PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY

Talks and shows.

Geoff Sinclair has given 4 talks to local garden clubs during 2002 and three presentations at conferences. Most notable was the Small Woodland Association's National Conference 'Rediscovering Woodland' with over 200 attendees from around the country. Appendix two is a copy of the presentation made by Geoff. In total at least 443 attended the various presentations.

Beanpoles and local wooduse have been a feature of Karen Kenny's many talks given through the year. In addition IOGG took the Allotment Forestry Display and material to the Spring and Summer Suffolk Garden Shows.

Articles

The campaign has had three articles published this year:

- HDRA Magazine. Mark Dowling wrote an article about the project for their magazine at the request of the Editor. This is a national magazine for members of the Henry Doubleday Research Association. (Appendix One)
- National Small Woods Association: Geoff wrote an 'Opinion' piece for the Small Woods Association Magazine
- Royal Forestry Society Magazine: Geoff wrote an article called 'Allotment Forestry: rebuilding a local woodland culture'. (Appendix Three)

Press Coverage

Additional press coverage has been as follows:

Date	Media	Details
05/01/02	Evening Star	Editorial comment on the Xmas Tree recycling
05/01/02	East Anglian	Editorial comment on the Xmas Tree recycling
06/01/02	BBC Radio Suffolk	Small piece on Xmas Tree recycling at the Tree Nursery.
07/04/02	BBC Radio Suffolk	7 mins on the Allotment Forestry Project as part of the 'Countryfile' programme
13/04/02	East Anglian	Full page article on beanpoles which mentions the Beanpole Festival.
04/05/02	Independent on Saturday	Two paragraphs on the project as part of a feature on the '50 Best Woods'

WWW. ALLOTTMENTFORESTRY.COM

Overall during the year 30 096 people visited the web site and an average rate of 81 per day or 2505 per month. Feedback from the website host on the pages visited has highlighted that far and away the areas of most interest are the factsheets and details on fencing materials and suppliers. On average only about 250 people access the site each month via the address with most finding it via a search enquiry.

Monthly and daily average Web Site Statistics for 2002

Month	Pages/day	Visits/day	Pages/month	Visits/month
Dec 2002	111	67	3446	2084
Nov 2002	131	93	3935	2799
Oct 2002	137	93	4253	2906
Sep 2002	141	89	4238	2686
Aug 2002	170	100	5291	3124
Jul 2002	167	101	5180	3144
Jun 2002	138	99	4158	2990
May 2002	147	95	4572	2953
Apr 2002	128	82	3843	2466
Mar 2002	94	65	2932	2045
Feb 2002	82	57	2313	1620
Jan 2002	51	41	1600	1279
			Total	30096

THE FUTURE

Apart from the continuation of existing activities and the hosting of the 6th Beanpole Festival the following projects are to be developed during 2003:

Demonstration Area Improvement

Over the next year we want to add to the number of rustic garden structures and wildlife gardening features in the demonstration area. Each feature will be photographed during construction and the details added to the website. Features to be tackled this year:

- Rustic arbour
- Rustic bench
- Summerhouse with decking all made from recycled pallets.
- Stag beetle pyramid
- RSPB Log pile.
- Laid hedge along boundary with old folks home.
- Wattle raised beds
- Rustic fences completed around woodland area

Allotment Forestry Strategy

The key development task for the forthcoming year is the preparation of an Allotment Forest Strategy. The task proposal for this is given in Appendix Four. This has the general aim of achieving access to local grown beanpoles for all allotment holders and gardeners in the 'Greater Ipswich Area'¹. Strategy preparation will require several weeks' research into allotments in the project area and will involve allotment holders and gardeners in its preparation.

Web Site

Apart from the continuing development of the web site a key project to at least get started in 2003 is web-based product promotion. These would be 'special themed' promotions focussing on particular products eg beanpoles, charcoal, Trugs and baskets, rustic furniture. These would be undertaken as part of a specific project and would require extra funding. They would also benefit from a 'celebrity' gardener fronting each promotion.

Articles

Articles to work on for 2003:

- Growing your beanpoles. Article suitable for The Garden. Should also include details on ground flora, stumperies etc (Geoff and Karen)
- Article on the use of the internet by small groups. (Mark and Geoff)

¹ Gipping Valley Project Area, Greenways Project Area, Felixstowe Peninsula and Woodbridge.

APPENDICES

Appendix One: Text of Article in HDRA's Magazine

Appendix Two: Text of Small Woods Association Conference presentation

Appendix Three: Royal Forestry Society Magazine Article

Appendix Four: Allotment Forest Strategy Proposal

Appendix One: Text of Article in HDRA's Magazine

Allotment Forestry

Based on allotment fields, community groups in Ipswich have been working since 1995 to encourage the use of sustainable beanpoles and woodland products generally in the garden and allotment. The Forestry Commission in 1998 promoted this work in a leaflet '*Allotment Forestry on your patch*' which resulted in a huge and continuing response across the country for more information on the role of allotments to promote sustainable woodland management. As a consequence of the increased effort required to meet this interest an internet based project was devised and eventually supported by the Forestry Commission, Countryside Agency, Shell Better Britain Campaign and the Suffolk Environment Trust.

Each year volunteers cut c 2000 beanpoles and pea sticks from Spring Wood LNR. These are sold through our Beanpole Festival and other activities. In addition 300-500 plants are distributed from our tree nursery each year to help local beanpole planting projects. Garden wood craft courses and open days are held through the year. All work is planned and implemented by volunteers, including the web site production.

Our main activities include:-

1. Running a community tree nursery and managing Spring Wood Local Nature Reserve through two monthly work parties.
2. Promoting local wood products to allotment holders and gardeners through open days, talks and a national garden product directory of local wood products.
3. Running a web site www.allotmentforestry.com for gardeners helping them to make use of local woodland products in the garden. The web site contains details on producers of local woodland products across England, fact sheets and DIY projects.
4. Run training workshops and produce guidance on how to use wood in the garden.
5. Annual Beanpole Festival held in May each year

Mark Dowling has been an Organic Gardener for over 15 years and works full times as an environmental consultant. For the past six year he has been working as a volunteer with Ipswich Wildlife Group and Ipswich Organic Gardeners Group as part of the Allotment Forestry Project. He also web master for the allotment forestry (www.alotmentforestry.com) and local environmental group's web (www.irene.org.uk) sites

Email: geoff@allotmentforestry.com

Appendix Four: PREPARATION OF AN ALLOTMENT FORESTRY STRATEGY FOR THE GREATER IPSWICH AREA²

Aim

To provide a long-term vision with a five-year Action Plan for the Allotment Forestry Project within the Greater Ipswich Area

Objectives

- To undertake a survey of allotment fields in the Greater Ipswich area
- To collate details on gardening, allotment and wildlife groups within the project area
- To collate details on existing sources of beanpoles and peasticks in the Greater Ipswich area;
- To prepare an Allotment Forestry Strategy in consultation with Allotment holders, Field owners and managers.

Actions

Objective	Action	Who	Timing (Month no)
To undertake a survey of allotment fields in the Greater Ipswich area	Prepare a list of all allotment sites in the project area along with their respective contacts.	Greenways	1
	Prepare a survey questionnaire: no plots, no vacant, no derelict, byelaws relating to trees, conservation features present etc.	Geoff & Karen with Greenways	1
	Sent out questionnaire and follow up with phone call wherever possible	Greenways	1 & 2
	Visit a selection of sites and meet allotment field secretaries.	Greenways with Geoff & Karen	2 & 3

² Gipping Valley Project Area, Greenways Project Area, Felixstowe Peninsula and Woodbridge.

To collate details on gardening, allotment and wildlife groups within the project area	List prepared of all contacts in the area.	Geoff & Karen with Greenways	2
To collate details on existing sources of beanpoles and peasticks in the Greater Ipswich area	List of existing woodlands and suppliers prepared	Geoff with Greenways	2
	List of 'potential' suppliers and woodlands prepared.	Geoff with Greenways	2
To prepare an Allotment Forestry Strategy in consultation with Allotment holders, Field owners and managers	Write draft Strategy	Geoff & Karen with Greenways	3
	Consultation on strategy to key organisations/partners	Greenways with Geoff and Karen	4
	Consultation exercise organised based on allotments to reach out to allotment holders and others.	Geoff with Karen & Greenways	4
	Consultation results collated and strategy finalised.	Geoff & Karen with Greenways	4
	Strategy published on Internet with a limited number of paper copies. Launch event to mark the occasion.	Mark and all available volunteers!	5 & 6

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Allotment Forestry Project
9th Dec 2002