

End of grant report - Meanwood Valley Urban Farm

By Benjamin Lawson, veg@mvuf.org.uk, 07922513704, www.mvuf.org.uk

5th December 2021

Overview

A hive of activity in winter and spring at the market garden- a big thank you to the Nineveh Charitable Trust! 2021 was an incredible year of progress at Meanwood Valley Market Garden, and its success has come thanks to the Nineveh Charitable Trust. Funding from Nineveh Charitable Trust allowed us to continue running an enriching volunteer program that fostered community and delivered hands-on learning about agro-ecological processes. Our regular volunteer cohort supported with major infrastructure restoration, alongside the growing and caretaking of chemical-free crops and caring for our soil. All of this has contributed towards a truly abundant growing season and unforgettable volunteer experiences and opportunities.

Volunteering at the market garden helped volunteers to find their way into growing food for their livelihood

Rhian and Louisa were both committed volunteers during the various lockdowns and beyond. We are happy to say that, as a result of their volunteering in the Market Garden, they have both been able to secure work in edible horticulture. Rhian is now Head Grower at Kirkstall Valley Farm CSA, a new urban market garden in Leeds that supplies locals with fresh vegetables, and runs a thriving volunteer program. Louisa became a grower at RHS Harlow Carr, and is now a part of the Kitchen Garden Team at Ridding estate in Harrogate. An excerpt from Rhian's testimony:

"Volunteering at Meanwood Valley Market Garden has provided me with invaluable experience in running a small-scale horticulture project...and gave me the boost I needed to apply for a paid role as a grower with a new urban farm in Kirkstall, Leeds."

Renovating our Infrastructure

Over the winter of 2021, in the midst of another lockdown, the market garden team was busy restoration and improving infrastructure around the garden. Support from the Nineveh Charitable Trust didn't directly fund this work, but none of it would have been possible without our volunteers.

We were able to restore our polytunnels to their former glory, thanks to a huge effort from all the volunteers to do the dozens of tasks to get the tunnels ready in over many cold weeks. The re-skinning was completed just before May, enabling us to begin planting early and eventually grow 300kg of tomatoes, over 1000 cucumbers, 200 peppers and 60kg of chard. These tunnels will continue to be a valuable resource for years to come.

Path building was a prominent winter 2021 task and major work was done, which has made the market garden so much more accessible for everyone - the growers with wheelbarrows, the public, children and those with physical disabilities.

We also began building retaining walls to reinforce the terracing of our sloped garden. This will help to prevent soil erosion and benefit the longterm health of the garden and the produce grown in it.

We were also lucky to receive funding to build a multifunctional structure called 'the Arc', made from green roundwood timber sourced from 30 miles away. The whole structure was built with volunteers at the farm, and the project designed, managed and led by an apprentice roundwood timber framer. Volunteers, after covid-19 restrictions had been removed, took part in a 'raise the roof' weekend where the whole timber structure was assembled in one go!

Apple and pumpkin day - October 2021

Apple day was such a wonderful day! We secured funding that ensured staff, dozens of volunteers, 90 schoolchildren from Westerton Primary School, the adults with learning disabilities groups, and veg box subscribers (at least 150 people) could all participate in juicing and pressing. Everyone was able to drink apple juice and take it away, fresh from the press. Even MP Hilary Benn got involved! After a hard days juicing we came together to share hot food – served in pumpkins from the market garden – and enjoy live folk music from local musicians and friends of the garden.

We hope that this report illustrates how Nineveh Charitable Trust supported the worthwhile work of the MVUF Market Garden. Through our volunteer program we are able to provide quality education, inspire a new generation of growers, and build community around a shared desire to care for the natural world and eat local. The hard work of our dedicated volunteers enabled us to continue working towards our goals of restoring & developing the market garden to create a thriving, biologically rich, food productive garden and remains a site of education and nutrient rich food source for generations to come.

Traineeship - Silvie's training leads to community garden success

In 2021 we secured funding to offer our first ever 6-month paid traineeship from April - October. Silvie finished her 2-day a week traineeship with the MVUF Market Garden and progressed directly to a Head Grower job at Wibsey Community Gardens in Bradford. What a success! Her testimony says that:

"...[MVUF traineeship has] given me the confidence in growing food at a larger scale than I previously had and enabled me to get a job as a grower at a community garden in Bradford. I hope to be able to take my experience at MVUF and implement a veg box scheme at the community garden."

Financial Statement

Item	Amount (£)
Project delivery: 2x Community Market gardeners	4160
Critical infrastructure purchase.	3000
Seeds, compost, bags, rubber bands and labels	1000
Refreshments	100
Apple and pumpkin day	300
Total Spent	8560

Thank you again for the funding and all the joy that has come from it,

Benjamin Lawson