



Grow From Home Progress Report

A collaborative, family based growing programme in Clase

Our second growing season: January - October 2022

Following our successful pilot project in 2021 we are now working with ten families to grow fresh seasonal produce in their own gardens. By providing them with raised beds, compost, seeds, tools, compost bins, water butts and a dedicated grower for support, they have learnt how to grow a variety of fruits and vegetables, reducing food bills, improving health and wellbeing and local biodiversity. Managed and delivered by Cae Tân's education officer, Jessie Kidd, families are directly linked to our Sustainable schools programme delivered at Clase primary school.

This programme was funded by Swansea Council, People's Postcode Lottery, Community Changemakers Fund and BCT Clase4all.

The main aims of the project are to:

- Reconnect families with the land and their food by growing produce at home
- Reduce food poverty by growing accessible, seasonal and highly nutritious fresh produce
- Teach simple, sustainable growing techniques
- Provide a link between growing in school and growing at home
- Reflect on food choices and the impact on health, communities and the environment
- Develop a community growing network

46 Participants

Including single
parents and
grandparents

Over £1000

of organic food
produced

45M²

Of productive
growing space

200 hours of

grower
support

In the early spring months, our first year participants considered the importance of a healthy soil biome and enriched their raised beds with manure, compost and cardboard. With lessons learnt from last year, many families had already planned the produce they wanted to grow and, more importantly, what they didn't want to grow. Where needed, families were offered seeds, compost, canes and pots however many had retained equipment from the previous year. By March, these eager families were sowing seeds, making bean and pea supports and swapping leek and tomato seedlings. We also welcomed two new baby growers, with mum keen to start weaning with fresh peas and pureed parsnips.



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October 1st 2022
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Participants new to the project began building their raised beds in April, filling them with woodchip, peat free compost, soil and manure. In partnership we installed compost bins, sited potato sacks, constructed bean supports and built mini greenhouses. This time together gave us lots of opportunity to talk about why Cae Tan CSA grows organically, how **home composting** works, the process of **pollination** and why nature is our greatest ally when growing food and **mitigating the climate crisis**.



Early Season Excitement

Following the infrastructure phase we then began sowing seeds and nurturing our new plants learning about open pollinated seeds, watering, plant germination and the importance of labelling your containers! Participants were astounded how successful there were and quickly we had a surplus of seedlings that were shared around the group or donated to friends and family. Plants such as sunflowers, nasturtiums, honeysuckle and cosmos were sown to provide habitat for pollinators alongside herbs. With funding from Community Changemakers we encourage neighbours and members of the family to join the growing revolution by sharing strawberry plants, blackcurrant bushes and lavender. It's exciting to see new habits forming with compost bins slowly filling up enabling families to have free compost for next year and reducing the impact on council recycling services and families participating in "No Mow May". Our Whats app group has become an excellent source of information with families posting questions, sharing solutions and photos of growing crops.

Harvest Time

It has been a bountiful year with families eating a wide variety of produce such as green beans, beetroot, kale, potatoes, strawberries, corn, carrots, lettuce, tomatoes and cucumber. The WhatsApp group has been flooded with photos of delicious dinners and the faces of happy children often trying new foods for the very first time. Whilst we endeavoured to calculate the volume of produce grown, it proved a little tricky as many children were sneaking food straight from the plant. However we estimated that the group grew approximately £1000 of organic, highly nutritious produce, and with potatoes, kale, parsnips, squash and carrots still in the ground, we expect that figure to grow. By planting blackcurrant bushes and raspberries, we look forward to fruit next year.



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Feedback from the families has been overwhelmingly positive

*"the boys come home from school and **straight out into the garden** - before they would go on screens immediately. I find it **very therapeutic**, I was out there until it got dark after one tricky day"* **Michaela**

*"I just thought everything would die, but **it all grew**. I was amazed"* **Lucie**

*"I've been **pureeing beans and peas for my twin babies**, can't wait for raspberries next year. I think I'm going to dig up the whole of my front garden "* **Nicki**

*"We've been getting our grandson to do all the watering, its so lovely to have him **involved**"* **Ann & John**

*"having a **group of people**, and you, on hand for **advice** is great"* **Kelly**

"my sister is buying a new house and now she wants one with space for a raised bed and I'm going to help build it" **Lucie**

Project Impact, Community Connection & Contribution

This programme has proved to be holistic in its impact. Whilst the food itself **reduces food poverty** and increases a families resilience during this cost of living crisis, it has also created a space where families can come together and spend time in nature, reaping the well-known **therapeutic benefits** that green space can bring. It has **reduced stress** levels, creating coping mechanisms to the trickiness of daily life. It has built skills, **confidence and self-esteem** and is beginning to tap into the wider growing knowledge that already exists in the community. There have been opportunities to talk about the **climate and ecological crisis** and what we can do to make positive changes. We have parents who work at the school **cascading knowledge** to their classes and colleagues, grandparents spending more time with their grandchildren and **neighbours sharing** food and watering responsibilities. The Peoples Postcode Lottery and MP Carolyn Harris visited the project in the summer enabling families to talk about their growing journey and the impact it has had.

This year we were able to provide **surplus produce** to the Big Bocs Bwyd project and Clase Community Food bank. Everyone felt very proud that produce they grew was **feeding their community**. Families and funders were warmly welcomed to our **harvest celebration** event. With support from The Shared plate, we used produce from participants gardens and the Cae Tan farm to make delicious pizzas for sixty people. With donated apples from Cyfoeth Y Coed we also made fresh carrot, apple and **beetroot juice**, just perfect to wash down the pizzas.



What's next?

The majority of growing spaces are being cleared of summer crops, however some families will continue to harvest carrots, parsnips, kale, potatoes, squash, leeks and herbs over the next few months. Soil health is vital to sustainable food growing and we will be feeding our microorganisms with a layers of autumn leaves, cardboard, woodchip, manure and compost before leaving them to rest over the winter.

In collaboration with our schools programme we will soon be delivering a whole school, healthy pizza making day at Clase primary school, and a soup making day using our new induction hob.

Looking to 2023 we have received financial support from the Swansea Household Support Fund to enable three extra families to join the programme and we are looking to apply for further match funding from Peoples Postcode Lottery and Clase4all.

A big thank you goes to all our funders who are helping us to raise awareness that everyone should have access to healthy, organic and regenerative food systems.

For more information contact Project Manager, Jessie Kidd, on Jessie.caetan@gmail.com

