



## A Short (Potted) History of Allotments in Scotland

Garden allotments first started to become popular in Edinburgh during the 19th century, when land was given to the poor to allow them to grow food. After the *Great War*, the priority for the allocation of allotments went to returning service men and women who had been involved in agricultural work during the war. There was also a call to make more allotments available to the general public too.

In June 1920 Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, said that allotments were the best idea of local government in recent times, because they helped to break down barriers between those in the country and the town, and those interested in growing food. He went on to say:

*'We want to cultivate this land to the best of our ability. We have not made the most of it in the past and we found out during the war how dangerously dependant we were upon foreign imports. A great deal of the food that we habitually import from abroad, we could have grown it at home; but the effort made by our farmers during the critical years on 1917-18, when the submarine menace was so serious...were most successful...'* (The Scotsman', 19 June 1920)

By 1920 there were 39 'garden allotment associations' across central Scotland, with 34 of those in Edinburgh. In Edinburgh, most of the allotment land was owned by private landowners and tenanted by the *Corporation of Edinburgh*. Four of the allotment grounds occupied parts of Holyrood Park – or the King's Park as it was known then. We know from law records (legislation) that allotments were no larger than one acre in size, but could be smaller. That's a wee bit smaller than a football pitch.



## The beginning of allotments in Scotland



Women's Land Army, c. 1917





## Scottish allotments in the 1920s and 1930s

During the 1920s and early 1930s allotment holders (or tenants) in Scotland were working people with occupations such as plumbers, carters, labourers, warehousemen, stonecutters, joiners and engineers. There were also two policemen, a comb-maker, dairyman, scavenger, night watchman, soldier and munitions worker. One allotment tenant, Archibald Chisholm, was in fact a gardener, which must be helpful when cultivating his plot.

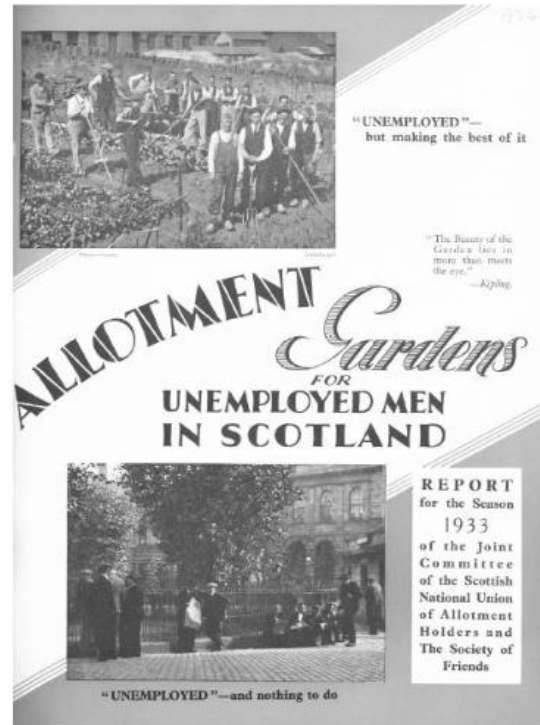


Figure 1.3 Edinburgh family in their plot at the Warriston allotments for the unemployed, 1932. *National Archives of Scotland, File AF 66/100.*



Photo—Scottish Pictorial Press

A Quiet Smoke



Not all tenants were employed, however, and people from all backgrounds were encouraged to produce their own food wherever possible. On 2 November 1933 the Edinburgh Evening News printed: *'By far the best thing for an unemployed man was to take up an allotment. It took him to the fresh air and to the country, and he could keep his family in vegetables for about six months of the year. The Corporation had secured large areas of ground on the outskirts of the city. Next season the allotments would probably all be taken up so that it was advisable to apply early. Tools, seeds, and manure could be obtained on specially favourable terms.'*



Photo—Scottish Pictorial Press

Busy Housewives

Figure 1.4 'A Quiet Smoke' and 'Busy Housewives'. SASU Report for Season, 1938. *SAGS-Victor Webb Archive, Glasgow University Archive Services.*



## Allotments during WW2

During WW2, allotments (and gardens) really came into their own, with British people needing to get much more of their produce from within the UK again. The **Dig For Victory** campaign played a very big part in the government's efforts to encourage families to do their bit to help produce food for themselves and their neighbours. The eye-catching posters that were used to promote the campaign are still popular today. Any outdoor space was seen as a potential growing spot, and people became very resourceful in growing vegetables anywhere that they could.

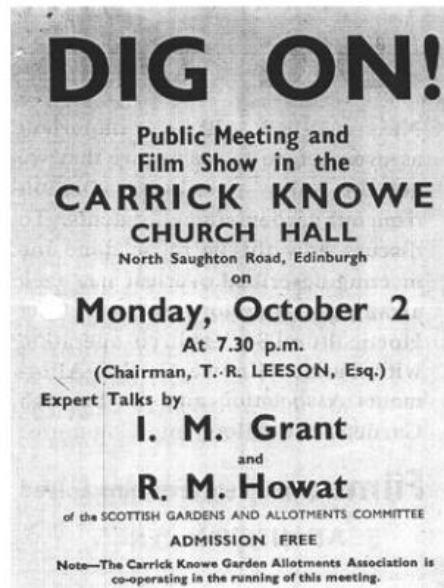
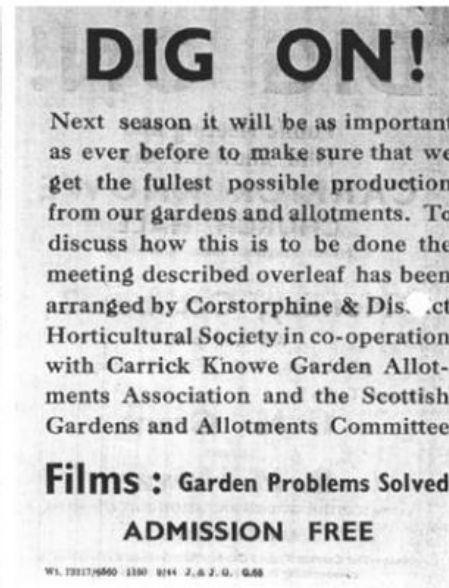


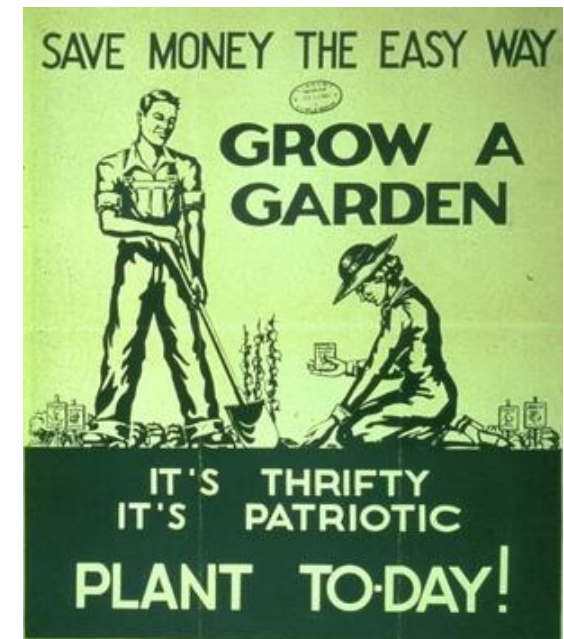
Figure 3.4 'Dig On!' Flyer for Public Meeting and Film Show. *Edinburgh City Archives, File 144/6 DRT 14.*



Photo—J. Gibson, Old Kilpatrick

School Children, Kilmarnock

Figure 2.3 School Children, Kilmarnock. SASU, Report for Season 1939. *SAGS-Victor Webb Archive, Glasgow University Archive Services.*





IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER  
ASK FOR A LEAFLET AT ANY EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE  
OR WRITE TO 'HARVEST HELP' ST. ANDREW'S HOUSE, EDINBURGH 1

## FOOD FOR VICTORY!

**Your Advertisement Printed Here**

1220 Franklin Ave.  
COLUMBUS, OHIO Sample No. 9 LEOPOLD NEURO  
EY 4373  
OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# GROW YOUR OWN VEGETABLES

[illegible]

ALLOTMENT  
OR GARDEN  
PLOT . . . . . 90' x 30'  
APPROX. 10 SQ. ROD  
POLES  
OR PERCHES

A cartoon illustration of a tropical scene. At the top, a sign with the text "STOP LOOTERS AND PROTECT OUR ARTIFACTS!" is displayed. Below the sign, there are palm trees with green fronds. In the foreground, four shovel-shaped holes are dug into the sand, with piles of dirt and debris nearby, symbolizing looting.

# DIG FOR VICTORY

A vibrant illustration of a woven basket brimming with a variety of fresh vegetables. The basket is filled with large green cabbages, bright red tomatoes, several orange carrots, a head of cauliflower, and a bunch of green beans. In the background, a large green cucumber and a pile of brown potatoes are visible. The entire scene is set against a warm, yellow background, suggesting a sunny day.

*if you*

# DIG FOR VICTORY NOW

# VICTORY

## GROW VITAMINS AT YOUR KITCHEN DOOR

## Enter VICTORY GARDEN CONTEST

CONSUMER INTEREST DIVISION, MINNEAPOLIS DEFENSE COUNCIL: "A WAR CHEST ADD-

# DIG ON FOR VICTORY

A cartoon illustration of a smiling man with a pipe, carrying a large fork, a basket of vegetables, and a bunch of leafy greens, walking on a path towards a small village.



## Allotments in Modern Times

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century allotments had a fall in popularity, before becoming more popular again in recent years, as people have become increasingly interested in growing some of their own food. With this surge in popularity once more, people often have to wait a long time for an allotment plot, so it is a good idea to join the waiting list now if you think you might like to take on your own allotment one day in the future. It is never too early to join the waiting list! Infact, our neighbour's daughter has just joined the list (via her mum) at the age of 10.

If you are interested in joining the waiting list for an allotment, you can find more information at: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/allotments>. If you look on the FEDAGA website, you can also see a list of all of the allotment sites across Edinburgh.

<https://www.fedaga.org.uk/allotment-sites.html>

For adults that are interested in reading more about allotments, there is an interesting essay about them at this link: <https://www.fedaga.org.uk/uploads/1/6/1/0/16102276/plotters.pdf>



**Craigentinny**



**Warriston**

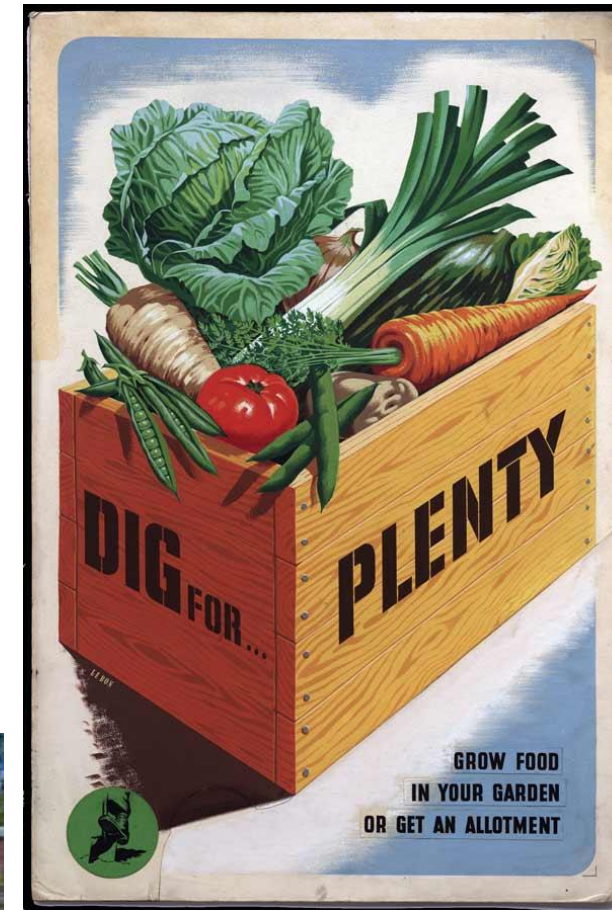


**Leith Links**



**Redhall**

**There are allotment sites all over Edinburgh.**



**Midmar**



## Getting Growing Now!

Having waited myself for an allotment for 12 years, I know the frustration of wanting to get growing right away! It can also be tricky to know where to start if (like me) you don't have much experience with gardening and growing your own vegetables. I certainly spent many years growing all that I could on window boxes at home, which was really rewarding in itself, and full of both success and failure. There are also lots of things that you can grow indoors, if you don't have any outdoor space at all. I even have a friend who used to have a living room full of tomato plants!

With all of this in mind, over the coming weeks and months, it is my mission to help our school community access some of the information and resources that might inspire the 'green-fingered gardeners' of the future! After all, much like the *Dig For Victory* campaign of WW2, there are ways that we can all grow something (however tiny) in our own homes, window ledges, balconies or gardens.

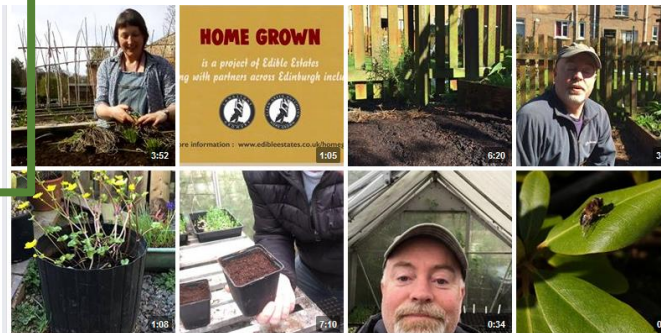
In coming weeks we will be introducing and looking at local resources that you can access for help.. almost on your doorstep (like the **'Longstone Growers'** facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/LongstoneGrowers>) and will also provide you with links to other good bits of information from both social media and other gardening experts, as we find them.



Miss R's new allotment plot



I will also be keeping a video, photo and written diary of my own journey with my new allotment plot, as we work through all the challenges of learning to grow our own vegetables. I have only had the plot for two months, so you will be able to join me on the journey from the very start.



## MEET OUR ECO COMMITTEE



Remember that, all of this will also be working towards the day that we can get back to growing at school. Our school community worked really hard with Alan (from Edible Estates and Longstone Growers) to start preparing our growing space for planting, and will still plan to get back to that project as soon as we can.

We will also keep working on our beautiful wildlife garden when we get back (massive thanks to Karen Jamieson and all the other volunteers for that!). So, lots for us to do as a team when we get back! My Eco Committee will be busy, but so will all of our classes, who will get a chance to help with planting and 'growing our own' at school.

**We would love to hear from you about your own experiences of growing something of your own, so that we can share in your successes and blunders..and all help each other along the way. Please do share any of your growing experiences with us, and we will add them to our 'Longstone Lockdown Growing Diary'!**