



# Edinburgh Community Backgreens Initiative

PROJECT BULLETIN - FEBRUARY 2007

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### **Introduction**

Welcome to the latest update of the Edinburgh Community Backgreens Initiative. Since the last update in September '06, I'm pleased to say we've been moving forward with the project and we're looking forward to starting at the five new sites this Spring.

### **Planting of Fruit Trees and Bushes**

In October a volunteer group of 27 residents planted 83 fruit trees and 260 fruit bushes at the Wheatfield and Cherrytree community backgreen sites. The work was carried out over two weekend workshops and the volunteers benefited from an introduction to tree planting by John Butterworth a organic fruit tree expert. Several varieties of apple, pear, cherry and plum trees were planted along with red currant and gooseberry bushes. The workshops were rounded off with a picnic.

It is intended for the fruit trees and bushes at the community backgreen to form part of a wider community orchard which will be maintained by members a fruit growing club to be established in the local community. We hope to see our first crop of berries this year and tree fruit in 2008.

This coming summer the volunteer groups will be inter planting herbaceous perennials between the trees and bushes to create a food bearing 'forest garden' as depicted in the illustration below.

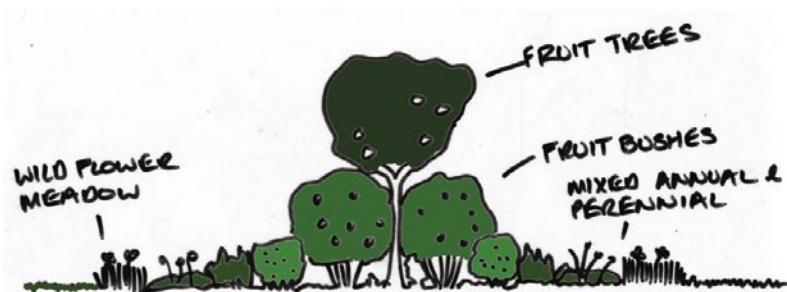
### **Funding of Community Composting Operation**

In October we received confirmation from the Scottish Executive that we had been successful in a £145,000 bid to fund the installation of six community composting facilities at community backgreen sites in Gorgie Dalry. From the middle of 2007, residents around the sites will be able to compost kitchen and garden waste at the 'Co-Sheds'. This is the first time this method of composting has been used and will be an important pilot for tenemental composting in the rest of the capital. Foundations are presently being dug and the first Co-Shed will be erected in March.

### **First Tenement Signed Up To Green Caretakers**

We have signed up our first customer for the Green Caretakers service. The sixteen households at 38 Caledonian have agreed to put in place a stair factoring agreement with the New Horizons tenement factoring company. ECBA have an agreement with New Horizons to provide backgreen maintenance to stairs that sign up. Although this is only the first stair, it demonstrates the route by which we hope ECBA will draw an income into the future.

ECBA will be holding further meetings with New Horizons during spring to further examine how the two bodies can work together to open the service up to more stairs, and broaden out the services provided e.g. to provide composting and organic vegetable box schemes (see Resident Survey below).



## Design of Five New Community Backgreens

We have now completed the design process for the five new community backgreen sites in Gorgie Dalry which we will be making a start on this spring. This will add a further 750 households to the existing 300 which are benefiting from the initiative.

### Design Study

The design study resulted in some improvements in the community backgreen model which will be implemented in the new sites. The illustration below shows the Southern end of the Caleys site. It is similar in size to the Wheatfield site which is now nearing completion, however at Caleys we will be retaining a backgreen in front of each tenement with a shared 'village green' in the centre of the site. This variation on the original community backgreens model will provide a 'lever' with which to encourage stairs to sign up to the Green Caretakers factoring service. Whilst these areas will be regenerated and planted with fruit trees and other species, the Green Caretakers will not maintain these gardens unless it is paid to do so by the residents on the stair.

### Resident Survey

During the study we also collated a lot of useful information from the resident survey which will inform us how we will seek to develop the initiative into the future.

- 17% of the households around the sites responded to the survey, a good figure for a community survey.
- 43 households said they had experience of gardening that they would like to apply to the greens.
- 52 households would make use of an allotment.
- 97 households said they would participate in the composting operation
- 80 households would be interested in a organic vegetable box scheme.

And a whopping 101 residents, 14% of all residents around the sites, said that they would attend the volunteer workshops to regenerate the sites.

