

Edible York Report: Work done during the pandemic, March – June 2020.

With government restrictions starting in March it was apparent that Edible York would not be able to work in the usual way. For instance we could not hold events, gather more than two volunteers together at our city-centre beds, or have a mass distribution of plants.

Similarly the residents of York had to change their way of life, their needs and priorities had altered.

We felt that edible growing would be more important than ever, and introduced some innovations into our programme.

This report gives details of many of the activities we undertook, and includes some comments and feedback that we received as a result.

1. Online videos for Home-Schooling.

Videos about seed sprouting and sowing made to show on the Edible York facebook page, and since archived there, followed by three other edible activities. These were aimed at children so that parents could use them as home-schooling resources. They also reached a general audience of adults.

The first one was live on 25th March. Many other people and groups went on to make videos – Edible York was one of the first.

This is the data from our facebook page where we streamed the videos. (Figures correct at time of writing.)

a) Seed Planting shown live on 25.3.20,
covered sprouting seeds and lentils in jars and saucers, sowing tomatoes and lettuce.
1,100 views.
Repeated on 26.3. 2020 with 216 views

b) 1.4.20,
Sowing radish, rocket, and useful flowers eg sunflowers and marigolds
589 views

c) 8.4.20,
Moving seedlings into bigger pots.
569 views

Comment ‘I've got an allotment but still love to watch people growing things. You can learn things you didn't know. ‘

d) 15.4.20,
Seeing how things are going, planting seed potatoes.
602 views.

e) 23.4.20,
Mustard and cress .
368 views

Comment: 'Oh that's cool! I have windowsill basil plants at the moment that I take a few leaves from as I need, if I can do the same principle on a larger scale with spinach that sounds like something I could realistically do. Thank you.'

f) 30.4.20,
Peas and lettuces..
305 views

g) 7.5.20,
Sowing spring onions, chives.
259 reached

h) 15.5.20 Spinach and chard.
664 reached.238 views.

i) 21.5.20,
Last of series. Planting out tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers. Companion planting, repeat sowing.
224 reached, 432 views

j) 23.4.20,
Creating a mini-garden.
786 views.

k) 28.4.20,
Cut off the root end of a leek and place in soil – what happens?
785 shares, 242 views.

l) 28.4.20,
After using the outside of a pepper try sprouting the core in a pot of soil.
595 reached, 181 views.

2. Seed Stations.

A Seed Station is a site at a garden gates or community garden where 'help yourself for free' gardening goods are displayed. Originally there were seeds, plant pots and compost, and as the weather got warmer the items included small edible plants and surplus indoor decorative plants. As the concept became known the stations were replenished by local people donating their surpluses.

The first one was in Holgate, soon followed by Planet South Bank at Clement's Church, Barbican beds, Route 66 until there were about 20.

A map of the locations is shown in the appendix below. The facebook page was used for publicity. For instance a post about Route 66 Garden 'reached' 1,283 people. And one about pea shoot kits at Muncastergate 'reached' 2,885 people, with 3,471 for the Map.

One comment said:

'Many thanks for the cucumber seeds (last packet) and the sunflower seeds. If more cucumber seeds germinate than I need, I will offer them on here. (Collected from Orchard Way.)'

Case study: Route 66 garden – Seed and Compost station. This was set up by a guerrilla gardener who put up a sign indicating the seeds and compost were there for anyone to take. Seeds were put into jars to protect from wildlife. There was a steady turnover of additional seeds and compost, and donations of runner bean plants, and spider plants.. An Edible York trustee visited the site several times to talk to

people in the garden, some of whom were using the Seed Station for themselves and others had a more general interest in how this public garden develops.

3. Seeds by post.

Provided seeds and instructions for tenants living in two areas of York, for Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, and Edible York received £60 for this.

4. Gleaning.

Potatoes – two sessions of gleaning at Scrayingham in the second week of April. The farmer who grew the potatoes was unable to sell them because of the sudden closure of restaurants and cafes, and disruption to food-processing businesses.

Each volunteer gleaner needed their own transport (car, bike) so as to be isolated, or travelled with household members. The individual gleaners retained some potatoes for themselves, and the rest were redistributed.

On the Saturday, 12 volunteers collected and brought back 579kg potatoes.

On the Tuesday 32 people gathered 1,769kg, (73 big green crates).

That is a LOT of fresh spuds!

Deliveries started straight away. Six crates went to the York Food Bank Trussell Trust. The potatoes waiting for distribution were stored in Apple HQ on Salisbury Road, not currently used for fruit. Volunteer drivers, part of York City Council's community food hubs, transported 50 crates to the bases which direct food to residents identified as needing it for one reason or another. The remainder were distributed via agencies and sites known to Edible York from the system set up for fruit distribution.

One recipient said: 'You are a big tonic, thank you.'

And another - 'As a potato recipient, thank you very much! I am going to come up with many ways to cook potatoes over the next few weeks.'

5. Public edible beds.

Gardening at the two city centre beds continued, with one leader each and one volunteer, distanced apart from each other, using gloves and cleaning products. Conversations with passersby increased over time as residents were able to spend more time outside.

6. Distribution and sale of plants.

Germinating seeds and potting on of edible plants for community gardens. Surplus plants were sold, raising £100+.

7. Radio York interview.

Beginning of April, Edible York's chairperson, Ruth Jennaway was interviewed on Jonathan Cowap's programme, talking about the home-schooling videos.

8. Outdoor event about Women Gardening took place on March 14th.

This was part of International Women’s Week. The main organising group decided to postpone the event, but Edible York had various activities planned so went ahead at a community garden. The restrictions on group events were not in place at that stage.

9. Planting fruit trees.

Edible York continued support for Dodsworth Avenue residents, this time by assisting with planting two fruit trees on 21st March.

10. Administration and management.

Edible York’s trustees met regularly using video conferencing which enabled governance to continue. The financial position is satisfactory in the short term; it is a priority to bring in additional income for specific pieces of work. Two funding bids for work in the rest of this financial year were submitted, which will be decided in the next few weeks.

Editions of Edible Express for April and May were produced and circulated online for people who have opted to ‘Stay in Touch’.

Evaluation and Outcomes.

This table summarises outcomes resulting from the work recorded in this report.

Outcome	Activity
Learning and skills development	Home-schooling videos
Improved health (physical, mental)	Gardening and eating seeds and plants.
Reduced loneliness	Gleaning, volunteer gardening, Edible Express.
Increased neighbourliness	Seed stations as a local resource
Increased household resources	Potatoes distribution. Seed Stations and posted seeds.

Conclusions.

Edible York responded quickly and imaginatively to the crisis. This was possible through:

- Existing local knowledge, many contacts (individuals and agencies), use of social media.
- Range of skills amongst the trustees.
- Key trustees and other people who redirected their time as a result of changed paid work situations.

Compiled by Penny Bainbridge, June 2020.

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Appendix – map and list of Seed Station locations.

Plant some seeds with ...

Seed share box locations - let us know if you spot any more! (Edible York)
2,666 views
[SHARE](#) [EDIT](#)

Plant some seeds / Seed Swap locati...

All items

- Edible York, Barbican Beds
- The Nose - Planet Southbank Edible ...
- Glut Share Shelves @ Holgate Allotm...
- 2 Howe Hill Close - seed swap box
- Linton Street
- Apple HQ shipping container
- Route 66 - Sustrans wildlife garden
- Door 84 Youth Centre
- Seed swap box - 51 Orchard Way
- Sprouts Edible Garden, Howell Hall, C...
- Cherry Tree Ave - Seed share box
- 53 Muncastergate
- Seed swap box - 129 Hull Rd
- 11 Glebe Avenue - seed swap box
- Constantine Ave YO10 3TB
- Dalby Mead

Made with Google My Maps

Map labels: Overton, Nether Poppleton, Upper Poppleton, Knapton, ACOMB, DRINGHOUSES, Knavesmire, Middlethorpe, Bishopthorpe, Askham Bryan, Sprouts Edible Garden, Pike Hills Golf, Fulford Golf Club, Heslington, University of York, Campus East, Clifton, Rawcliffe, Huntington, Dalby Mead, New Earswick, Cherry Tree Ave - Seed...