

Kitchen Garden

We are planning to be as self-sufficient as we can in vegetables and soft fruit, growing them using organic 'no dig' methods.

Sustainable Food

Choosing to live sustainably is not just a one-off choice, but a series of small choices day by day, never more so than in the case of food.

The current food supply chain is totally unsustainable. It is based on oil for production (fertilisers, pesticides, powering farm machinery), processing and packaging (plastics), and transportation from farm to fridge. Food production often results in natural habitats across the world being rooted up; over exploitation of soil and water supplies; vast inequalities between developed and developing; shocking treatment of animals; and a range of chemicals in our food.

Growing and buying locally means a lot less oil use for transportation, ideally less packaging, and greater food security. It also benefits the local economy: spending in local shops keeps 80% of the money in the local economy, buying from the major supermarkets keeps only 20% if that. Local fruit and veg also means seasonal, which means varying menus throughout the year, using what we are producing (eventually), and bottling/pickling etc, and hence becoming more directly aware of God's provision and more rooted in the soil of Mucknell.

The Garden

The kitchen garden is roughly on the site of an earlier, but entirely overgrown, garden. It is enclosed by a new brick wall, which reduces the exposure to the wind and provides space for espaliers. Even so, the site is still very windy and the planting needs further protection. A wood-frame greenhouse is the centrepiece.

The local soil is clay, so the soil was imported from near Elvington, in the Derwent valley in Yorkshire: alluvial soil created in the 17-18th centuries by deliberately damming the river to flood the land. We are using our neighbours' horse manure to improve the soil. Crops are mulched with grass clippings, and we are making our own compost. Watering is from water butts and from the outside taps linked to the rainwater harvesting tank. We are trying to source any materials we need as locally and sustainably as possible. Eventually, we will be able to use the products of our own coppicing, such as poles for beans.

About Mucknell

Mucknell Abbey is a contemplative monastic community of nuns and monks living under the [Rule of St Benedict](#) and part of the [Church of England](#).

More information on [sustainability at Mucknell](#), and further factsheets on the renewable technologies and grounds are available at www.mucknellabbey.org.uk.



Planting at 26 June 2011

