

**Latheron Lybster and Clyth
Community Development Company**

Soil Fertility and Composting Event Report



“Fertile Soils – Healthy Communities”

Lybster Bowling Hall 11th February 2012

Introduction

This report focuses on the Fertile Soils – Healthy Communities event delivered as part of the CWA Knowledge and Skills Development Scheme 2011/12. This event took place on 11th February 2012, training a total of 57 people. This report summarises these event and gives feedback on the success of the project.

History

In 2010 LLCCDC delivered a project to provide 13 allotment plots, 2 polytunnels with 15 boxes, gardening and cooking classes to promote “grow your own” and “healthy eating” throughout the South East Caithness area.



The allotment at Seaview House, Lybster



The poly tunnel boxes



The herb raised beds

The project has proved very successful with many visitors from throughout Caithness and some from further afield, and all get the “conducted tour”.



We also make wooden compost boxes from re-cycled pallets.

This event is part of the CWA Knowledge and Skill Development Training Programme, funded by the Scottish Government Skills Development Scheme and the Robertson Trust.

The Event

The purpose of the event was to deliver further knowledge to those already participating in growing their own produce and to encourage others to get involved.

The aim of the course was that on successful completion of the training participants will be able to successfully compost their garden waste and to produce good quality fertiliser and plan for future development of their project or garden.

Event Trainer:

Ronald Gilchrist BSc,MSc,MIBiol,ACIWM,FLS
Greenway Consulting (Scotland) CIC
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Course Participant List - see appendix 1

Course Activity

The topics which were covered during the day:

- Gardening made easy - easy by design
- How to make excellent Compost
- How to make excellent Worm cast
- How to generate and maintain excellent Soil Fertility
- How to maximise your harvest - quantity, quality and value.
- Recession-proof your community - developing a robust local economy.

Each attendee received a free copy of the excellent pocket handbook "Grow Food Nature's Way". This is a comprehensive handbook of notes for the topics which were covered. This freed folks from having to write notes so that they could concentrate on the application of what was said to their own situation.

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The day was highly interactive - as much a Workshop as a Conference. By the end of the day, each attendee had the knowledge to develop an action plan for how best to progress their projects/gardens/allotments in the following weeks and months.



Ron in action with a captive audience

The excellent Ron Gilchrist delivered the training in his own unique and enthralling manner. As the day went on the workshop style event saw the noise level increase as the attendees got more and more involved.

Diane Oliver (CWA) delivered a short talk, provided information on CWA, conducted the feedback form filling and assisted in the group sessions.

Eric Larnach (LLCCDC) conducted a guided tour of Seaview House, the allotments and the poly tunnels.

Feedback

See Appendix 2. During the week following the event LLCCDC received several emails from participants, all saying how much they had enjoyed the event and were now inspired and looking forward to putting their new knowledge into practice.

Stories

Before Ron was able to pack away his demonstration hot box/wormery one woman had returned home, sent her joiner husband back to the hall so he could get a look at the box and reproduce one for her.

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Another woman managed to persuade her husband to construct a wormery box the following day.

I was at an indoor bowling match on the following Wednesday evening in the nearby town of Wick, sitting at a table I turned around to find someone (who had missed the event) reading Ron's handbook "Grow Food Nature's Way".

Appendix 1: Participant List

Alan Tanner	Janet Ross	Robert Roy
Ann Mackay	Janette Walker	Rod Harrison
Anne Sutherland	Jean Barnett	Ron Gilchrist
Annette Ward	John Bingham	Ron Urquhart
Carol Grant	John Whiley	Ros Bruce
Carole Price	Kirsty Rosie	Rowland Shallcross
Christine Mackay	Kirsty Strachan	Ruth Shallcross
Diane Oliver	Laird Sutherland	Ruth Swanson
Dieter Tuerlinckx	Leslie O'Neill	Sally Blanshard
Eileen Perry	Linda Parsons	Sheena Millington
Elaine MacGillvray	Liz Joiner	Sheila MacLeod
Elizbeth MacDonald	Marie McKenzie	Sian Walters
Eric Larnach	Marina Swanson	Sue Rainbow
Gladys Gunn	Marshall Bowman	Sue Steven
Gladys Lyon	Maureen O'Neill	Sue Whiley
Graham Lippitt	Meg Sinclair	Tamara Streight
Henry Fosbrooke	Michael Travers	Toni Clark
Ian MacKay	Michael Williams	Vince Walker
James Walker	Pat Butler	Walt Perry
Jane Travers	Phil Blanshard	Wanda Brook

Appendix 2: Feedback Received

52 forms returned

How did you hear about this event?

WRI	1
Word of Mouth	8
LLCCDC	16
FCFCG	1
CWA	3

General event feedback:

	V.Good	Good	Fair	Poor	V.Poor
Location	40	10	2		
Organisation	45	6	1		
Catering	48	3	1		
Facilities	33	13	6		

Do you feel this event delivered your expectations?

Yes	42	No	0	Partly	10
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Comments from partly:

- after watching the video I expected to get down to what can be done on a range of plots from home garden to 6 acres mixed pasture and peat bog
- filled in at 12.50
- liked more hands on - to see a wormery in action
- Lost partner recently who did garden etc. Which I am not sure
- No! Different from expectations but offers a challenge to existing thinking
- Growing parameters pertinent to the immediate area (lat 58o North) section on soil structure
- Too much information for one day
- I thought there might be more information on crop rotation
- I didn't realise it was to focus so much on hot boxes and worm boxes
- More local focus, encouragement to establish networks and maintain contact

Why did you want to take part in this event?

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- To raise awareness and network
- to gain new knowledge and reinforce or supplement existing knowledge and make new contacts
- learn more about making the most of my garden for growing food and supporting wildlife
- to learn about composting
- to improve my knowledge
- I am interested in growing food for ourselves
- wanting to gain expertise in planning and implementing a 2 acre forest garden similar to that showing in the recommended video
- to gain more information on growing my own food
- to improve my land
- ideas for our ground
- to learn more about gardening / composting and be able to do it better
- interested in gardening
- to learn about composting, the proper way
- to manage to make good compost
- Very interested in trees and shrubs, need more information on pruning etc. Lots of berries need more knowledge
- to support a local community event, meet new people (likeminded) learn new techniques
- to learn
- to gain knowledge, ask questions and see how I could organise a garden and compost facility
- to improve both quality and quantity of garden produce preferably by recycling methods
- to learn, stimulated by the film you recommended and want to "do our bit"
- To ensure that I am getting the best from my soil. To understand the principles and ways of developing a wormery. To discuss ideas with like minded people.
- interested in gardening / trees etc
- to gain information that could be used in growing plants / trees in the environmental conditions found in Caithness mineral requirements
- keen organic gardener always wanting to learn more
- Already had an interest and wanted to expand on what I know
- To find out where I have gone wrong. With my composting and how to improve fertility
- To improve my soil
- To learn more about growing without chemicals
- Out of interest
- Belief that this is the future
- As I am interested in gardening and being better at gardening

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- To learn about proper composting etc.
- I wanted to take part in order to improve my gardening skills. And grow better vegetables and improve soil in the garden and learn about composting skills
- To keep my wife company
- to gain more knowledge to improve growth in the garden and to pass on to local garden club
- Gardening for 68 years - always something to learn. 50 years ago my father said country (UK) should be self sufficient in food. Quality of food was better than and there were fewer allergies.
- I have tried and failed with a wormery
- I can always learn more
- Great interest in the subject
- Because the tropics aware about the things that I am particularly interested in
- To see who else is doing similar things by relating to community growing in this part of the Highlands
- An overall interest in all things environmental / community based. And particularly self sustaining in vegetable production
- to improve my knowledge of composting to grow organic veg to be self sufficient
- Interesting topic. Love gardening
- To get ideas for our croft / garden area. In relation to trees - ground prep improvement
- interested in the subject
- personal interest, but also interesting for job purposes
- to learn new skills and knowledge to pass on to schools and community groups
- gain knowledge
- beginner gardener looking for ideas on how to improve my food production cost effectively
- Because I have an interest in producing some form of community "grow your own" venture. To increase my knowledge of soil management

What benefits do you feel you gained by attending this event?

- increased awareness and networking with others
- I am a polymath - never stop learning
- Reawakened my enthusiasm to become a composter, not a roller! Gained a lot of inspiration
- info pack is excellent all projects that are practical and low cost
- increased my knowledge
- number of points I wasn't aware of
- how to improve soil fertility / how to raise mineral levels in soil
- lots of tips on looking after the soil

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- lots of info
- learned about soil, gardening and how to help ourselves
- more knowledgeable about ways to improve the soils
- learned about making compost
- I have been well informed
- increased in knowledge
- to better treat the compost bin and the advantages of a hot box
- a more detailed / different view of conventional soil husbandry
- increased knowledge, a renewed desire "to do something"
- gained knowledge, questions answered and learned how to organise a garden and compost facility
- it brought together a number of isolated areas in my knowledge
- knowledge, resources, hands-on "how to"
- Understanding why my compost is only a rotter! Understanding thermo heat, how it works got even more excited about worms
- lots of info that I did not know
- Specific information w.r.t. Composting, wormeries etc.
- Instead of just thinking about wormery going to build one! The general tips on fertility and organic gardening.
- where to start
- Knowledge
- Knowledge to tackle the garden
- Warm friendly meeting like minded people. Discussion during sessions to contacts for cuttings, plants etc.
- how to build a hot box
- Where do I begin? Multiple
- I am more knowledgeable now on how to promote and maintain the soil in my garden.
- Greater understanding of composting and wormery
- I feel that I will be able to grow better vegetables and look after my garden better
- A very enjoyable day wasn't very enthusiastic and knowledgeable speaker. Picked up a lot of useful information from the speaker and other attendees
- refreshing presentation, speaking with other participants and sharing experiences
- A more compact form of gardening with emphasis on healthier, tastier food. Partnership resources and health of the soil
- Hopefully to get wormery working properly
- I knew a bit about hot boxes, wormery. Learned a lot more
- Helpful ideas for the future
- Have specific information now about different projects so a start can be made
- Reassurance that what we're doing is of value and interest others
- concept sharing

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- talking to others with similar goals / interests and also to help as a community to educate others
- will make a hot box and wormery as discussed
- get ideas and mixed with other people
- insight into composting
- better understanding of how and why things work
- learned more about composting / wormeries
- learned about hot boxes and wormeries
- huge amount of knowledge and information from fellow classmates and instructors
- Knowledge of soil enhancement practices and ideas from other community projects.

What will you do with the skills & experience you have gained in attendance?

- incorporate the ethos into our land management
 - utilise
 - make a hotbox and a wormery
 - replan my composting area, rescue poor soil areas, plant swooping contact
 - hopefully put it to good use
 - try to improve my garden and to be more aware of recycling
 - start buying trees
 - put them in to practice
 - use them
 - try to recycle more, and do something to help with providing food
 - make better compost, grow better fruit and veg, make better use of existing ground
 - put them in to practice
 - get on with it - by making a hot box
 - hopefully put all into action and make and work a wormery and hot box successful
 - pass all to my daughter and grandchildren - they are the future
 - implement as much as I can
 - Will try to build hot box and wormery. Now very aware about soil needs and waste recycle
 - put them in to practice
 - make a wormery, improve soil, share with others
 - take better care of my soil, compost and more, make a wormery
 - put into use
 - put into practice, modify existing techniques
 - build a wormery and a hot box as I am one of the rotten composters
 - Improve composting and get a wormery
 - Make good compost and improve my soil
 - Go home and make a more efficient composting system
 - Put them into practice
 - Use them growing forward
 - I hope to put them into practice at home
-
- Set up an efficient compost bin, etc.

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- Try to pass on knowledge and the skills obtained to other like minded people and the community as a whole
- We will probably try making raised beds and a wormery
- Re-think gardening methods! Grow more trees
- A hot box, wormery, raised bed
- I would like to try growing more vegetables
- Hot box / wormery, become a composter not a Rotter!
- Definitely start a wormery
- I hope to put many into practice soon
- share with others
- additional instruction to participate and contribute to community based initiatives
- try to recruit others to grow their own veg
- use the knowledge for our own land
- we will try and incorporate some of them and increase our self sufficient ability
- Hopefully use the skills etc.
- use at home and for job purposes (education)
- pass information on to schools and community groups
- hopefully set up market garden
- Decide what the best way forward for my needs and use the information given to suit.
- Use some of the knowledge and ideas to improve our own vegetable / fruit production and find ways of encouraging others in the community to grow their own as well as developing a network to support this activity.

Would you recommend this event to a friend?

Yes: 52 No: 0

Comments (from yes)

- it raises awareness
- Well... Why not?
- even non-gardeners would be encouraged / enthused to become gardeners
- to share experience we have
- would like to see others
- very informative and important, as we all need to help ourselves and others
- to improve knowledge
- detailed course with lots of interest
- knowledge
- great to talk to people and hear views and ask questions
- we all need to be aware of the problems
- because presenter knows how to energise and stimulate sharing of ideas
- to gain invaluable knowledge about composting and worms
- although I am not interested in community gardening information within this presentation was of great interest
- There is much benefit to be had by following the principles taught

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- Encourage less waste
- I thought that the knowledge obtained would come in useful to others
- It was well organized, interesting and I learned a lot about gardening
- the more knowledgeable the better
- very informative
- The wealth of knowledge available
- Because everything is explained well
- Chatting with other. May be more useful if more local to Easter Ross, Black Isle
- promotes community adhesion and environmental awareness
- to bring communities together
- good to hear someone explaining in practice what you would otherwise try to find out from books
- great for sharing experiences and information and to meet people with similar outlook / ideas for projects
- very good - very easy to understand information
- because it is a very good course to promote

General comments on this event:

- pretty good show
- Excellent training manual. Will be a great reference source. A great turn-out, but would like to have seen more young as we need to educate them for the future
- excellent group - small tables to enable networking and sharing ideas
- overall very good
- wonderful that CWA puts events like these on for free
- good training programme, written / printed info
- would prefer more hands on work
- very impressed and helped by people, event and organisers
- yes, many thanks networking ops we v. Helpful
- thank you for such a well organised, interesting and community friendly event
- pleasantly surprised by turnout of 60 plus from the local area
- Catering was excellent, good atmosphere, buzz in general. Enthusiasm by Ron is captivating! Very informative day and practical.
- very confident speaker, holds attention / interest
- Inspiring! Excellent speaker
- Some research on government regulations would be useful, concerns raised over government regulations
- None
- Valuable information can't wait to implement ideas!
- Ron Gilchrist - infectious
- In most interesting and enjoyable event, truly inspiring
- Very well attended. I would have been interested to know who else was attending
- More local focus, encouragement to establish networks and maintain contact
- very thought provoking on a positive note
- thank you
- Food complemented the event; well done!

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- I was very pleased this event was held so far north as most courses folk need to travel vast distances

Demographic of those who returned feedback sheet (optional)

Male: 18

Female: 34

16-39 years: 5

40+ years: 37

Ethnicity:

Scottish	13
White	4
British / White	4
English	2
British	6
European	1
Homosapien	1
Belgium	1