Dunchurch Allotment Association



By Paul Sanders

For gardeners on Dunchurch Allotments the first half of this year has been unusual. The main sowing time of April was unseasonably dry and cold with little or no rain for almost a month. The sandy loam soil has meant that the decent precipitation that occurred in the early months of the year was not retained and frequent watering was required to support emerging seedlings. Another dry spell occurred from the end of May into June with no rain for over three weeks but just as gardeners were beginning to despair the clouds darkened and some rain was delivered from late June into July only to revert to a very hot spell in mid-July.

Weather concerns have always been at the heart of gardening but with climate change the meteorological conditions are likely to be less predictable and more extreme. It is with this in mind that many of our members are looking at ways to ameliorate this change particularly in relation to water use. For many allotment holders collecting and storing water has become an important part of the gardening business with many ingenious techniques being trialled. This is particularly challenging when the flexible undulating and sloping roof of a polytunnel is the rain collecting area.



Retaining moisture in the ground is for many growers the way forward, ensuring the soil is rich in organic matter and not allowing the soil to dry out. It is common to see allotment compost being applied to growing areas in early spring when rain is anticipated and later on, bean trenches are filled with copious amounts of rotting green waste. Some gardeners have now got into the routine of covering the soil with grass cuttings thereby reducing water evaporation. This also has the advantage of reducing weed seed germination.

With the climate changing and weather events likely to be more extreme it is pleasing to see that gardeners continue to experiment and adapt their practices to meet the new challenges.

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