Dunchurch Allotments



By Paul Sanders

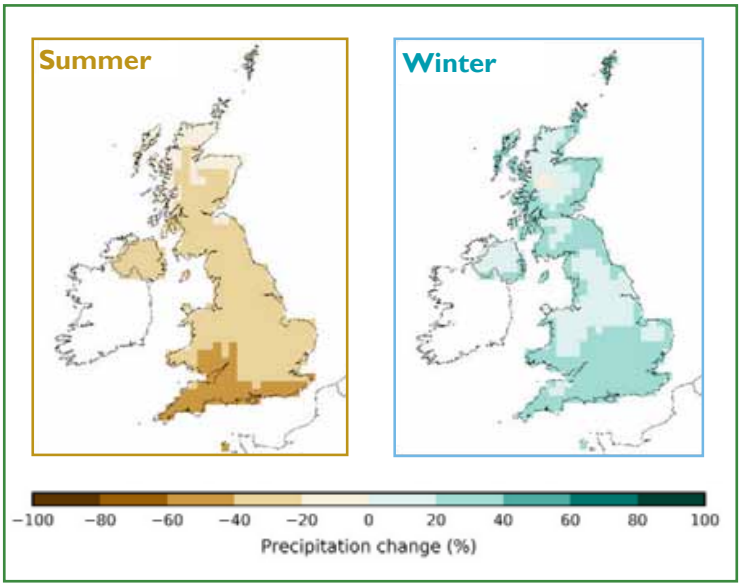
As I write this piece in December, COP28 in Dubai is in full swing. It is here that leaders meet to agree on the necessary measures that are needed to combat climate change. It made me think of how our members on the allotments will need to adapt to the changes in the weather patterns that we are already experiencing and how we should be adjusting our gardening practices to reduce our impact on climate change.

As the world warms the UK, according to the Met Office, is likely to have hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Extreme weather events such as heatwaves and heavy downpours could become more frequent and more intense.

As a gardening community we are ahead in some practices but falling short in others.

On the positive side peat-based growing mediums are a thing of the past which is a good thing as peat bogs from which the growing medium was extracted are an important carbon sink.

As we grow lots of our own fruit and veg the carbon footprint on what we eat is low as the distance the food has travelled to get onto our plate is short.



Projected average change in precipitation in 2060–2079 compared to 1981–2000, showing expected drier summers and wetter winters. Source MDPI Open Access Journal – Visualizations of Projected Rainfall Change in the United Kingdom

A few people still use synthetic fertilisers, which if not absorbed by plants break down to form potent greenhouse gases. However some ingenious forward-looking plot holders are making their own fertiliser from nettles and comfrey leaves.

Harvesting rainwater is increasingly being undertaken in anticipation of likely summer drought and this coincidentally reduces the reliance on energy-intensive water treatment processes.

On the negative side all our grass-cutting machines are petrol powered so produce greenhouse gases; a move to battery-powered machines would be beneficial, reducing noise and air pollution. But it would be important to ensure that the energy used for charging these machines does not come from fossil fuels.

One area rarely considered is that the soil in our gardens is an important carbon sink, locking up compounds of carbon in the soil. To maintain this carbon store the advice is do little to disturb it. By digging or rotavating we expose the soil to the air, releasing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases as the micro-organisms get to work breaking down the organic matter. This may seem counterintuitive for gardeners, but digging the soil is bad for the planet. Increasingly, many of our members are turning to no-dig methods of cultivation, largely to ease their workload but this fortuitously helps in the battle against climate change.

Allotment holders have a unique opportunity to be stewards of the land, making positive contributions to climate change mitigation. By adopting eco-friendly practices, we not only protect our environment but also create a more resilient and sustainable community for generations to come.

Storm Isha

On the 22nd January, storm Isha caused havoc across the country and sadly, this long established tree on The Heath felt the full brunt of its strength. Our thanks to Jaine Thornton-Weeks for the photograph

