



Your community  
Your gardens

# Fairlie Community Garden, Ayrshire

Fairlie is a tiny village with a big heart. It was the first Fair Trade village in Scotland and the Parish church is the only 'Eco-Congregation' (an ecumenical environmental project) in the area. Now a group of local gardeners have turned a derelict boatyard site into a community allotment to share their passion for growing their own.

The Organic Growers of Fairlie is an association of village residents, who started the community gardening project by making their own compost for growing fruit, herbs, salads and vegetables.

The group also designed sturdy playground wormeries for all the local primary schools. The children quickly took to looking after the worms and growing their own food in raised beds and containers.

In May 2008, the group developed the project further by gaining access to an old railway and boatyard site, which they felt would be perfect for a community garden. The site had been fenced-in and abandoned for 25 years because of pollution – the soil was full of diesel oil and marine anti-fouling paint. But, as a result of these problems, the group was able to rent the site fairly inexpensively.

The polluted soil did create problems – all food planting has to



## THE STATS

- ▶ 2008: the community garden site was developed
- ▶ Two polytunnels
- ▶ 78 raised beds
- ▶ 60 further raised beds to be built in 2010
- ▶ 100 visitors on the 2009 Open Day

## MORE INFO

- ▶ Visit the website at [www.organicgrowersfairlie.co.uk](http://www.organicgrowersfairlie.co.uk)

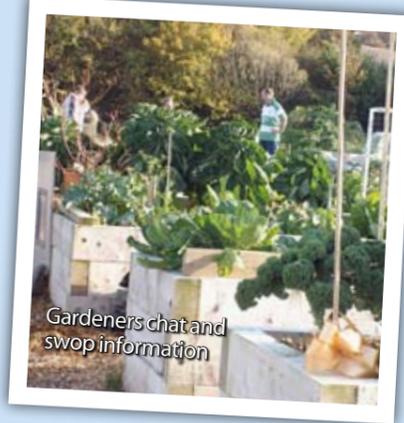
be done in raised beds, isolated from the contaminated soil. The garden has imported soil in the beds, with a plastic sheet and a layer of sand underneath. On the positive side, the raised bed system gives better access for people of all abilities and allows the soil to be worked intensively to maximise food production.

The garden now has 78 raised beds, with more due to be built this year to keep up with demand, a shed and two polytunnels.

It is a beautiful site with views on one side to the sea where dolphins swim. The allotment site has its own stretch of beach – so seaweed fertiliser is in limitless supply! This unique garden receives lots of visitors, and has appeared on BBC Scotland's Beechgrove Garden, with the presenters arriving by rowing boat!

"It is rare to find allotments conveniently set in the middle of a village, surrounded by such beautiful landscape on all sides," says volunteer Malcolm McQueen. "Working here has brought lots of individuals together, promoting community life and it has produced lots of tasty vegetables for local families!"

The project has received grants from the Scottish Government



Gardeners chat and swap information

(Climate Challenge Fund) to expand the garden. It is being seen as a model of what can be done on a polluted brown-field site.

Fairlie village recently lost its pub and local post office, so the garden has become the main social area. The large barn has become a meeting place for gardeners when the weather turns poor, and the garden has been used for fireworks displays and candle-lit carol services.

"The community garden has become a focus for the village," says volunteer Frances Robertson. "It has been wonderful to watch the development and sharing of gardening skills and the friendships arising."



The beautiful view to the sea



The raised beds help maximise food production

Veg flourish in the garden's raised beds

COMMUNITY GARDEN OF THE MONTH

## DO YOU HAVE A COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT?

If you're a member of a local community or school gardening project we would love to hear from you. Post or email a synopsis of how your project started and what you have achieved with some before-and-after photos to Laura Fanthorpe, Garden Answers, Bauer Media, Media House, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA or [gardenanswers@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:gardenanswers@bauermedia.co.uk)

## WIN TOOLS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY PROJECT

This month the Fairlie Community Garden will receive more than £350 worth of garden tools from Draper to help their volunteers get stuck in. Next month it could be you!

The prize comprises of five sets of tools including a trowel/fork set, cultivator, spade, fork, rake, secateurs, flexi bucket and tidy bag, and one set of shears, pruning saw, spray gun and a hose kit. For more information on the full range of Draper products visit [www.draper.co.uk](http://www.draper.co.uk). Or call 023 8049 4333 for stockist details.

