

**“A role for more food security....A place to connect and disconnect.....”
Allotments more than ever on the rise!**

The pandemic showed an increasing Europe wide demand for allotments: Not only healthy fruit and vegetables and food secure but also physical and mental health benefits flowing from allotments were in people’s mind.

The article published in the Sunday Times on 28th March 2021 gives us some insight.

Let use this regained awareness, let us make our voice now even heard more and transform this visibility with innovative actions into more secured new plots for the benefit of the society, fauna and flora as well as a sustainable future.

Read the article: “Diaries unearth benefits of allotments” below and make politicians and authorities know these findings.

Diaries unearth benefits of allotments

Ben Spencer
Science Editor

The clocks have gone forward, the days are getting longer and spring is in the air. For more and more people, it is time to get planting.

Gardening saw a surge in popularity during lockdown as millions picked up trowels and bedded-in blooms. Now new research has put a figure on the amount of effort required to grow vegetables.

Researchers at Sheffield University have calculated that an average of 24 minutes work is required to produce each kilogram of fruit or veg grown on an allotment. Their findings, published in the journal *Sustainability*, suggest it's not a bad deal compared with a weekly slog around a supermarket.

The researchers asked 163 allotment holders to keep diaries and found that each kilogram of produce required

17 litres (30 pints) of water, 0.2 litres of topsoil, 2.2 litres of manure and 1.9 litres of compost.

The diaries, summarised in a paper published in the *British Food Journal*, showed the physical benefits – the gardeners made 87 visits to their plots each year, on average, travelling 86 miles to and fro – as well as the mental. One participant wrote: “The plot is my safe place. It’s my mental health balancer. Peaceful but sociable, a place to connect, to disconnect. My little piece of the planet.”

Miriam Dobson, the lead author on both papers, said allotments “provide tenants with a huge spectrum of benefits beyond fruit and vegetables”. She added: “Providing more people with space to grow their own food would have a far-reaching positive impact.”

Separate research sheds

light on which crops give the best yield. French beans yield 6.5kg of produce per square metre, courgettes 6kg per sq m, tomatoes 5.1kg, squash 3kg and potatoes 2.6kg. Sweetcorn, which is tricky to grow, produces just 670g per square metre.

Jill Edmondson, of Sheffield’s Institute of Sustainable Food, believes that the growing global population and increasingly fragile international supply chains means we have to start

using more green space in our cities to grow food.

Edmondson is on a waiting list for an allotment plot – along with 100,000 others, according to the National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners.

She calculates that if every green space in Sheffield were used to grow fruit and vegetables, it would comfortably provide the city’s 500,000 inhabitants with their five a day. Even using a tenth of the space would give 90,000 people enough fruit and veg.

She points out, however, that 65 per cent of allotment land has been lost since the 1950s. It is estimated there were 300,000 plots in 1996, but the number has declined since. “There is growing evidence of the important role that growing food in cities and towns could play in local and even national food security,” Edmondson said.

TOP OF THE CROPS

Yield – kg per square metre

French bean	6.48
Courgette	5.96
Tomato	5.12
Runner bean	3.28
Squash	2.94



