

# Garden Newsletter Summer 2024.....



## Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden



**Thursday July 18<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Wildflowers are giving some splendid colour.....**

We have some splendid wildflowers that have just started to flower giving the garden some super colour and some much needed food for the pollinators that we rely on so much.....



**Wildflowers.....**



**Friday July 19<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Seed sowing is still taking place.....**

We are just about on the limit in terms of seed sowing although the way the weather conditions have been just lately there is probably not a definitive time when we need to stop sowing our seeds. Indeed, today we have experienced the hottest day of the summer with temperatures hitting 29 – 30 degrees.....

**Dwarf French Beans look strong and healthy.....**

Below you can see plenty of Dwarf French Beans that we have sown, we have sown both green and purple beans with both of these varieties showing some really strong healthy growth.....

Indeed, the purple bean plants have some distinctive colourings on the stems and the underside of the leaves.....



**Dwarf Green.....**

**Dwarf Purple....**



# Wide range of herbs.....

We have a huge range of different herbs, both medicinal and culinary herbs which are all making plenty of strong healthy growth given the relatively warm summer temperatures, if we had some consistent sunshine they would flourish even more too.....



Chia.....Lemon Verbena.....



Tea Tree.....Lemon Grass.....Lemonade Thyme....

## **More Herbs.....**

We really do have a huge range of different herbs, both culinary and medicinal herbs which all have their own uses in lots of different ways. In terms of medicinal usage, this is a very specialised field but many of the herbs that we have growing really have some amazing properties but at the same time, their usage needs to be carefully supervised by professionally qualified people.....

Below we have a couple of almost traditional herbs – Bay Tree and the tried and trusted Garden Mint.....



**Garden  
Mint.....**

**Bay Tree.....**

# and More Herbs.....

We really do have a massive range of herbs in lots of different areas of the garden – herbs generally like plenty of sunshine which sometimes proves difficult in this country, particularly this year to date, but the remaining days of July are giving us a mix of showers and some warm sunshine which are ideal growing conditions. Below you will see some more of the herbs that we have growing and indeed they are flourishing.....



Samphire is a salt tolerant plant that can be eaten either raw or cooked.....

Eaten raw it is very salty, indeed we water these plants with saltwater.....

Can be used in salads or it can be cooked and eaten with fish.....

## Samphire....



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**Tuesday July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024**

**Cucumber crop is going to be huge! .....**

Our cucumber plants that are growing inside the poly tunnel are producing a really bumper crop of fruit – given plenty of water coupled with the warmth that the sun shining on the poly tunnel generates, these plants are loaded with female flowers that produce the fruit.....

We also have some different cucumber varieties but the plants that are giving us the big crop so far are the Mini Munch variety. Hopefully the other two varieties will start cropping soon.....

Here are some tasty looking cucumbers plus they have been grown from seed, plus no pesticides or chemicals have been used, in fact will never be used.....

Also, the fruits have had no plastic wrapping either.....



**Mini Munch Cucumbers**

# Lettuces are looking great.....

We have a full raised bed full of lettuces which are growing really well, lettuces generally do not like it too hot because they “bolt” and go to seed very quickly so slightly cooler conditions with plenty of water are the best type of growing conditions for lettuces.....

Here you can see the mix of different lettuce varieties.....



**Hearty  
Lettuce...**

# Home grown.....

# Lettuces.....

**Wednesday July 24<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Sweet Peppers look amazing! .....**

**We have some very interesting and colourful sweet peppers growing in the poly tunnel – this variety is called Tequila which really has a very dark colour as you can see from the photograph below.....**

**Hopefully we will get plenty more fruits to follow.....**



## **Tomatoes are starting to ripen.....**

**You really cannot beat both the smell and the taste of freshly picked home grown tomatoes – free from any pesticides and any plastic packaging, the taste is noticeable plus the satisfaction from growing from seed to producing your own fruit cannot be matched.....**

**So with plenty of water and the warmth of the poly tunnel, plenty of fruit has formed on our tomato plants – also, we have a wide range of varieties too.....**

**Below you can see some of the tomatoes ripening and changing colour.....**



**Here you can see three different varieties of tomatoes, at the top you can see the red and yellow varieties that are virtually ready to be picked and then directly above you can see a cherry variety that is growing in a hanging basket high up in the poly tunnel. Plenty of watering is required here.....**

**Friday July 26<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Cucumbers are producing so much fruit.....**



**Lots of cucumbers..**

**Friday July 26<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Lots of hard work going on here! .....**

One of the wildflower zones that we have in the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden has been left to flower with the surrounding area also left to grow.....

In hindsight leaving the area around the wildflowers to grow has not been a good decision because the weather conditions has meant that the rate of growth of the grass has been ridiculous plus with the length of the grass and a mixture of weeds and buttercups, now this area has got so long that it has flattened down with the rain leaving the area underneath the grass very wet!

Also, there are several big dock leaf plants growing too – a troublesome weed! which we will need to dig out and continue to stay on top of because the deep tap roots that dock leaves put down making them difficult to eradicate.....



**Deep  
Long  
Grass!**

**Lots of clearance  
taking place.....**

**Hard Work!!**

# The virtues of HARD WORK! .....

Here you can see the virtue of some hard work, the grass and weeds have been cleared by virtue of actually pulling the tufts of grass out by hand and then using the strimmer to cut the area down even lower to the ground.....

Also, the big pile of grass will be added to our compost heaps which in turn will rot down and we can use the compost that we make.....



## Grass clearance....



**Hard  
Work  
Paying  
Off! .....**

**Monday July 29<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Hard work continuing! .....**

Despite the heat that we are working through, a 7.00am start before the sun really warms up has enabled us to complete the clearance work with the cleared area around one of our wildflower zones looking more like a garden area instead of an overgrown mess! .....



**Potatoes are making lots of growth.....**



We have planted lots of potatoes all over the allotment – garden..... Some are planted directly in the ground, some are planted in bags and there are some potatoes planted in some of our growing boxes. The common theme is that they are all making some excellent growth, indeed, some of the plants are starting to flower. Usually a couple of weeks after flowering the potatoes are ready to harvest..

# Flowering Cherry Trees are looking great.....

One of the few bonuses of the very wet 2023 - 2024 Autumn and Winter months we have just experienced is that the rainfall has been great for the trees that we have planted all over the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden.....

These trees which have been provided by Smart Learner Driving School have benefited from the rainfall and are starting to make some strong growth, indeed these trees were planted a couple of years ago now when we experienced the brutally hot summer which made survival more important than actually making any significant growth.....

Here you can see the strong growth that these trees are making.....



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## **Herbs are relishing the sunshine.....**

**Finally we have got some warm sunshine which most flowers particularly herbs really enjoy – lots of our herbs are flowering now including our Blue Hyssop, this is a herb that the bees really are attracted to. Indeed our Lavender bed today was absolutely covered in bees. You could actually here the “buzz as the bees were working away – the bees must be thinking, finally some warm, dry weather with plenty of sunshine.....**



## Bees are loving our fennel flowers.....

Below you can see that the bees are enjoying our fennel flowers, the really hot weather conditions are ideal for the bees so the fennel, lavender, thyme and lots of other herbs are in flower at just the right time. We have no bee hives in our garden space but someone somewhere must get "rich" off our garden especially as we do not use any pesticides so our garden space is a real haven for the bees.....

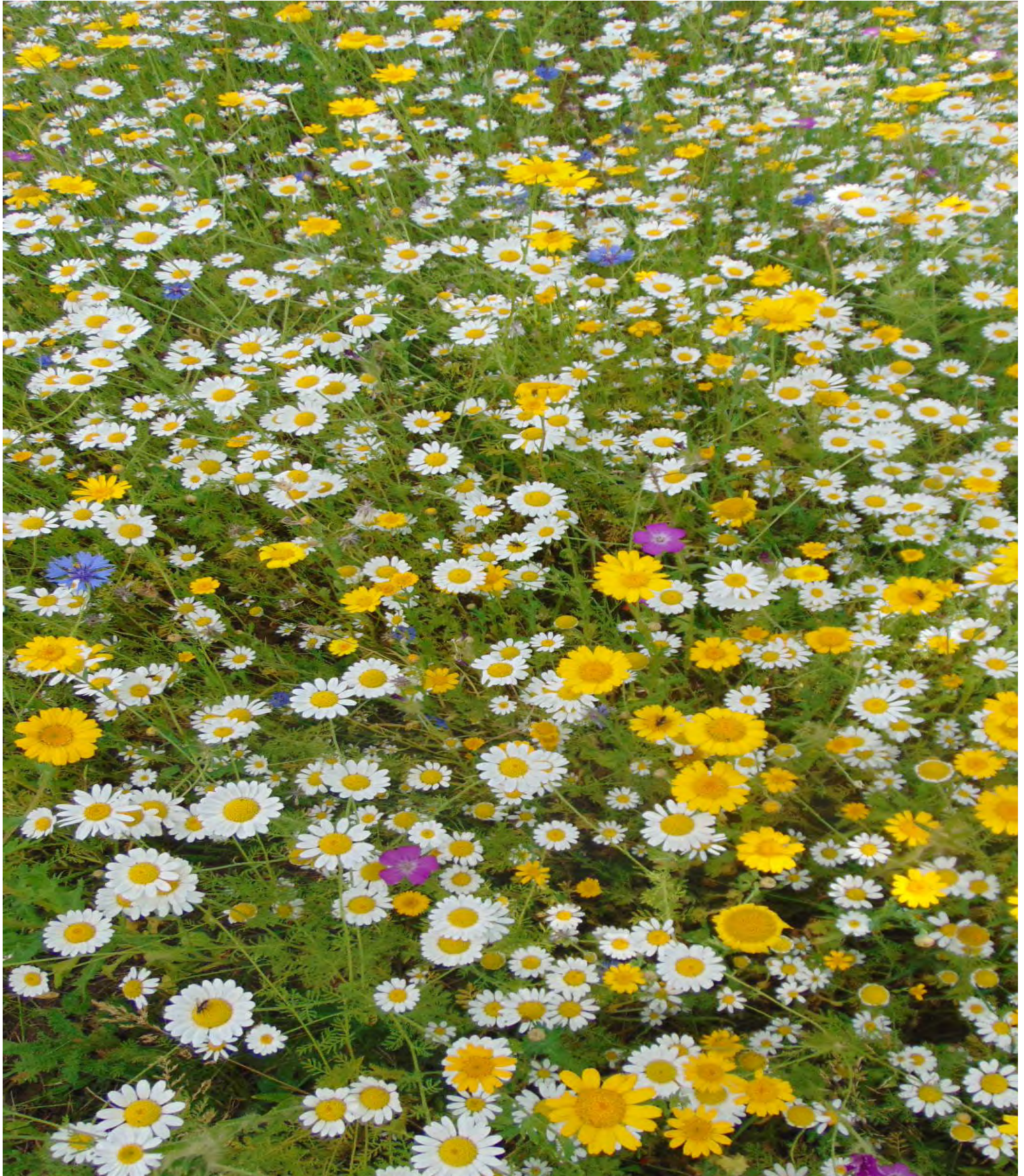


**Tuesday July 30<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Wildflowers look stunning.....**

**In the gorgeous summer sunshine, our wildflowers really do look stunning with a mix of corncockle, marguerite daisies, cornflowers and corn marigolds.....**

**The vibrant mix of colours really does paint a colourful picture.....**



## **Calendula really provide some striking colour.....**

**Relatively easy to grow, once you have them, they will readily self – seed so they will come back year after year. Below you can see the traditional orange colour because there are now lots of different shades of both orange and yellow, indeed some of these different shades are a real mix of orange and yellow along with some different shades of orange too.....**

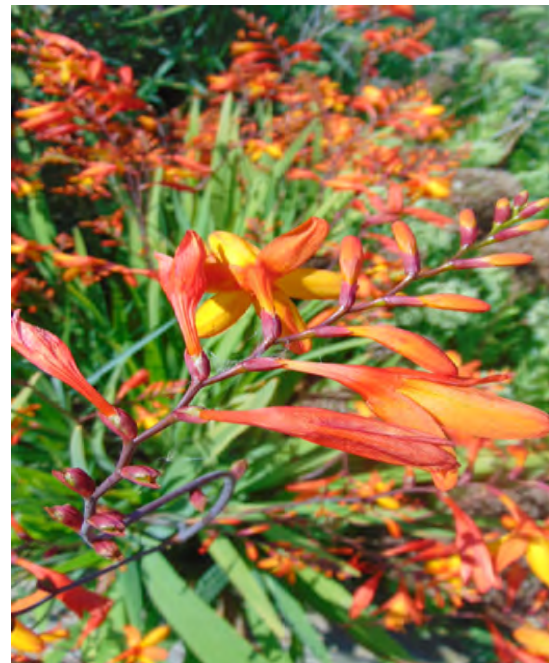
**You really cannot beat the traditional orange.....**



# Sunshine accentuates the garden colours.....

With the recent spell of hot, warm sunshine, this bright sunshine has really accentuated some of the bright colours from some of the flowering plants that we have growing in different parts of the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden.....  
You can see below the blue agapanthus, the pink sedum, the flame orange of the crocosmia and the mix of orange and yellow calendula.....

## Lots of colour.....



**Thursday August 1<sup>st</sup> 2024**

**Watch this space! .....**

The Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden spans a considerable space sited within the school perimeter fence except that there are a couple of areas that look more akin to a building site rather than a garden. So, “fixing” these areas is top of the jobs to do list for the summer. If you look at the area below, this is one area that we are looking to change to create a more professional look.....



# Hard landscaping work has started.....

We have started to clear the barriers away, weeding has been completed, now the foundations are being laid ready to build a picket fence which will create a far more professional outlook for the garden space.....

Watch as this development begins.....



**Friday August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024**

## **Colourful Poly Tunnel Harvest.....**

After the start to the summer was beset with cool, dull weather, the poly tunnel proved its worth as our tomato plants, cucumber plants and sweet pepper plants all enjoying the protective warmth inside the tunnel.....

This protection allowed all of these plants to establish themselves, allowed the flowers to set on all of these plants and now that the warm sunshine has arrived we are starting to reap a good harvest of crops. Also, plenty of water has been the order of the day – indeed, within a poly tunnel environment particularly when the weather is hot, watering is absolutely crucial.....

Below, you can see a colourful harvest of different varieties of tomatoes, sweet pepper and very sweet and tasty cucumbers. All home grown too.....



**All home grown produce**

**Monday August 5<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Cucurbits are making some strong growth.....**

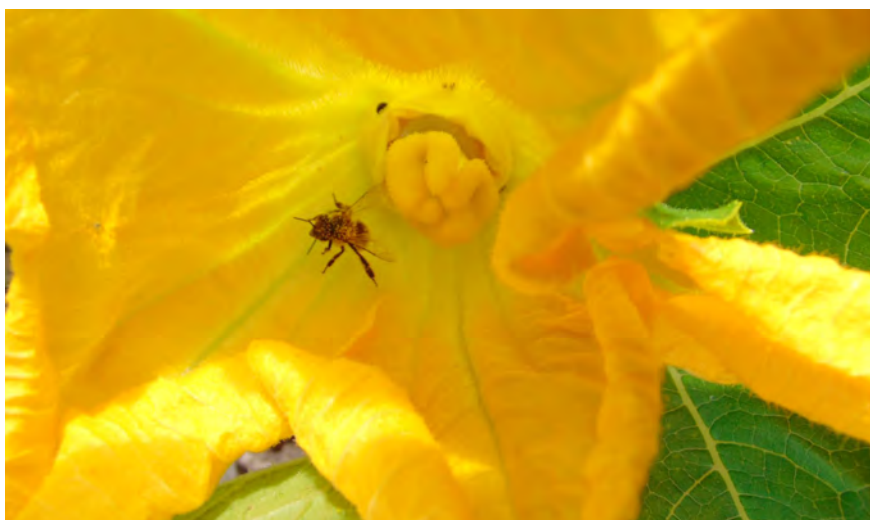
Some of the plants in the cucurbits group are growing well in the allotment garden with lots of different pumpkin varieties, patty pan squash and lots of different courgette varieties, cucumbers also come into this group of plants...



**Pumpkin forming behind the female flower.....**



**Patty Pan squash looking great.....**



**Bees busy pollinating our flowers.....**



**Yellow Gold Crest Courgettes.....**



**Pumpkins are growing fast! .....**

**Tuesday August 6<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**More grass clearance taking place.....**

There are three areas of the garden that require some hard work to clear some long grass – when the grass is dry, it becomes so much easier but even so a measure of hard graft is required – nothing come easy, but a measure of hard work and perseverance brings results. See below for the results.....



**More grass  
clearance.....**

# Lots of different fruits growing all over the gardens...

If you take a close look around some of the garden areas there are plenty of different fruits growing – indeed a lot of the planting that has taken place is probably five or six years old now, trees that came from the Woodland Trust as part of a fruiting hedge package. Indeed, over 400 trees were planted.....

Take a look at the photographs below with some accompanying text.....



Here you can see one of our Rowan trees that is loaded with berries. These berries have both culinary and medicinal uses.....

# Lots of fruits.....



Here you can see some of our elderberries that are just starting to ripen. Again, elder has both medicinal and culinary properties, the flowers have medicinal properties plus the berries can be used to make cordial, wine and jam.....



Here you can see our rose hips .....

Now, rose hips have both culinary and medicinal uses.

They are loaded with Vitamin C.....

Indeed rose hip oil is full of vitamin A, C, and E and essential fatty acids.....

Amazing benefits.....

## More fruits.....

Here you can see just a “few” of the wild blackberries that we have growing in the garden area, the hedgerows are absolutely loaded with so much fruit.....

Free fruit if you take the time to pick them – they really do taste great!

Simply put, they are ripened by the sun.....



Here you can see our Blackthorn bushes that have plenty of sloes..... Sloes can be used to make jam and jellies plus the fruits can be used to make sloe gin...

## Sloes

Thursday August 8<sup>th</sup> 2024

Pumpkins are making good progress.....



The starting point.....  
A small pumpkin.....



**Pumpkins growing..**  
**3 Different varieties**



## **Runner Beans are very slow this year.....**

**For some reason our runner beans are very slow this year – growth has been relatively slow but it appears that there are plenty of flowers showing which hopefully will at some stage produce some beans. Who knows why?**

**Inconsistent weather, poor pollination, not enough water. Who knows?**

**But, the plants will hopefully produce when they are ready.....**



**Friday August 9<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Tomatoes are ripening slowly.....**

**Our tomato plants that are growing in the poly tunnel have lots of fruit which is slowly starting to ripen – although again, consistent sunshine is needed.....**

**Also, we have removed a big willow tree that was growing right at the side of the poly tunnel which was blocking a good deal of light. So, now that this has been removed, when the sun does shine, these fruits will gain more benefit from the sunshine. They certainly get plenty of water.....**

**You cannot beat both the smell of freshly picked tomatoes and of course fruits that are ripened by the sun. Below you can see some of these different varieties of tomatoes that we have growing.....**





**Week Commencing Monday August 12<sup>th</sup> 2024**

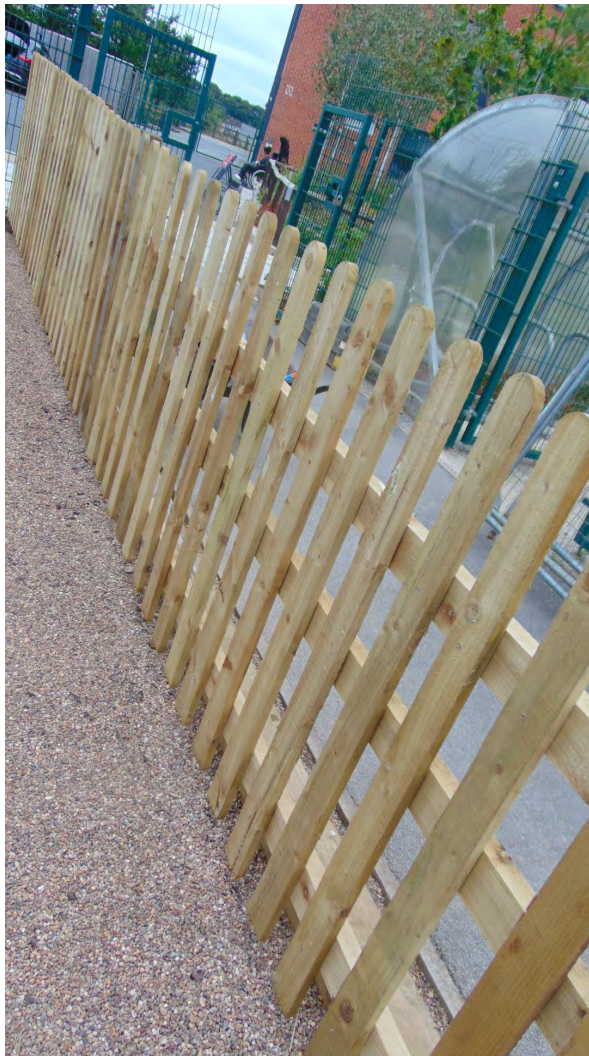
**Landscaping work is underway.....**

**The front entrance to the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden has not been the best way to enter the garden area with building site barriers erected along the side – so! the time has come to get rid of these barriers and develop a fresh new look to the entrance area.....**

**Follow this progress below.....**



**Picket fence build continuing.....**



**Picket Fence  
Build  
Continuing....**



**Here you can see that we have completed the picket fence build, we will look to perhaps put a gate in place or we may leave the opening as an opening so to speak both for an access point of view and as a opening and an access for hedgehogs to get into the garden space. Too often an after thought when people erect new fences, there is no access for hedgehogs, this is an animal that we need to look after and provide as much access as possible to our garden spaces. Without getting into politics, the more of our green belt that is being ripped apart through house building and other major construction projects, then the more we can do within our garden space, then so much the better. We need to look after our green spaces, not completely destroy them.**

**The same goes for our Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden – within this space we use NO Pesticides at all, we have planted lots of new trees including a fruit tree orchard which includes apple and damson trees. Lots of flowering cherry trees have been planted which are slowly establishing themselves.**

**The most important thing to consider is that all of these trees will, if we look after them properly will be around for many years to come providing not only a very important part of the habitat for wildlife and the most important area is that trees provide us with that most vital commodity – oxygen!**

**Also, we have lots of fruit bushes all planted and establishing themselves.....  
In short, the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden is a haven for wildlife.....**

**Week commencing August 19<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Another big project has been started.....**

Ever since the work started on the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden, we have been trying to set up a pond which would be a vital part of our garden space.....

For a number of reasons we have been thwarted in our attempts to build the pond with one of the main areas of concern being that the area where we have dug out the pond floods due to the lie of the land, so before we have had the chance to complete the excavation, remove all of the stones and then get our underlay down before we then get the pond liner in place, this "hole" almost continually fills up with water! So, we have gone to Plan B which means we are going to build a raised bed pond in a different part of the garden space.....

In the meantime, we are starting to fill in the hole that would have been where the pond would have been built. See below the start of the "new" pond build...



**Raised bed pond build  
underway.....**

## **Pond build continuing.....**

Now that we have cleared the weeds and any other vegetation from the raised bed pond area, the next job is to create a stone free base so that we can lay a base layer before we look to lay our pond liner. It is vital that we create this stone free base otherwise any sharp stones will puncture the liner which will obviously be no good at all. In short, the pond will leak! .....

Follow the set - up work below. Indeed, it is a painstaking process but ultimately it is crucial to the development of the pond set – up.



Here you can see the need to remove more stones..... and more stones! .....



Preparation nearly done – just time to make some final checks which are worth it! ....

# Tomatoes of all shapes, sizes and colours.....

We have lots of tomatoes growing in the poly tunnel which are all shapes and at various stages of different colours as they ripen. See below.....



**Tomatoes**

Home grown harvest.....



# Cucumbers are still going strong.....

Even though the summer weather has been so erratic, the poly tunnel has provided a protected environment that our cucumber plants have relished.....



# Cucumbers still cropping

**Tomatoes are still ripening.....**



**Home grown produce – cannot be beaten**

## **Solitary Bees have been very busy.....**

Here you can see one of our Solitary Bee Nesters which the solitary bees have been using to lay their eggs. The solitary bees that have laid their eggs here inside the chambers – then the eggs have been sealed off until they are ready to hatch out. Looking at the way the chambers have been sealed off, these are Leafcutter bees that have laid their eggs here because the chambers have been sealed off by using leaves. Very clever and fascinating too.....

Solitary bees are just as important as the honey bees and the bumble bees.....



## **Braeburn Apples look almost good to eat! .....**

**We have lots of fruit trees planted in both of the school gardens, some are more established than others but the three year old trees here have started to produce some beautiful looking apples – indeed, looking at this tree here, the Braeburn apples look almost good to eat now, but we will resist to allow the fruits to swell some more before we pick them.....**



**Sunday August 25<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Finally, some Runner Beans to pick.....**

**We have finally been able to pick a small handful of Runner Beans today, albeit a small handful. Hopefully we will get a late crop.....**



# **Poly tunnel grapes are looking good! .....**

The grape vine that we have growing in the poly tunnel is producing some very tasty grapes – we have some super bunches of grapes that taste great.....



# **More fruit in the garden.....**



**Conference Pears**

**Tuesday August 27<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**More clearance and set – up work continuing.....**

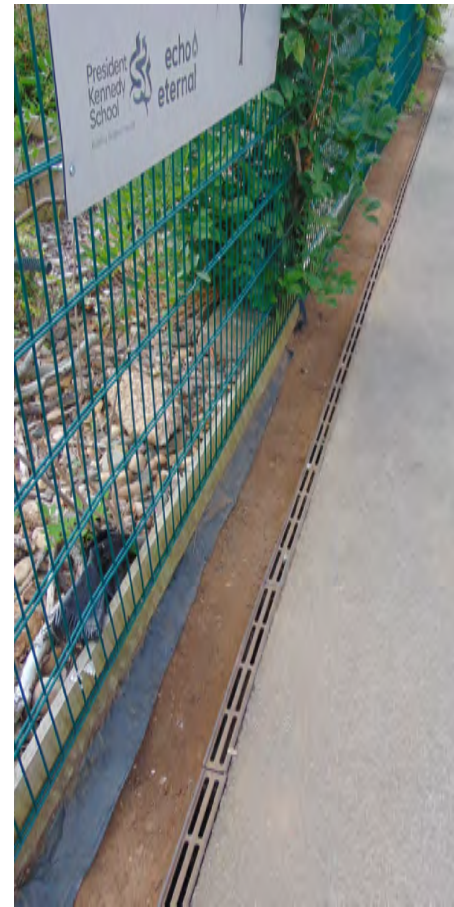
**Wildflower area being cleared.....**



**Wednesday August 28<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**School Garden Frontage being weeded.....**

**Around the external perimeter of the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden there is a narrow channel of compacted soil and a line of drainage which unfortunately get neglected allowing weeds to grow as you can see below.....**



**Weeds!**



**Thursday August 29<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Pathway being widened.....**

**Raised Bed Pond set up continuing.....**

Today, we have continued some hard landscaping work with both the garden pathway being widened and the raised bed pond base being set up at the same time – this work will complete another couple of ongoing projects.....



Here you can see that a thin layer of grass is being removed before we set about putting a weed suppressant membrane down which we will cover with pea gravel.....

Before we do that, we need to remove the ironwork left behind by the people who built the school.....

## **Ironwork removal...**



## **Grass removal....**



## **Weed suppressant membrane put in place.....**

Now that we have cleared the grass and removed the ironwork and plenty of rocks and stones, this is when we can put down the weed suppressant membrane before we cover the pathway with pea gravel. Before we do this gravel work, we also need to put the raised bed pond timber in place.....

Then we have a border or base to work to.....

Below you can see some more of the work that we have done today.....



## **Garden upgrades**

**Pathways being widened.....**

**Perimeter fence weeded.....**

**Raised bed pond base created.**

**Friday August 30<sup>th</sup> 2024**

## **Raised Bed Pond Base Set – Up Continuing.....**

Weed suppressant membrane has been laid and pegged down – the bottom layer of the raised bed pond has been set up, a layer of sand has been added which we need to sieve to make sure there are no stones. Then a base layer of underlay will be set up before we continue to build up the depth of the pond....



## **More cucumbers are growing.....**

**Our Mini Munch cucumbers have been prolific this summer and are still producing plenty more fruits – given the protection of the poly tunnel coupled with daily, yes , daily watering including week – ends. This is an ideal growing environment with the protection of the poly tunnel and the watering aided by the warmth that the poly tunnel generates. Then you see the results.....**



# Picket Fence Gate has been built – now to fit it! .....

One of the remaining jobs of the summer work programme has been to build a gate for the picket fence – this has been done now. All that needs to be done is for the gate to fitted to the fence .....

