



Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden



New Year – New Growth!

At the start of a new calendar year, there is always a sense of anticipation and excitement as to what lies ahead, the same can be said for what a growing year in the garden will bring. Follow some of the planting work and garden developments that are either planned or are already in progress.....



At this time of the year, you are always looking for signs of new growth which gives you a little bit of encouragement that the winter is getting shorter, the sight of new growth particularly when the weather is cold and dull is always a heartening sign. So, if you look above, you will see that the garlic that was planted on the shortest day [December 21st 2024] has started to make lots of growth which will hopefully accelerate very quickly now that the shoots have pushed through the compost. Also, garlic likes the cold weather too.....

Garlic.....

Tell – tale signs of winter growth.....

Below you can see that there are lots of signs of spring growth – these are narcissus spring flowering bulbs that are planted all over the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden. Indeed, lots of these bulbs have been planted for a few years now so they will be naturalising and spreading which hopefully when the spring comes will provide a real splash of stunning colour.....



Clearance work taking place.....

The Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden is essentially a big space that needs plenty of upkeep, indeed there are some areas that have still not been actively developed as we would like, so this has been a focus recently.....



Landscaping work continuing.....



Here you can see that we have set up another area of picket fence which creates a boundary around the garden – we are also going to build another raised bed alongside the picket fence. This raised bed will not only provide another growing space but will also add to the stability of the picket fence. We will set this raised bed up again using our hugelkultur principles adding plenty of organic material and lots of logs and branches which in time will decompose adding carbon into the soil. Plus, adding this material to the raised bed is also a cheaper way to fill the raised bed before compost is added to form the top growing layer.....

More landscaping work being done.....

Below you can see that we started to build another big raised bed on the back of the picket fence – this will serve two purposes in that it will be another big growing space plus it will serve as a “brace” for the picket fence to counter the high winds that will blow the fence over.....



New Raised Bed built

Now to start filling the new raised bed.....

Now that the raised bed is built, the next job we need to do is to look at how we fill it up – being a big, deep space, this will take lots of bags of compost which will not be economical at all. So, we will use the hugelkultur method used in other beds which means we will layer the bed with lots of old rotting logs and organic material, including straw packaging, even cardboard can be used, leaves are another material that we can use in our raised bed.....



Herbs have been pruned.....

During the winter months this is the ideal time to prune our perennial plants, particularly our herbs – we have so many herbs growing in the garden area which all provide not only some stunning colours but also some amazing aromas as well as some fantastic uses too, both culinary and medicinal.....



**Variegated
&
Common
Lemon
Balm.....**

More pruning work done – more new growth.....

As we continue our pruning and tidying work in the garden, we are discovering more and more new growth – sedum is a perennial plant that is as tough as anything and essentially it will grow anywhere.....

Here you can see lots of new sedum growth.....



Here you can see the new Sedum growth that is bursting through the ground after we have pruned all of the old growth back.....

Also, you can see the frosted sedum flower heads before we have pruned all of the old growth back.....

Sedum

Rhubarb is another really tough crop.....

Another crop that we have plenty of is rhubarb – a crop that really is tough and starts to push through the ground early on as you can see here.



Rhubarb

Forcer.....

Here you can see our rhubarb forcer – like any plant, once it makes new growth and forces its way through the ground, to continue growing it needs to photosynthesise and make its own food. So, with our rhubarb, if we place our rhubarb forcer over the growing stems, the stems continue to grow as they seek the light that they need to photosynthesise. As the rhubarb grows under the forcer, it produces almost pink stems that taste super sweet.....

Rhubarb.....

Poly tunnel salad crops are growing well.....

This winter we have made a conscious effort to utilise our poly tunnel growing space more efficiently so along with the garlic that we have planted, we also have some hardy winter salad crops growing too. Below you can see that our Lambs Lettuce is growing really well. Just look how vibrant the leaves look.....



On the left you can see another salad crop that is growing inside the poly tunnel - this crop is Rocket.....

**Lambs
Lettuce
&
Rocket**

Winter vegetables are growing well.....

Usually associated with Christmas dinner but essentially, they are a winter vegetable – yes, we are talking about the humble Brussels Sprouts.....

We have some plants growing under a protected mesh cover to keep the pigeons off, that is when the cover stays fixed on with all the high winds we are experiencing just lately. Also, under this same mesh cover, we also have plenty of Savoy winter cabbage which also looks great too.....

You cannot beat home grown vegetables.....



Brussels Sprouts.....



**Savoy
Winter
Cabbage...**

The weather is ever challenging.....

After yet another storm, you will see from the photographs below that there are areas of the garden that due to the gradient on the garden site are always prone to flooding simple because the water flows down the slope and then eventually it just sits on the ground. With ground that is already sodden and the water table being so high, effectively the water has nowhere to go.....

There is not much we can do about it except wait until the water disperses naturally, any excess water at this time of the year will subside eventually.....

During the active growing seasons, the trees and plants would be taking up a lot of this excess water but during dormancy they do not need much water.....



Water!
Floods!

Consecutive days of rain are causing big problems!

After consecutive days of heavy showers, there are some areas of the garden that are literally under water, with more rain forecast, there seems that there will be little respite for some time yet. It will take an extended period of dry weather to help with the dispersal of this flood water.....

Following on from the previous page, the photographs below show the aftermath of another day of rain.....



Poly tunnel crops – a different take.....

Here you can see two photographs taken from different angles to highlight the growth of our Garlic crop and our Rocket salad leaves.....



Stunning Irises.....

Below you can see some photographs of our irises – the detail in the flower is an absolute joy to see – stunning detail!



Tulips are pushing through.....



There are so many spring flowering bulbs pushing their way through the ground including tulip bulbs which are relatively early.

Tulips

Daffodils are everywhere in the garden areas.....

Over the years we have planted literally hundreds of spring flowering bulbs in many different areas of the school garden. Lots of these bulbs are daffodils and now these bulbs are pushing through in many different areas of the garden. Indeed, some of these bulbs are close to flowering



Snowdrops are flowering now!

Usually the first bulbs to flower are the snowdrops – aptly named as they look like small drops of snow as you can see here in the photograph.

Newly planted, we hope in time that these snowdrops will naturalise and then spread over the area of the garden where they are planted.....



Snowdrops.....

Containers full of bulbs.....

As well as the hundreds of bulbs that are planted in the grassy areas, we also have lots of bulbs planted in pots and containers. These bulbs are growing quickly too as you can see from the photograph below.....



More landscaping preparation work.....

During the winter months, this is the perfect time to prepare some areas of the garden in readiness for further developments when the spring comes around... One area that we are developing is close to the front entrance to the garden, as well as setting up the picket fence, building another raised bed growing box, also, here we have covered the ground with weed suppressant membrane so that we can set up another willow dome.....



This space does not look very inviting so far but watch for the development work we are going to put in place – this will hopefully transform this area plus it will create another natural teaching and relaxation space.....

Groundworks in place.....

Willow dome being constructed.....

Now that the groundworks have been put in place, the next job is to construct a new willow dome. Willow domes once they establish really do provide a cool natural space – in the summer months particularly on warm days, under the willow it is so cool and refreshing – another really important job that trees do...

We already have a willow dome in the garden area, so after we have cut that back, the willow that we have cut down is being used to plant a new willow dome. Willow by its very nature grows very quickly plus it is very easy to grow...

Once you cut the branches off, if you push the cut ends into the ground, they should root very quickly, indeed, some of the cut pieces already have new growth emerging so hopefully this growth will continue

Here you can see the start of the new willow dome construction.....



A very cold start to the day.....

The start to Thursday January 30th was extremely cold indeed, with the sky very clear, the overnight temperature dipped to minus 3 degrees giving us a frosty start to the day but the glorious January sunshine that followed was a treat.....

What it did mean though was that our work on constructing our willow dome had to wait until the frost came out of the ground so that we could get our willow rods into the ground – frozen ground is not conducive to planting work...

Here you can see the frost covered area.....



More willow construction work.....

Here you can see the outline shape of the willow dome – all of the outer willow rods have been pushed into the ground, what needs to be done now is that the willow rods need to be fixed together, then we will weave some more willow into the sides of the dome shape so that when the willow grows it grows nice and thick to cover the framework.....

