

VEG (Visiting Edible Gardens) is a new programme of garden visits in and around Eden District, focusing particularly on growing food such as fruit & vegetables.

Why Grow Your Own?

Growing your own food locally can be great fun, very rewarding, and giving you the immense satisfaction of producing organic food that is great to eat. With rising prices for supermarket food that is often transported long distances, growing your own food can also save you money and help reduce impacts of climate change.

Over the last couple of years there's been a real increase in community gardening in Penrith and elsewhere in Eden. There are already several community gardens operating, including developing unloved urban spaces, front yards, and even railway station platforms! The Salvation Army in Penrith is also growing food as a contribution to food bank parcels.



About VEG:

We see the VEG programme of garden visits as a great way to showcase what's possible in a range of garden spaces in Eden District, from large gardens to smaller yards, and from well-established plots to uncultivated gardens 'with potential'. It's a chance to see what others in the community are up to, learn from those with more experience of growing, and generally become inspired to get started yourself!

VEG is a joint initiative by Transition Town group **PACT** (Penrith Action for Community Transition) and **Freegle**, which together are working on a range of projects to encourage more local growing of produce such as fruit & vegetables.

Penrith & Eden District Freegle is a partner in the **Sustain Eden** project, run by **CAFS** (Cumbria Action for Sustainability) and funded by the **Big Lottery Fund**.



The Freegle project aims to support the growing of food in the Eden District of Cumbria, by helping people pass on unwanted seeds, plants, trees and surplus produce to others for free. The Freegle Direct web service has been set up to enable people to join, offer and request items in a garden category.

Joining VEG as a visitor:

We'd encourage anyone who's interested to join a VEG visit, whether they're already actively growing produce, looking for tips, or just wondering how to get started!

Details of forthcoming VEG visits will be available on the PACT website (www.penrithACT.org.uk), and publicised widely well in advance.

Obviously the visits will be mostly outside in the elements, so we recommend dressing appropriately with suitable footwear and clothing. We will ask visitors to sign in when they arrive, and provide a short introduction to the site where we'll point out any potential hazards that might exist.

Participating in VEG as a host:

PACT is keen to arrange an interesting and varied programme of edible garden visits over the summer months. If you are interested in volunteering your garden for a possible VEG visit, we'd be very keen to hear from you – please do contact PACT at info@penrithACT.org.uk or phone Chris on 01931 713240.

Notes on organising a VEG visit:

We do not envisage VEG visits need in any way to be complicated or hazardous, still there are few admin points to consider, just to make sure that the visits go smoothly.

Visits are organised by PACT, which has public liability insurance for organising a range of community events. While domestic gardens hopefully do not represent a major hazard, nonetheless it's obviously essential for us to ensure that all those visiting have a safe and enjoyable experience. We have been advised that it is likely that any claims will primarily be against your house insurance.

A representative from PACT or Freegle will visit in advance, to do a site assessment and provide any guidance on safety. In order to meet the needs of our insurer, we will also conduct a simple risk assessment. This is a way of identifying potential hazards, for example steep steps, slippery surfaces, ponds, sharp objects, possible irritants to allergies, etc. We can then help recommend ways in which potential hazards can be reduced or eliminated.

We also recommend that the visit host contacts their own house insurers, to let them know the visit is happening and give an indication of the likely numbers who may be coming. In general the situation for the householder is the same as for anyone you invite onto your property, i.e. you have a reasonable duty of care.

Please also note that any thefts will almost certainly not be covered, so we recommend that any valuables are best hidden or locked away.

On the day of the visit we will then give a brief health & safety introduction, to point out any obvious hazards that may exist. We will also maintain a simple sign in / sign out sheet (just to make sure we don't lose anyone!).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The following answers should provide some basic guidelines on how we see the VEG visits working:

How will people find out about the event?

Each garden visit will be included in the VEG programme for the year, with a brief introduction to the garden, and details of the time and location (including detailed directions if necessary). This programme will be listed on the PACT website and used as part of general publicity for VEG.

On the day we'll also suggest putting a sign at the front of the garden to help ensure people enter the right property – PACT can provide a laminated sign for this purpose, which can be hung on the gate or fence.

How will people get to the event?

Depending on where the garden is, realistically it's likely that most people will arrive by car, certainly in rural locations. Therefore thought will need to be given to ensuring there's adequate parking nearby, either on a drive or on the street.

Where possible we are keen that people consider car sharing, and are looking at ways to promote this option.

We advise you to tell your neighbours so they know about the visit.

When will VEG visits take place?

We are hoping to run the VEG programme primarily over the main growing season during the summer months, most likely March – October.

While we're open to suggestions for a whole variety of visits, we anticipate a typical VEG visit will be at weekends and during the daytime, in the hope of getting a good attendance.

How long will a typical VEG visit last?

The length of the visit will depend very much on the size and scope of the garden, and the level of interest from those visiting. We anticipate that a typical visit might be 45min to 1h30min.

How many people are likely to visit my garden?

Our intention is to advertise the event and hope that there is a good attendance, particularly as the visits are free. For most visits we will ask people to reserve a free place so we know approximate numbers in advance.

Can I charge people to visit?

No, all visits are intended to be free of charge. If a visitor is particularly keen to pay something, they are very welcome to make a donation to PACT.

While PACT is very grateful for anyone willing to open up their garden for a VEG visit, unfortunately we are not able to pay you for doing so.

Do I need to be a gardening expert?

While ideally you'll be able to explain what's growing in your garden and answer any basic questions, we hope there'll also be some general discussion amongst the visitors, so that everyone may gain knowledge and ideas as a result of the visit.

A representative of PACT will also attend on the day to support you with the hosting of the visit.

Do I need to provide any refreshments and access to a toilet?

It is not essential to provide any refreshments, but if you are prepared to offer tea / coffee / juice then that would be a very kind offer.

You do not have to provide access to a toilet, but if you can that would be helpful.

What happens if the weather's bad....?

Ideally the visit can still go ahead, particularly if people come dressed appropriately and there's a covered space such as a shed, garage or barn where people could congregate if it's raining.

Depending on the garden location, if the weather is terrible (e.g. localised flooding, very strong winds, etc.) then as a last resort we might have to cancel or postpone the visit.

