

Welcome to the fourth, and (for the time being) final Museum Monthly, a newspaper of general interest from the Rossendale Museum that takes a look at the way different people in Rawtenstall relate to nature. This edition, 'The edible outdoors', is a collection of texts from members of Incredible Edible Rossendale, placed alongside a collage of wild medicinal herbs drawn by Friedlinde Nauck.

'The edible outdoors' is also an invitation to the opening of the Incredible Edible Community Garden and the DIY Medicinal Tea Garden on Wednesday the 20th of July. The edible garden, situated next to the Rossendale Museum in Whitaker Park, will consist of raised beds (including fruit, vegetables and herbs), wheelchair access and a new seated area. Stallholders will be showcasing locally produced foods, and Ramsbottom herbalists Tim and Tracey will be offering wild food walks around the park. For more information visit www.ierossendale.com

Thanks to all those who have contributed to the Museum Monthly, and to Orbital Design for sponsoring the project.

How do you relate to nature? What has shaped this relationship? Do you ever collect anything from nature? Why do you do this?

The newspaper of general interest is part of 'New light on old bones', a research project exploring the social history context for natural history exhibits at the Rossendale Museum. More information can be found at newlightmanchester.wordpress.com

Incredible Edible Rossendale has a 2020 vision for self sufficiency in the towns of the Rossendale Valley. We aim to encourage residents to grow their own produce, either on their own land, or on community land tended by IER volunteers. We aim to educate everyone on the benefits of eating fresh food, while boosting our local economy with good quality healthy food produced in the community.

Well at the end of 2010 we decided to extend our garden efforts to downstairs near our front doors to put my potted Christmas tree and my lovely June berry (*Amelanchier lamarkii*) tree, which does have edible berries although I haven't tried them yet. I also started a seed growing shelving area on my kitchen windowsill using four bricks and a couple of sides from some drawers - I think they are anyway!! So far I have started off tomatoes, lettuce, red onion, sweet peas, peas and dwarf French beans. The June Berry is thriving in its new spot in a great new recycled container one of three pieces of large black drainage piping, kindly donated by workmen constructing new drains on Baron Street behind our flats. We were given two large and one medium pieces, but decided to saw one of the large pieces in half and are planning to cut the other large one in half too.

I worked for Groundwork Pennine Lancashire as a Youth Training Officer until last October and before that I was Groundwork's Bury Community Project Officer, as well as being a Freelance Environmental Consultant. The majority of my work over the past 12 years has involved community and environmental projects, so lots of green spaces, allotments, school gardens and countryside conservation. Perfect for me as I've always been fascinated with wildlife, plants and gardening. As a child I always had my own little plot in the garden, grew carrot tops and cress and helped my granny in her lean-to conservatory. I used to teach school students attending Rossendale Alternative Provision up at Stubblee Community Greenhouses and have watched the site develop over the past few years. I now volunteer up there on Tuesdays and thought that it was time to see if anyone would be interested in finding out about balcony gardening from a beginner, and of course get some hints and tips.

On the most part gardening weather not been too great in May, so I am probably a bit behind, but it's certainly cheering up in June and I have been in the garden all day. The main thing I am finding at the moment is impatience. I want to shout at the veg - grow grow grow, NOW!! Eager beaver that I am. I think it is because we had such an early and summerlike spring in April, it felt more like May, so it feels like everything is taking forever to grow.

Currently I am harvesting mixed salad leaves, spinach, and rhubarb. There are so many things coming to fruition, but that just aren't ready yet, and I want them now! Strawberries, raspberries, peas... Other things in the garden are looking promising, there are loads of tiny apples on my mini apple tree and the tomatoes are starting to flower. The early potatoes I planted in bags are enormous! I am especially pleased that the onions and garlic I planted out in the autumn are doing really well - they will be giving me onions to eat way before the ones I have planted in spring. I have things growing everywhere, outside in raised bed and in pots, in plastic greenhouses, polytunnels, and of course on my windowsill. I find that basil and chillis do best on my dining room windowsill. Had bumper crops last year.

