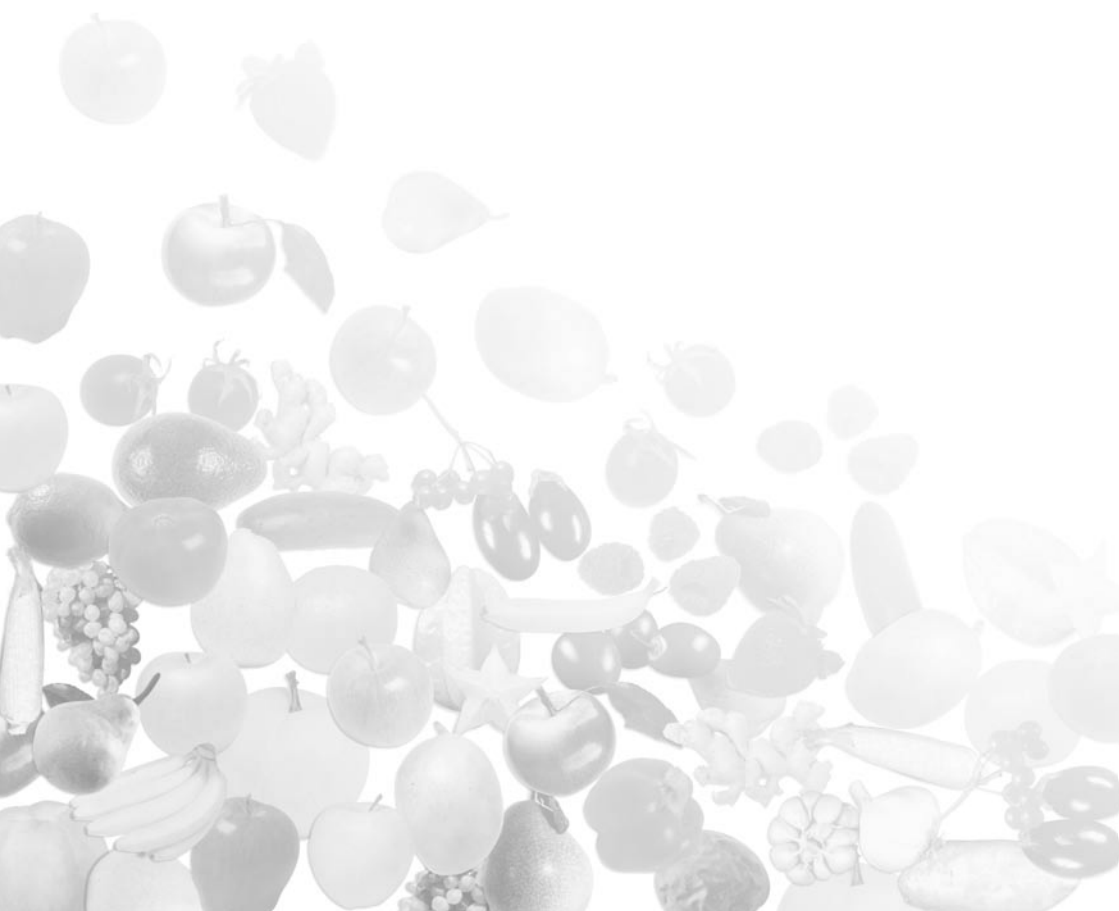


Balsall Heath Jungle book



Local residents talk about the environment and growing food







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Urban Jungle

A jungle or forest is a web of life, where all the plants and animals depend on each other. Thousands of years ago Balsall Heath was covered in trees, and until 200 years ago by farmland. Today, it still has many trees, gardens, and much wildlife, but human beings have become 'the spider in the web' which dominates the whole system. We have chosen to cover up most of the forest with houses, tarmac, and concrete.

We cannot live without plants. Plants use the energy of the sun to give us our food and oxygen, re-absorbing some of the carbon dioxide which pours out of our vehicles, heating systems, and factories. Woods and gardens relieve stress and heal hurt minds.

Stress

Much of our stress is caused by trying to force our bodies to adapt to a techno-jungle dominated by computers, chemicals and bright lights. We are cut off from the seasons and our extended family of plants and animals. Other health problems are caused by chemicals in food, and lack of exercise.

So why not get back in touch? By growing just a little of our own food, we can get really fresh fruit or vegetables with no chemicals added, no processing or packaging, no fuel wasted in transport and tractors. And all without losing the comforts of city life! Modern varieties of fruit can be grown in tiny gardens. Allotments are just over the road in Cannon Hill Park.

The following pages show how people in Balsall Heath, who come from all over the world, bring with them a rich tradition of growing their own food.



From breadfruit to apples and pears

by Mrs Grey, of George Street

I come from Montego Bay in Jamaica. I lived in a town, and even in town everybody had gardens big enough to grow lots of fruit and vegetables. Everybody - especially families with children - has a breadfruit tree, and there are so many avocados that sometimes they just fall on the floor.

Children have fruit for breakfast, like nesberries, which look like Kiwi fruit on the outside. (You have to rub the skin off then pack them in banana leaves until they are ripe.) And when they come in from school they pick fruit while they are waiting for their dinner.

We make a cold drink from the flesh of the big pods which hang down from the tamarind trees. Tamarind has a really unusual sharp taste.

Make your own chocolate

We made so many things ourselves - even chocolate. We would take the seeds from the cocoa pods, parch it on the fire and pound it in a mortar. Sometimes we used coconut milk (made from the flesh of the coconut) to make the chocolate instead of dairy milk. We could get our own coconut oil from the milk too and we used coconut husk as scourers. And some people used to make their own starch for starching collars from bitter cassava!

It's so easy to grow things there. You can squeeze out tomato seeds in the garden, or throw away bits of potato with eyes on, and they grow. As well as potatoes, we have lots of other things which grow underground - sweet potato, sweet and bitter cassava, yams, coco yams, dasheen. For yams you have to build a frame for the vine to grow up, and plant the yam in a big bank of soil.





No plastic bottles

People would bring fresh milk from the country every day. There were no plastic bottles to throw away - they would measure directly into our own containers. My husband comes from the country - they grew all their food themselves, they didn't have to buy anything.

In Jamaica we have lots of fruits you can't get here - custard apple, sour sop, sweet sop, jackfruit (you eat the fruit raw and roast the seed), breadfruit (roast it and eat it with ackee and salt fish), ginnips in little bunches (again you eat the fruit and roast the seed), and starapple - a round fruit with a green or black skin - you squeeze out the juice and flesh - it's so sweet. We have round mangoes, long mangoes, black mangoes, stringy mangoes, and many different bananas and plantains for cooking or eating raw.

Fruit to share

I miss the fresh fruit and the fresh fish straight from the sea, and the freshly killed meat. Here we just eat to live! We've lived in Balsall Heath 45 years. 42 years ago we planted an apple tree and a pear tree in our back garden - you can see the pear tree covered in white blossom from this window. We get loads of apples and Williams pears: I used to give them away to the children at Tindal School. And we've grown potatoes, cabbages, lettuces, cucumber, tomatoes, sweet corn - you name it - in our back garden here. I even tried growing a plum tree from a stone, but it didn't bear fruit. But we're getting older now, and I don't know if young people are interested in growing their own fruit and vegetables. I hope so.





Pomegranates in Pakistan

by Mrs Chishti, of Brighton Road

Once, my father was going to a village called Sarhal in connection with some work, when he saw a small branch of a pomegranate tree lying on the path, so he picked it up and took it home.

Back home, he dug the earth and softened it and planted the branch in it. My brothers and sisters and I made it our job to look after it. Every day I got up early and watered it, and hoed it once a week. We watched it grow: little buds started to open on the branch and after six months it had become a beautiful three-foot high plant which brought delight to our little home and enhanced its beauty. And we carried on looking after it and watered it and hoed it regularly.

Flowers, fruit and new trees

Two years later flowers started to appear on the branch. We were so happy when we saw those flowers. We guarded them and protected them from birds and insects. Not long afterwards tiny fruits started to form from the flowers. In five months' time the fruits were ripe and we ate them with relish. Of course we carried on eating fruit bought from the market but the fruit from our own home-grown pomegranate tree was something special.

We gave pomegranates to our neighbours as well and they really enjoyed them too. So my father invited them to take a cutting each and plant it in their own gardens. Four of them did, and so today there are still five pomegranate trees bearing fruit in our gardens, which give us hundreds of pomegranates each year - plenty to eat ourselves and enough to give away to friends and relatives.



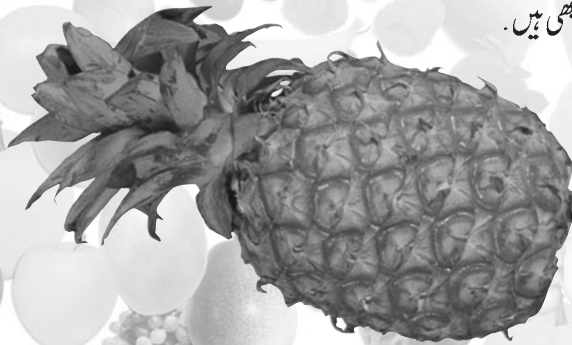


انار کے درخت کی کہانی

ایک دفعہ کا ذکر ہے کہ میرے والد صاحب کسی کام کے سلسلہ میں ایک گاؤں جا رہے تھے جس کا نام 'سربال' تھا۔ انہوں نے راستے میں ایک انار کے درخت کی ٹہنی پڑی دیکھی اور اسے اٹھا کر گھر لے آئے۔ گھر آکر زمین کھودی، نرم کی اور اس کے اندر وہ ٹہنی گاڑ دی۔ ہم سب بہنیں اور بھائی اس کی دیکھ بھال کرتے رہے۔ میں اس کی ہفتہ وار گوڈی کرتی تھی اور روزانہ صبح سویرے اٹھ کر اسے پانی لگاتی تھی۔ دیکھتے ہی دیکھتے اس ٹہنی کے ساتھ کونپلیں پھوٹنے لگیں اور چھ ماہ کے بعد وہ تین فٹ اونچا خوبصورت پودا بن گیا، جس سے ہمارے چھوٹے سے گھر میں بہار آگئی اور گھر کی خوبصورتی میں اضافہ ہو گیا۔ ہم نے اس کی دیکھ بھال جاری رکھی۔ باقاعدگی سے گوڈی کرتے اور پانی دیتے رہے۔

دو سال بعد اس پر پھول نکلنے شروع ہو گئے۔ ہمیں وہ پھول دیکھ کر بے پناہ خوشی ہوئی۔ ہم نے ان پھولوں کی حفاظت کی، انہیں پرندوں اور کیڑوں کوڑوں سے محفوظ رکھا۔ کچھ دنوں بعد ان پھولوں سے چھوٹے چھوٹے پھل بنا شروع ہو گئے۔ پانچ ماہ کے عرصہ میں یہ پھل پک گئے اور ہم نے مزے لے لے کر کھائے۔ ویسے بھی ہم پھل بازار سے خرید کر کھاتے رہتے تھے مگر اس اپنے گھر کے اندر پیدا ہونے والے پھل کا مزہ کچھ اور ہی تھا۔ ہم نے اپنے پڑوسیوں کو بھی انار دیئے، وہ بھی بہت خوش ہوئے۔ پھر میرے ابا جی نے اپنے پڑوسیوں سے کہا کہ آپ بھی اس کی ایک ایک ٹہنی لے جائیں اور اپنے گھروں میں لگائیں۔ تو ہمارے پڑوسیوں میں سے چار گھروں میں اور ہمارے گھر میں اب تک وہ انار کے پھلدار درخت لگے ہوئے ہیں، جن پر سینکڑوں انار ہر سال پیدا ہوتے ہیں اور ہمارے گھر اور محلے والے خود بھی کھاتے اور اپنے رشتہ داروں اور دوستوں کو تحفے کے طور پر بھیجتے بھی ہیں۔

مسز چشتی





Mega allotments on St Kitts

by Mrs Gardner, of Tindal Street

I was born in Saddlers Village on St Kitts island in the Caribbean. We grew most of what we needed - carrots, sweet potatoes, yams, breadfruit, okra, aubergines, green bananas, ripe bananas, monkey nuts. We used to sell stuff as well. We had land after the sugar-cane estate was broken up - they gave everyone a plot, maybe the size of ten allotments here.

There were lots of different fruits. I remember the date palms - we threw stones at the dates to get them down. And we had ginnips - round fruits with one big seed. We had a mango tree and a lemon tree and orange trees on our land. People would come to buy things from us in season - they would pick their own fruit - we sold it cheap. I remember a mango garden where we could get a big cardboard box full of mangoes for a shilling. The mangoes here don't taste the same. On the next-door island of Nevis they must have grown even more stuff because people from there would bring stuff to sell on St Kitts.

I came to the UK in 1960. What I miss most of all is the sunshine, and my family - there were 12 brothers and sisters, and only two of us came to the UK. St Kitts has changed a lot - they've built a lot of hotels there now - but people still grow their own.

Bringing it to Balsall Heath

We've recently got an allotment near Cannon Hill Park, so we try to grow our own food here now too. We've planted onions, potatoes, carrots, beetroot, cabbage, and lettuce. I've got some little pumpkin seedlings growing in the kitchen. And we've got herbs growing in tubs in the garden, and blackcurrant and gooseberry bushes from





Balsall Heath Jungle growing in pots. We've got a compost bin from the Council to compost our kitchen waste - when it's ready we'll take the compost to the allotment.

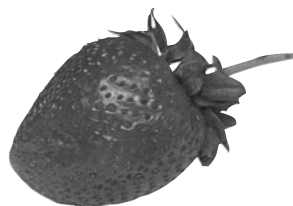
I'd like to see more trees in Balsall Heath, but trees can be dangerous. A mother and son were killed by a tree in a high wind in Kings Heath. So the trees shouldn't be too big or too tall.



"I'd like to see less cars in Birmingham. They're very convenient, but ten people a day are killed in road accidents in this country - mostly children."

Iraqi gardens

by Su'ad, a Clifton School parent



My home in Iraq has a big garden - in fact most Iraqi houses have big gardens surrounding the whole house, because the weather is very hot through the day but pleasant at night. The middle of the garden has a lawn and the boundary has fruit trees like figs, and others which I don't know the names of in English.

In the corner we have to grow at least one date palm and one olive tree by law. The climate is very suitable for them. One side of the garden has flowers, and the whole family has dinner in the garden and sits there many hours, sometimes with visitors, until bedtime. Sometimes they play cards or dominoes. And the children have a big space to run around and play in the cool of the evening.



A country living

by Mrs Stephens, of Homer Street

I come from a village in Dominica, although we had a house in the town as well. We grew a lot of vegetables - that was our livelihood. We would sell them in the market in the town, or people would come and buy from us. We had carrots, turnips, cabbage, lettuces, beans, peas....

My father had enough land for us to live on. We used to sell food to buy rice and flour, sugar, or oil and butter. We used to sell flowers too - people used to come to us to buy flowers for weddings. And my father used to cut some branches from a big bay leaf tree to sell. Everything was hand-cultivated. We used to sow things in old baskets and then transplant them to the soil.

Every two weeks the banana boat used to come. Geest Industries used to send a truck to collect bananas from a place near the village. We had no motorable roads to the village so we had to walk three miles to sell our bananas. Other things we carried on our heads to market which was even further.

Coffee with milk

We grew coffee, mainly for our own use, and dried the beans ourselves. We also grew corn, yam, dasheen, and cassava. We would scrape the cassava, press the starch out, dry what was left to and make it into a kind of flour called farine. You can even buy it in this country now.

We had animals too - a few goats, a couple of sheep, and the cow for milk.

We grew fruit, especially oranges and tangerines. We sold the oranges to hucksters, and they used to sell it in Barbados. There were different trees along the road - mangoes, breadfruit, and lumber - as well as timber,





people would take shingles from the lumber trees to make roofs. We didn't have a coconut palm ourselves but we got coconuts from other people. We did have pawpaw and sour sop and sweet sop.

I miss a lot of things about Dominica - we could walk more freely - young people could gather together on a moonlit night, if it was dry, although we didn't go out alone.

We also grew a lot of a vine which we called christopheen - the Jamaicans call it chocho. We used to wash our clothes in the river and there was some christopheen planted there. I was given a plant from there when I was pregnant. They say if you're pregnant and plant certain things they bear a lot, and it did grow well - passers-by would take some from the roadside with our blessing.

When I first came to this country I planted some chives and cabbages and lettuces, but cats and dogs messed it up. I've got a big sycamore tree in my front garden. I'd like to see more trees in this area, especially things we can use or eat.



• A child at Tindal School stretches through the undergrowth to pick an apple.



The jungle's burning

Like dragons breathing fire, human beings have developed an insatiable need to burn things for their comfort. From primitive fires for warmth and cooking, to central heating, electricity generators, and internal combustion engines, we are now pumping out huge quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. At the same time we are cutting down trees in Birmingham and forests in Amazonia - the very trees which can transform that carbon dioxide back into oxygen.

Floods

There is now no doubt that this surplus of carbon dioxide is causing global warming and disrupting climate patterns worldwide. Sea levels are rising, islands are disappearing, floods are not just affecting Britain but devastating countries like Bangladesh, Mozambique and Honduras. We simply do not know how badly the delicate web of life that we depend on for our survival will be affected in the long run.

All the technical solutions are available: solar electricity, pedal power, better insulated homes - the list is endless. Governments promise action, and then take fright when threatened with losing the votes of die-hard car drivers.

Do we as individuals have any responsibility for improving the situation? We asked students at St Albans secondary school (see next page). We also asked them to produce a recipe for a sustainable neighbourhood (see page 11).





Is the environment worth saving?

by Year 10 students from St Albans School

"We ought to do something about global warming. Too many people are driving cars, lorries and vans and it is causing a lot of air pollution. People should walk or take the bus."

"Too many trees are being cut down and there are not a lot left, people should plant more trees and less buildings. I think people should grow some of their own food."

"If we don't try stopping this disaster, we are gonna go to a certain point where there will be no food to eat. If we decide to work together we can work something out."

"We should stop cutting down trees and I think we should start using public transport a lot more. I think that fossil fuels and petrol from cars are polluting the world and because of all this nature is being harmed."

"I agree we should do something to stop this from happening but it is not up to us: this is the way nature is, and yes it will die out but something will replace it. Anyway, I will be dead by the time anything happens so I don't have to worry."

"It is OK to care about the environment but there is a line where you stop. You think cycling is going to stop the pollution? OK let's be realistic here: there are thousands of people that cycle in this country but there are millions who use cars. If you really want to stop pollution you need to get a lot more people."

"Do you think you can save the world by stopping everyone driving? You said that you want to grow your own food - then do it! If you think one person can save the world, you're mad! But people should do something."



"I agree that I, or more likely all human beings, ought to do something but I disagree about not driving cars because some cars, I mean those small cars use less fuel. And those electric or solar batteried ones are not that bad. Also they are as good a way of transport as buses, coaches or trains."

"I want to learn to drive and get a car as soon as I can pass my driving test and as soon as I can afford one."

"I agree with your idea because pollution does kill plants and wildlife but people should be free to do what they want with their cars because it is their problem - they are causing problems for themselves, killing their own things."

Recipe for a sustainable neighbourhood



by Kevin, a Year 10 student at St Albans School

Ingredients

- Bicycle paths for people with bikes
- Walking paths for people who like walking
- No cars, to stop air pollution
- Parks for little children and teenagers
- A nice green garden with entrance, with benches, fruit trees, sand pits, swimming pools, picnic areas, waterfalls & garden cleaners looking after it so it doesn't get damaged
- Lots of houses with double glazing
- No chemicals



• We can see a pear!

Growing up and growing food

Many city children have little idea where their food ultimately comes from: seed, soil, water, sun. In order to give them a taste of this, we sowed tomato seeds with children at Clifton Infants, all kinds of salad seed with Clifton Juniors, and planted gooseberry bushes and raspberry canes with a group at St Albans secondary school. What follows is a selection of poems from Clifton Juniors, in which they imagined the process of growth from the seed's point of view, and a matter-of-fact account of the St Albans project, offered spontaneously by one of the participants. One of the poems commemorates an act of vandalism: many of the plants were thrown into the school pond by persons unknown coming over the fence one weekend.

Making and using compost gave the children the experience of the cycle of life and death. Plants grow up from the soil, and die back into it to nourish new plants. Investigating a worm compost bin produced squeals of delight and fascination from the Year 2 children!



Poems from Class 5L at Clifton School

Seeds!

Seeds shooting up
Enjoying the cool water,
Enthusiastically growing,
Drinking the sunshine,
Sun shining bright on the seed.

Rachel



Because of a little seed

Seeds - look at them grow,
into a sunflower.
A steady flow of water
from a can or from a hose.
When the flower came out I ran to see.
All because of a little SEED.

Miriam



Seeds

Seeds here, seeds there, seeds everywhere.
Sun shining at the seed.
Growing, growing, growing the flower.
Soil on the seed, water on the soil,
water on the seed growing the flower high, high,
Growing here, growing there, growing everywhere.
making the flower as big as the sky.

Sani





Sunflower

Sunny day
Up seeds grow
Nature is
Fun
Lovely flowers
Open
Worms wiggling
Energy is plants growing
Rain helps the plants to grow.
Slara



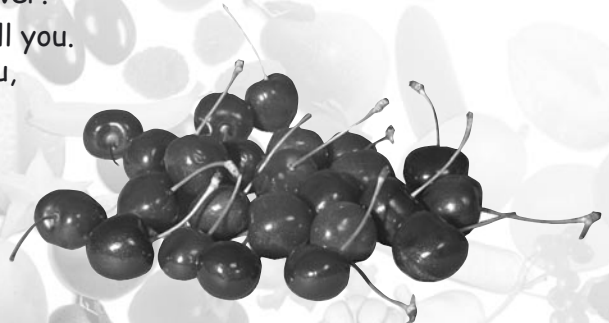
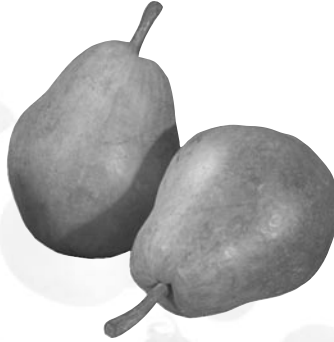
Courgettes

Courgettes
Open
Under
Rich
Ground
Emerging
Taller
Thinner
Everlasting
Haseeb



Vandals

Imagine being a seed
Buried in compost
Cramped in the compost
Out comes a sunflower.
But people might kill you.
They'll stamp on you,
Pull you out
Then you're DEAD!
Asad





Project Report:

Gooseberry and raspberry planting

by Amar, a student at St Albans CE School

Activities

- Report and analyse results of the measurement of land
- Clean the area; dig out soil; transplant shrubs

Outputs

- We have improved a neglected area in the school grounds
- We have learned about times and places to plant
- We have prepared the soil for planting shrubs
- We are aware of the importance of protecting our environment

Skills

I have developed the following skills in this project:

Communication...

- We have worked in a group to achieve a task
- We have listened to instructions

Working with others...

- Working in groups for planning the activities
- Planting and digging

Solving problems...

- Deciding where to plant the shrubs

Evaluation

The things that went well...

- The digging and planting. I participated in planting shrubs.

The things that could have gone better...

- Not enough tools. One day it was very cold.

I recommend next time we should...

- Get changed or wear suitable clothes
- Work in a different place








Food Net

Some ideas and recipes from Eleanor & Nihat, at Food Net.

The Food Net project has been set up to find ways to help people to eat more fruit and vegetables. We are working with local people to find out why people don't eat more healthily in Birmingham. We know that communities that eat plenty of fruit and vegetables are less likely to suffer from heart disease and cancer. There are a lot of people in Birmingham who get heart disease and cancer and we are trying to reduce the number. For more information, contact Eleanor on 678 3875.

Why eat more fruit and vegetables?

You have already read and discovered that growing food is fun. But why eat the fruit you grow?

-  Fruit and vegetables are colourful and tasty and can brighten up your meals and snacks.
-  They are full of vitamins and minerals, and our bodies prefer food to vitamin tablets as a way of getting the vitamins and minerals we need.
-  They provide fibre, which helps us to digest our food.
-  Fruit and vegetables are low in fat and calories so you can eat lots of these to fill you up, without putting on weight.
-  Eating more fruit and vegetables makes it less likely that you will suffer from heart disease or cancer in the future.



Give me 5!

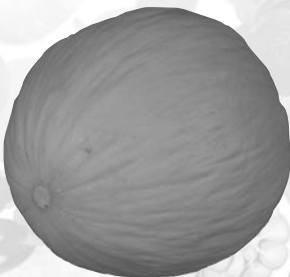
You may have heard that you should aim to 'eat 5 a day'. But what does that mean?

Try to have **5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day**, having as many different types as possible. That includes vegetables in a cooked dish, such as a curry or pizza.

What is a portion?

Medium fruit, such as an apple, orange or banana	One fruit
Very large fruits such as melons and pineapples	One large slice
Small fruits such as plums, apricots, satsumas	Two fruits
Raspberries, strawberries, grapes	One cupful
Fresh fruit salad, stewed or canned fruit	Two or three tablespoons
Dried fruit	One tablespoon
Fruit juice	One small glass (150mls)
Vegetables, raw, cooked, frozen or canned	Two tablespoons
Salad	One full dessertbowl

Count up how many portions you are having now, try to eat one more tomorrow, and build up gradually until you are having 5 a day.





"Fruit Chat" (Chat Pati Chat)

by **Nighat Zaidi**

- 1 medium size orange, segmented
- 1 medium size apple, peeled and diced
- 1 medium size, banana peeled and sliced
- 10 small grapes, cut into halves
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tea spoon sugar
- Optional $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon chat masala or black pepper (ground).

Mix all the fruit in a bowl add lemon juice, chat masala and sugar and give it a good stir. Chat Pati Chat is ready to eat!

"Magic Touch"

by **Nighat Zaidi**

Do you know you can grow your own fresh coriander on your windowsill? Just throw a handful of dried coriander seeds either in your garden in late spring or summer, or in a pot with some soil or compost. Keep it moist for a week and between 8-14 days, you will see little coriander leaves appearing. Some people lightly crush the seeds first.

and try these...



Create colourful fruit and vegetable kebabs to cook under the grill or on a barbecue.



Grate or chop vegetables to add to shepherd's pie, lasagne, pasta sauce or casseroles.



Add extra vegetables and pineapple to pizza.



Remember baked beans count as a vegetable and can be added to other dishes. Try them with curry powder.



Pancakes filled with fruit such as raspberries or stewed apple make a delicious pudding with ice cream or fromage frais.





Balsall Heath Jungle aims to help create a sustainable neighbourhood in B12 - a neighbourhood that we can enjoy today without destroying our future. Its aims include:



Promoting health

Raising awareness of environmental issues

Creating ecological gardens

Protecting trees in public places

Actively inviting all sections of Balsall Heath society to take part

Our main activity for 2001 is to help our members grow fruit in their own gardens without using chemicals. We also want to find out who is already growing fruit & veg in the area and form a network of mutual support. In the future we hope to establish a community orchard.

Membership is open to people who live in Balsall Heath and sympathise with our aims. If you want to become a member please 'phone **446 4798** and leave your name, address and phone number, or e-mail all@jnjl.org.uk. The subscription for twelve months is £1. We will keep you in touch with our activities and you will have the opportunity to buy fruit trees or bushes at wholesale prices and get free advice on how to grow them.

Volunteers: gardening or office work

If you want to get excellent work experience at the same time as helping to turn our vision into a reality, apply now! In some cases we can arrange specialist training for our volunteers. **We especially need speakers of Asian languages and Arabic.**

**Balsall Heath Jungle, The Annexe,
100 Mary Street, B12 9JU.**

www.jnjl.org.uk





Supported by

Food Net (NHS)

**Millennium Festival
Awards for All**

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