

“Growing in Confidence”
The Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim
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Organic Centre – provides training on horticulture and sustainable living.
The “Growing in Confidence” programme is funded by the Health Promotion Department in HSE West and Department of Agriculture, Food & Fisheries.

Purpose: Active involvement to change patterns of food intake through a holistic approach.

6 Gardening projects in a variety of settings in 3 counties suffering from sustained population decline are currently supported. Participants are targeted for those living on a tight budget and are recruited through community and statutory contacts.

A professional gardener is employed by Organic Centre to deliver training. The gardening project is supported by cooking classes. The aims of the project are linked to the recommendations of the Obesity Report, Cardiovascular Strategy and the National Health Strategy. The gardens provide opportunities for physical activity outdoors and for positive social interaction and development. Growing in groups and working together through peer support and informal learning provides emotional and mental benefits.

Context:

Poor diet is responsible for 30% of life years lost in early death and disability (WHO,2002)
300,000 suffering from diabetes in Ireland.

Development of How-To-Guide (available online).

Presentation 2: Building Peace through Our Shared Environment

Gardening project bringing people from Catholic and Protestant communities together, funded by EU, Border Action Peace II and HSE.

Schools project – sow seeds, harvest and cook.

Publicity around the project has led to local community rediscovering the area. Bags of produce sold to locals and profits donated to local special needs centre. Promotes sustainable local economies. Gardens provide a space where people can come together without labels.

Discussion:

1. Barriers:
 - access to land
 - lack of value on green lands/communal space
 - Gardener – must have the ability to work with different groups, needs to be a mentor as well as an educator.
 - security of site (vandalism)

2. Possible Solutions:

- Community Ownership – security less likely to be an issue.
- Be innovative/creative when looking for garden space, e.g. back gardens, raised beds, roof gardens
- Tidy Town Councils – expand to include healthy towns with best productive gardens
- Schools – link to education curriculum
- Develop a student volunteer placement programme with a horticultural college
- Mainstream Growing in Confidence project