DIG FOR VICTORY!

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www.wearemud.org
@mud_cic
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We are Manchester Urban Diggers (MUD), we are passionate about digging and growing to revitalise our communities within Greater Manchester through sustainable food production. We’re really proud of the work we have done and we’re excited to share our successes so far.

Come on a journey with us to learn about our projects, impact and what we hope to do in the next few years and beyond…!

“Volunteering with MUD has been one of the best decisions I have ever made and has dramatically altered my lifestyle and given me a lot of joy back in life.” - Mary

“MUD provides not only skill sharing and the opportunity to learn but also a strong emphasis on community. Also the freedom to try new projects regardless of previous skill.” - Andrea

“I think Platt Fields Market Garden is absolutely unbelievable, since lockdown they’ve got 600% more volunteers and the garden has just flourished in every single way… they’re just doing such amazing things… if only you could just bottle that up and throw it out to different spaces - it just works so well.” – Sam Buckley
Who are MUD?

We are a not-for-profit social enterprise dedicated to changing our food system. We are urban community market gardeners based in Greater Manchester making spaces for people to grow food. We provide a network of hyper local, organically grown fresh produce to the local communities. We also offer the space to the local community to host workshops, events, volunteer sessions, social prescribing sessions. One of our goals as a Community Interest Company (CIC) is to become a sustainable business that can provide free services to those who need them most.

We’re always looking for ways to build our network, create more market gardens and partnerships. If you would like to find out more about opportunities to collaborate and volunteer with us, please contact the Diggers below.

Mike
Hi I’m Mike, my background is in community gardening, youth work and graphic design so I take the lead on our branding and marketing, volunteer coordination and help with project management, garden design, growing and general infrastructure development.

Jo
Hello, I’m Jo and my background is in horticulture, hospitality, environmental activism and sustainable agriculture so I take the lead on project design and management, growing, workshop delivery, events and community outreach.

Sam
Hey I’m Sam, I have a background in horticulture, environmentalism, physics and systems design. I take the lead on our Veg Box Scheme, financial management, infrastructure development, backend systems design and help with growing and project management.
Platt Fields Market Garden (PFMG) is the home of MUD! It was our first garden and is currently our largest. PFMG is a community market garden and part of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) network. As a CSA member, we offer a Veg Box Subscription service as well as sell produce, supply local restaurants and develop our own fruit, herb and vegetable based products. Overall PFMG has:

- 50+ vegetable varieties
- over 1400 visitors a day over the weekend
- 1500 veg boxes sold per year
- 360 volunteers
- 0 waste

The skills and knowledge base that we have gained through our volunteers has been fundamental to our progress and continued impact across Greater Manchester. We have various volunteering opportunities at MUD. We cater for all ages and abilities across our projects and are happy accepting volunteers who would just like to help out as a one off or become a regular.

PFMG is our flagship project and something that all associated Diggers are keen to develop, make sustainable and replicate across other sites in Manchester and beyond, continuing to strengthen our network of sustainable food production. We’re building a community at MUD and want you to be a part of it!!

Volunteering for MUD has helped me to be passionate about something that is really, really good for you and has absolutely no negative effects... apart from maybe money spent on compost! - Ffion

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Volunteer Stories

Ffi

MUD has inspired me to take over a small area in a shared garden and I made a bench... I've grown veg before but this time I'm trying to plant a lot more bee friendly stuff. I suppose MUD inspired me as they have bees in PFMG, so I decided to make a little bee haven. I think they've got me more into gardening... they are hoarders like me and make everything out of what they've got – they upcycle. I enjoy showing off my garden now, I'm always trying to get people to come round and sit by my fire ... and that's what MUD is trying to achieve as well... The market garden is my kindred spirit because it's similar to mine, when I'm there I think, ah I wish I could share this with my mum and dad – I know they'd love it... Even though it's not my garden, I feel like I'm a big part of it.

Nicola

I never fail to be amazed when I walk or run past PFMG - visually it’s beautiful but it’s also much more than that. It’s such a great space for people and families and communities that wouldn’t necessarily have access to green space and an allotment... MUD definitely has changed my life, in a very positive way. It’s connected me more with Manchester, beyond my professional network, and I’ve met some people I ordinarily might not have met, and made some good friends... It’s made me absolutely appreciative of open spaces and being outside and the importance of having access to that, so I really value the experience. I really look forward to my Mondays there and come home really happy. It’s been great for confidence and self-esteem, and has been a bit of a rock during a very strange year.

Alison

MUD have got a very strong community support element to them. Especially for young people who are now working so long on screens or at home, MUD offers an opportunity to get out and relax and be with people. I've volunteered at PFMG since May 2020, it's an opportunity to do something quite physical, which is rewarding in itself and I enjoy chatting with people and working with young people. Being a volunteer and getting the veg boxes has made me more creative with what I cook – it's all about how you can be more creative with 3 parsnips and carrot...
The Landing is our first roof-top growing project developed on an unused car park in Stockport in collaboration with Where The Light Gets In (WTLGI), a local Michelin star restaurant and supported by Stockport Council.

For WTLGI owner Sam Buckley, ”The Landing tells the story of who we are, what we do, and the things we value the most... For me it’s about having a business with low and positive impact on our immediate environment and the people we interact with”.

“MUD’s ethos and philosophy behind what they’re doing is the most valuable thing that we get from our partnership, you know when I see all the volunteers there, people from all ages and all walks of life, it’s just really lovely, it just makes sense – it’s about protecting that idea and strengthening it.”

Together we grow all kinds of vegetables and herbs which feed into the restaurant’s seasonal menu. Attracting wide media coverage including BBC radio food programme, this project also helps increase local biodiversity by growing pollination plants for attracting bees and butterflies as well as providing habitats for urban birds.
Why we do what we do...

In recent years, urban farming projects have blossomed all around the world. In the face of climate change, increasing population growth and urbanisation, urban farming projects are more and more important to help improve the food supply chain, mitigate the impact of global food production, and reduce food waste.

Here’s are some of the ways that we are benefiting the environment...

Enhancing ecosystems – our community gardens improve water and air quality, provide habitat for wildlife, our bees improve pollination success.

Improving municipal waste management - Organic waste is collected and put to good use across our projects and helps lessen the cities ecological footprint.

Using green spaces – we have transformed brownfield sites and underutilised green spaces across Manchester into spaces that generate local food.

We have been certified with ZERO WASTE to landfill this year.
Social Benefits of Community Gardens

MUD has become an important presence within the local community. It enables a sense of community that a lot of our volunteers, collaborators and visitors alike all agree on. This is reflected in our previous questionnaires.

Other benefits include:

• Urban gardening helps to address social and health inequalities by improving access to fruit and vegetables.

• Volunteers who participate in our gardening activities say they feel part of the community and more empowered to develop new relationships and connections to nature.

• Having access to a community gardening has a clear impact on the social inclusion for people visiting and using them.

• People’s wellbeing, confidence, self-esteem, mental health and quality of life has improved as a result of their involvement in our community garden.

86% of users feel more connected to their local community since joining the veg box scheme within PFMG

“MUD has provided a safe, friendly and stabilising environment for me”

100% of participants believe their mental well-being has improved as a result of volunteering with MUD

Survey completed in Dec 2020 with 50 respondents
Our Vision For the Future

Building on the success of Platt Fields Market Garden, we want to work with different partners including local communities, parks, individuals, and businesses to create a network of place-based community gardening and food growing projects across Greater Manchester. Just as our food requires soil, air, sun, and water, our future success also relies on four elements including place, plant, people, and planet.

**Place** - We focus on developing place-based community gardening and food growing systems. It first and foremost requires a space to dig. Therefore, we would like to work with partners who have direct access to land or can facilitate the acquisition of land.

**Plant** - Growing plants is at the heart of our projects. It not only provides food to feed the local community but also supports the surrounding biodiversity. Digging and planting are the key methods for us to engage with place, people, and planet.

**People** - We work with over 300 volunteers across our project sites and are looking for support from people who enjoy locally grown vegetables and fruits are wanting to improve their well-being and engage with the local community. We also accept and receive donations; these have included groundworks, donations of materials and tools and money. Eventually, we want MUD to fully support itself.

**Planet** - We care about the planet we all share with a focus on building sustainable food systems. We are always looking for donations to help sustain and improve our projects, at the same time reusing and recycling. We welcome kitchen waste to feed our compost, unwanted seeds and plants, cuttings from your garden or tools you no longer use...
Get involved and keep up to date with activities...

www.wearemud.org
Volunteer
Projects

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