

CASE STUDY: FLINTSHARE

A HORTICULTURAL CSA IN RURAL WALES



Established: 2010

Type: Community-led

Legal Structure: Asset locked Ltd Co

Paid staff: 0

Trainees: 0

Volunteers: 3 FTE

Produce: Vegetables, fruit, honey

Members: 106 members

Member radius: 30 miles

Shares: Produce exchanged year-round with members for cash or labour

Buy in to supplement produce: No

CSA turnover: £4,600

Land: Total of 1 hectare cultivated on three sites; one with a free annual lease, one with a letter of consent and one owned by a college with a Memorandum of Understanding

Infrastructure: Six large tunnels, two shipping containers, six sheds, a greenhouse, field scale and raised beds, established and new orchards

Approach: No-dig

And... they are one of the few entirely voluntary CSAs

The seed...

Nikki Giles lamented the lack of locally grown, organic veg and had learnt about the CSA model while training as an organic horticulturist. She won the contract from a local rural regeneration agency specifically to start a CSA and given just four months of funding to do it. This paid for her salary, flyers and public meetings. These meetings supplied the ideas, the core group, the land and some further donated funding. The range of skills attracted to the initial core group was pivotal to the future resilience of FlintShare; they met weekly and the meetings were euphoric, great fun and involved a lot of cake.



Grew...

Taking on three sites at once was a challenge but also provided a wide choice of opportunities to pioneer members: wilderness at Cilcain, under cover at Northop or a more manageable site at Hawarden. It was decided early on to charge a modest membership fee and introduce the VegAccount allowing members to pay for produce with either labour or cash. This proved very popular and membership quickly grew. A grower was employed 18 months in but a year later FlintShare reverted to a volunteer only model. FlintShare strives to develop volunteer skills and has facilitated career moves through this.

And...

FlintShare now manages tunnels, orchards, field fruit and veg, raised bed areas, bee hives, willow beds, new coppice, and have access to a conifer plantation. The VegAccount model is regularly reviewed and based on trust with members able to crop when and where they want. Management is by a core group. The pandemic highlighted the absolute resilience of the model. FlintShare are now creating better disabled access and building a covered space for social gatherings. FlintShare continues to attract (and keep) members, and is proving a very successful model for this rural area.

Photo credits: Flintshare

