



Spending time on an allotment can be a great way of getting back to Mother Nature

Going back to our roots

THE British have had a love affair with allotments for centuries. Originally designed as a functional food source during both world wars where families would gather, the stereotypical view of allotments has since evolved into the archetypal 'external man cave' - a place to create, tend, think and ponder.

The British obsession with allotments is still alive and thriving, with 90,000 people on waiting lists (Source: MailOnline, 2017) and a staggering 330,000 current plots in existence, nation-wide (Source: National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners).

In the West Country alone, there are over 50 allotment associations and also, perhaps, there has been a reinvention of the concept of allotments, brought to the fore by The Eden Project.

With the advent of literally "going back to our roots", a more responsible trend towards food sources and lifestyle, allotments are back in vogue, as a way for families to re-connect - teaching children about growing organic produce, how to respect the land and to better understand where our food comes from.

Respecting and understanding the

Perhaps we should be switching off our smart phones and spending more time, outdoors, with our feet in the soil...

land is never a bad thing, particularly for children and young adults. With the advent of technology and social media madness, we spend more time worrying about charging our mobile phones than charging our soul. We look down into our phones for external affirmation rather than working on ourselves from the inside out and working on 'soul food'. Leading naturopaths recommend walking on soil and grass as a way of neutralising negative and electrical energies, as well as additional benefits of letting our feet heal and breathe. This technique isn't new - it even reached Hollywood in the film *Pretty Woman*, where Julia Roberts gets Richard Gere to take off his shoes and socks to appreciate walking on grass in the park and "re-connect with self".

Growing our own fruit and vegetables in an allotment or even within a dedicated space on a patio or garden can really change an individual's relationship with food and taste. There is no

doubt that organic or home-grown really does taste better, a bit like fresh farm eggs versus what you see on a supermarket shelf.

Times are a-changing. After years of abusing our planet, many are finally taking a refreshed stance towards Mother Nature and food.

Plastic is a key issue making people think about what and how they eat. With additional pressure on farmers (and Brexit looming), we need to consider how we grow fresh produce, both now and in the future.

In New York, beekeeping and allotments are in abundance on roofs and inner-city areas, to help educate, feed and keep the food chain moving. As urbanisation creates less space and more sold-off land, communities will need to become more creative.

In Asia and Latin America, wall gardens are in abundance - a theme that will literally grow over time. So this National Allotment Day, don't just

chuckle at a seemingly British eccentricity - actually consider the power and importance of allotments as a national treasure to evolve and nurture for the future of our planet.

If you need some advice on how you can 'dig for victory' - or at least dig your own crops - then come along to the Achieve weekend which this year takes place at The Passenger Shed, Bristol on October 13 and October 14.

There will be an array of experts at the event, offering their help and guidance, including *Masterchef's* Greg Wallace as well as *Love Your Garden's* David Domoney.

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