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I have an allotment in Yorkshire in the North of England. I try to grow as many different fruits and vegetables that i can. I suppose this is based on the philosophy 'A little of what you fancy does you good'. Allotments are small plots of land [300 square yards], which you rent from the local council. [Local Government] The cost of this years rent is approximately £60. This my fifteenth year on this site.

Upon the allotment is a shed, a greenhouse and a covered composting area. The reason the composting area is covered is primarily for water collection. I try to collect as much rainwater as i can. The allotments do have a water supply but you have to walk 50 yards to the tap. I also have a small frog pond made out of a recycled magnolia coloured corner bath, that someone had kindly dumped at the side of the road.

The soil on the allotment is really good, i now have about 18" of topsoil. You could describe it as a moist silty loam. The only drawback with the soil is that the subsoil is riddled with horsetail weed, which is nearly impossible to eradicate. It is something you just have to live with, or you go elsewhere.

I use the deep bed system, some people call it the raised bed system. The beds are never ever walked upon. All access accross the beds is via timber planks. [Old scaffolding boards] The full growing area is divided into 4 feet wide beds with 18 inch paths between. Some of the beds are edged with timber but most are not. I have come to the conclusion over time, that where aesthetics are not a factor, then timber edging or any edging to the beds is an unnecessary cost.

I dig the beds each winter, primarily to remove as much horsetail root as i can, but also to add as much compost as i can, and as deep as i can. Apart from the addition of compost, lime and homemade comfrey liquid i use no other fertiliser. I do add stable manure to the compost when it is available. To aid digging i cover the beds with plastic sheeting to keep off the rain and snow. I have been out digging on a sunny day when there is 3 inches of snow on the ground. Some people think i'm nuts.

I am an avid recycler. An allotment has the advantage that it does not need to be too neat and tidy, unlike your own garden, so it lends itself to the re-use of things that could be described as tatty rubbish. Bottle cloches are one of my favourites.

I have trained apple and pear trees along the fences around the allotment. My latest tree is an apricot, which has its first flowers on it this year. I also grow rhubarb, raspberries, blackcurrants and gooseberries.

Last year i grew sweet potatoes in the greenhouse as well as tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers. I must point

out that the sweet potatoes were only as big as your thumb, but the leaves were great.

Like many on this site I am addicted to improving the soil. Deep compost rich soil holds moisture which minimises the need for watering. I try to only water when new transplants are put out, and at the end when things are trying to fill out. I have found that compost rich soils also reduce insect infestation.

Image (optional):

