

# Hope allotments blog – January 2021

December continued wet and cold with early January days hovering around freezing. There were a couple of nice afternoons when the sun had raised the temperature and we managed to build our wheelchair access path which has raised beds on either side and an archway made out of an old poly tunnel frame painted green.

We are going to use it to grow climbers like Kiwi and passion fruit and the beds will be used for herbs and fruit bushes. There is a variety of honeysuckle (*Lonicera Caerulea*) which produces edible fruit which is rich in vitamin C known as honeyberry and we are going to give it a try.



Honeyberry - picture courtesy of Beechwood nurseries

Not much is growing at the moment. It is a time of dormancy for most plants as the winter temperature and lack of light prevents photosynthesis from occurring at anything but the most basic level. We still have plants like kale and leeks to provide some fresh vegetables and even some of our lettuces are gamely carrying on regardless of the frost.



COVID 19 has once again got us all locked down so we have lost our helpers from MENCAP who were doing a placement with us. Hopefully we will get them back in February or March when teaching establishments are allowed to re-open. It would be a real shame if they can't come back as we have enjoyed having them here on the allotments, helping us preparing the soil for planting whilst learning about horticulture.

Looking forward to February. February is the month to get the beds prepared for sowing in March. You can risk sowing some early parsnips although they may or may not come up but apart from Jerusalem artichokes there aren't many vegetables which can be planted so early. Jerusalem artichokes aren't actually artichokes but a variety of sunflower. The story goes that the name Jerusalem came from a corruption of girasole which is the Italian name for sunflowers although where the artichoke bit came from I have no idea.

Finally,

Question: What do you call a man with a spade on his head?

Answer: Doug

Have a happy gardening month and see you in February.

**Joe - the Hope gardener**