

## Re-use in action - The Polytunnel

Peter Clarke's ingenious sourcing of re-used materials to build a polytunnel is literally bearing fruit for him and his family in Glassonby. Like a large greenhouse, a polytunnel makes it easier to grow a wide range of veg, protected from the elements. This is his inspiring story of multiple re-use of materials that formerly had other purposes or were scrap.

Always on the look out for useful items, Peter saw a few metres of blue mains water pipe on offer on the local Freegle re-use internet group, "left over from the construction of a polytunnel". Being a resourceful gardener keen on living sustainably, Peter decided he could build one as well, finding a website that showed how it could be done.

In fact there was more than enough pipe to form the structural hoops that support the polytunnel's polythene skin. The pipes fit over six foot sections of scaffolding pipes hammered vertically into the ground. A builder had cut standard scaffold pipes to fit a project site and scrapped them afterwards. Peter bought these cheaply from the scrap merchant, still strong and perfectly good for this job.

Peter continues the story, "In the spring I cut up and removed a large pile of timber from a pole barn in the village that had been taken down because the poles were decaying. This wood was destined for our log burning boiler but some lengths of 6" x 2" boards proved ideal to put round the base to fix the polythene to." The boards ended up on the inside to protect the bottom of the polythene from errant garden forks and also hold up a bank in one corner.

Within the polytunnel, the veg beds are contained by yet another re-used material, slabs of wood that were offcuts from the local saw mill, from larch trees being sawn into board, gate posts and similar. The mill sells this for very little in three-quarter tonne bales as firewood, but each bale contains lots of usable planks so long as you don't mind one side being curved. The beds contain sand and gravel dug locally and Peter's own compost made from autumn leaves, vegetable waste and grass cuttings. The path is a membrane covered with bark from the slab wood which falls off as you cut it up.

The only new items were the cover, some timber for the end frames and some screws. The 8' x 15' polytunnel is now full of peppers, aubergines, tomatoes and salads. There is still some blue pipe left over, but not enough for another polytunnel...

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. This project is a good example of Re-use. The Penrith and Eden Freegle re-use group can be found at [www.ilovefreegle.org](http://www.ilovefreegle.org). The full story with links is available on the PACT web site, [www.penrithact.org.uk](http://www.penrithact.org.uk)

