



## THE A - Z TO HAPPY VOLUNTEERS

Tips from Incredible Edible groups to help you gather crowds of contented helpers!

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The Incredible Edible Network



## Attract a rainbow of volunteers

When you publicise your group, make sure you consider the huge range of experiences you will need. Of course, you'll need growers but what about a fundraisers, educators, & blooming good cooks to bring in the crowds?

*"A great group needs to be like a good compost, so as with having equal measures of Green and Brown waste, your group needs a good balance of growers and non-growers"*

## Be prepared

As with growing, being prepared to engage in volunteers from the off.

If you want a group of more than one, you'll need to work with others, if you don't want to be the organiser then make it a priority to find someone who does.

### Contact details

Capture every spark of interest in a contacts book & follow them up...

**Desires** - Appeal to people's desires! People can be altruistic but may also have other reasons to volunteer - socializing, new skills, health etc.

Find out, and once you have some ideas, use it in your promotional language so a 'weeding' session = a 'meet the neighbour' session.

*"We found that once we combined the growing with the using of food, we got a few more people interested. We also looked at the benefits and sold these to the community - health, environmental, social, physical and emotional, financial - something for everyone but not forgetting fun."*

*Declan Donnelly, Incredible Edible Cloughmills, NI*

## Existing groups

Tap into existing groups who are looking for community-based activities to fulfil their own aims eg the Scouts, Army or Navy cadets, University of the Third Age, the WI, the Rotary, the British Lions etc

*"If you have trouble getting volunteers go and ask groups that are already set up. I've had help from Dunstable Council, The Perfume Shop, The Fire Service, Dunstable Council, Central Bedfordshire Highways and their contractor Amey. I've even had seven army cadets singing in Rugby Club our Christmas jingle video!"*

*Sahira Ward, Incredible Edible Dunstable*

## Food

*"Food is a great glue, to eat together is primitive, intimate, tribal. To share food is fun, and meaningful. We eat after our community meeting & in thick snow and bitter winds folk have turned up"* Mary Clear, Incredible Edible Todmorden

## Go public

Be seen doing Incredible stuff. Perhaps join the local market, tidy High Street plots on a busy day, take part in the School fete.

*"Whenever, I am tidying a high street plot someone comes up and asks me what I am up to. We've had lots of interest that way,"* Helen Yates, Incredible Edible Wilmslow

## Hot off the press

Resource-starved local newspapers, snap up community stories particularly those with a great picture so keep sending them press releases and whenever you do, put a call out for new helpers.

## Individuality

You may have an idea of what you want but often people are modest and can keep their skills under their hat.

You may find you have some excellent cake makers. This might not be on your to do list, but be flexible, grab the opportunity to do a baking fundraiser. It will give these people the chance to show off their skills and boost the group's coffers.

Guide by Tanya Wall

[www.incredibleediblenetwork.org.uk](http://www.incredibleediblenetwork.org.uk)

*“Folk like to play to their strengths, when we found we had a poet amongst us, we needed vegetable poetry. When we found a painter, we needed new banners, if someone can knit then we must need a tea cosy or two. Get my drift?”*

*Mary Clear, Incredible Edible Todmorden*

## Just do it!

Even a pair can be incredible, if there are only a few of you, start small and get going.

*“We recruit by 'doing', getting the thing going and waiting for people to ask questions, maybe because they are nosey or interested, either way you have them on the line!”*

*Declan Donnelly, Incredible Edible Cloughmills NI*

## Keep them in the loop

*It's a no-brainer that people need to know your plans to take part. Key is an up-to-date mailing list or sending newsletters, Facebook groups*

## Look for the ripe fruit

Target those who'd be drawn to your group eg retirees or mums with pre-schoolers as they may be looking for a purposeful pastime. Know your community so if you've students think how to target them – flash seed mobs? or if there are lots of families, plant with the local playgroups.

## Mojo

People like plants come in all different varieties – prickly, sensitive, etc so if you are head-butting a brick wall, take a break. Get back to what you enjoy, regain your Incredible mojo and once reenergized give it another whirl.



## Nerds need looking after

*“Cherish the person who looks after your website and your e-mail list. They are absolutely key to your communications with the volunteers. You will need to remind them about regular work parties and also about short notice call outs.” Jenny, IE Todmorden*

## Ownership

Many group leads struggle with the thought of overwhelming folk and delegation. But by asking people what they want to do it is easier to delegate responsibility. Support them but let them own their own part of the Incredible vision – Let go!

## Quick off the mark

Your first burst onto the community scene, is one of the best times to get new recruits, so don't waste it. Get them signed up and get the hard work done while enthusiasm is hot.

## Plot promotion

Your veggie patches are windows to the world, so use them to tell folk how they can become involved eg Meet here Sunday ☺

## Routine

Regular activities mean people have a clear idea of where, when and what is going on. If it is too ad hoc, they could feel at your beck and call.

## Serious stuff

Sometimes even Incredibles need formal arrangements such as licences & receipts. It may seem like overload but will save misunderstandings later. If you need any help with these please contact the IE Network.

**Thank you goes a long way**

## Understanding

Lay out your expectations from the start and you are less likely to be disappointed.

## Volunteer?

Most folk want to have a say too. They are giving up their precious time, treat them as participants not someone volunteering to your own cause.

## Xylophone of course!

Music like food can work wonders. Switch the radio on, ask who can play an instrument or sing....

## You're a volunteer too.

Take stock every now and again. This isn't a job, there are no deadlines or benchmarks. You're doing fab!

**Zip it!** Meetings are necessary sometimes but try to keep them short, sweet and relevant.

**For more info visit:  
[incredibleediblenetwork.org.uk](http://incredibleediblenetwork.org.uk)**