



HOW TO HOST A FARM VISIT ON YOUR MARKET GARDEN

WHY SHOULD I HOST A FARM VISIT?

Seeing is believing! The experience of seeing a productive and beautiful market garden, hearing directly from those who work there, tasting its produce, seeing volunteers enjoying working together, witnessing the wildlife and getting your hands in the soil is far more powerful than any written document in changing peoples' hearts and minds.

Many people (politicians included) have little or no idea about what happens on a market garden and are not aware that commercial operations exist at a small scale.

If you are confident that your market garden would give a good impression of the productivity, wildlife, soil health, financial viability and training and volunteering opportunities offered by organic and agroecological market gardens, then you are in a strong position to host a farm visit!

WHO SHOULD I INVITE?

Anyone who is in a position to shape policy and influence change!

This might be your existing MP/MSP/MS/MLA or the prospective parliamentary candidate (i.e. those who are standing for election), or a local authority representative (e.g. a District, Borough or County Councillor). It is also worth inviting civil servants, either at national level or local level - such as local authority planning officers, environmental policy officers or economic development officers.

There are also benefits to inviting local press and media, and local civil society groups (e.g. village societies, youth groups or Women's Institutes) on farm tours to demonstrate what you do. Who knows - you might even gain a few more customers!

HOSTING A FARM VISIT: STEP-BY-STEP

Before the visit

Think about the **key positive messages** you want your visit to convey. Keep it simple, and **identify 2-3 central points** - e.g. market gardens are productive, they are wildlife friendly and they offer rewarding employment and training opportunities.

What are the **key barriers** that prevent you from doing what you want to do, or prevent others from doing what you do - e.g. access to capital for investing in infrastructure and equipment, or planning permission.

Identify **who could influence policy to overcome these barriers** - are these local issues (e.g. planning related) or do you want to persuade your MP/ MSP/ MS/ MLA to influence national policy?

DON'T FORGET!

Make it clear when inviting people what they can expect and if you are going to offer refreshment.

Encourage visitors to wear suitable clothing and consider what you will do in the event of wet, cold or hot weather.

Consider what questions they might ask, and prepare some answers (e.g. yield, profit and loss figures).

During the visit

Plan a route which ensures that you show visitors everything you want them to see (micro management pays off!) and make sure to have a **clear itinerary**. It's a good idea to allocate someone to be timekeeper to keep you to schedule as it's easy to get behind when you get caught up in conversation!



After the visit

Follow up with an email, reiterating the key points, and including links to any reports and publications you want to highlight.

TOP TIPS

- Choose a time of year when your market garden is looking beautiful and productive.
- Tidy up before the visit. It is fine for people to see a working market garden, but try to see it through a stranger's eyes and imagine what they might see as messy clutter.
- Identify workers or volunteers who might be willing to speak with the visitors, and brief them beforehand. While spontaneity is to be encouraged, think about the points that it might be powerful for them to make.
- Create an opportunity for visitors to sit down with workers and chat over tea or lunch.
- Familiarise yourself with the **Horticulture Across Four Nations Briefing Pack**.
- Ensure you have enough copies of relevant LWA booklets and reports (e.g. **LWA Manifesto for Food, Farming and Forestry**, **A Market Garden Renaissance**, **Horticulture Across Four Nations** (Ha4N) or the relevant Ha4N pamphlets for devolved nations. For hard copies of these publications please email rebecca.laughton@landworkersalliance.org.uk.

PRESS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

It's always a good idea to use your farm visit as a publicity opportunity to amplify the messages you're trying to convey, or to raise awareness about some of the issues or barriers your market garden is facing.

Here are some things you could consider doing:

- **Invite local press** to come on the farm visit (you can find a template press invite on the LWA Campaign Toolkit). You could also contact your MPs press office and enquire about doing a joint press release.
- It's always worth sending a follow-up press release after the farm visit, attaching any high quality photos that you took.
- **Take photos** of things like abundant poly tunnels, fields full of veg, colourful plates of food, MPs talking to workers (and a big cheery group photo of course!) and **post to social media**.

FUN IDEAS



Why not offer your visitors some lunch or snacks made from your own produce, such as a seasonal vegetable soup or beetroot brownies.

Or you could invite visitors to pick some produce themselves or offer a selection of fresh produce for them to take home.

You could also make a photographic display of your market garden at different times of year, hosting events, or attending farmers markets.

DON'T FORGET!

Portrait orientation photos are best for posting on social media, whereas landscape orientation photos are better for sending to the press. ✓

Tag your MP in any social media posts and ask them to re-share. ✓

Don't forget to tag the LWA @landworkersalliance (Instagram) / @LandworkersUK (X) ✓