

# PHOTOVOICE IN THE GARDEN

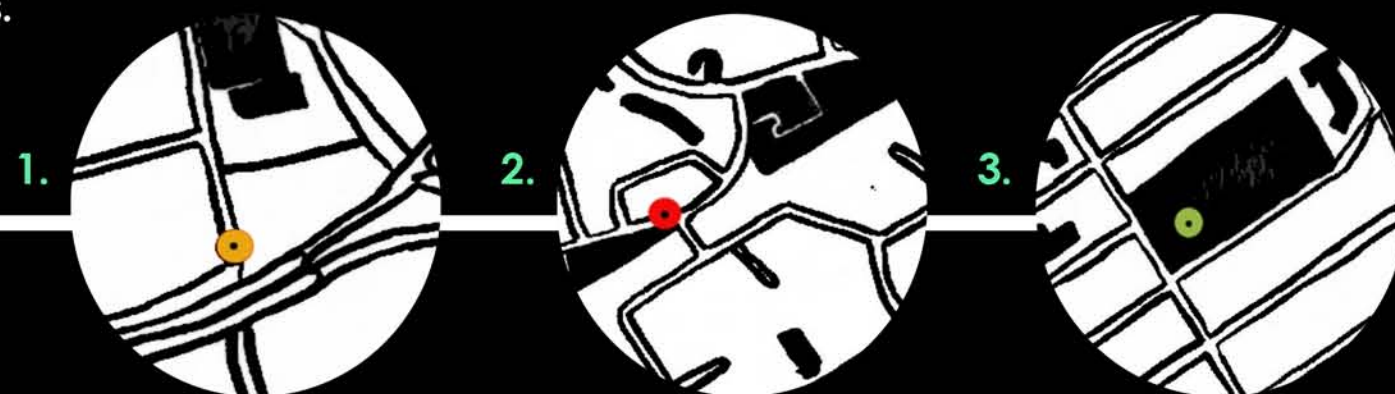


**WHAT:** Photovoice is a way to share lived experiences through images. It is a participatory action research and evaluation method developed to engage people who do not usually have a say in the decisions that affect their daily lives, as a way for them to deepen their understanding of an issue. It is also a way to share their story with others, individuals and groups, who might not normally hear them.

**WHO:** 12 community gardeners participated from three gardens across Halifax: the Multicultural Garden, Glen Forest Garden and Mosaic Garden. All of these gardeners are newcomers to Canada, coming from Bhutan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and Afghanistan.

**PROCESS:** We gave each participant a camera for the duration of the project. They took pictures that answered the question: What does your garden mean to you? In a series of 4 sessions each person shared the story of their photo with the group and listened to the stories of others.

Google map sketches of participating gardens, 1. Multicultural, 2. Glen Forest, and 3. Mosaic:



## WHAT DOES YOUR GARDEN MEAN TO YOU?



**FAMILY, HOME & CULTURE:** Many gardeners talked about feeling a connection to home, childhood memories and family members who are far away. Connected to this was the idea that the gardens are a way of teaching children about foods from the country of origin, about how food is grown and to pass on aspects of culture and identity that are important.

**STRESS RELIEF & HEALTH:** Stories were told about how gardening is calming and people feel happy when in the garden. It helps to worry less about family members who are not here in Canada. It feels good to be active in the garden and to eat the healthy food from the garden.

**SHARING & LEARNING:** Participants in the project talked about their experiences in the gardens with each other: some learning how to grow food, and others sharing their farming knowledge. There were also lots of funny stories about practicing English, making friends, as well as sharing seeds, plants and vegetables.

This project is a collaboration between the **Our Food Project of the Ecology Action Centre (EAC)** and **Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)**. Many thanks to the interpreters who supported this process: Sushila Banksota, Douce Chamukenge, Sabina Kasheke, Paresh Lacoul, Adalbert Museme, and Shanaz Sobhani.



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**SAVING MONEY:** Many participants mentioned that they save money by growing food, by not buying it at the grocery store, and through saving seeds and preserving.

"FOR \$6 I WAS ABLE TO EAT GREENS FROM MY GARDEN FOR 2 MONTHS!"

**PRIDE:** A feeling of pride was present throughout the process. Everyone expressed feeling proud of their gardens, and the food cooked with the harvest. The plots were much smaller than the fields many had farmed before coming to Canada; some people talked about the feeling of pride coming as a surprise even to themselves. The words "we are farmers" and "this is what we do", came up over and over. For those who were not farmers, the feeling of pride came from having grown something despite being new to gardening in Canada. It seemed like as the roots of the plants went down, people felt more and more of a sense of belonging; as though the plants were telling people they can find a place here.



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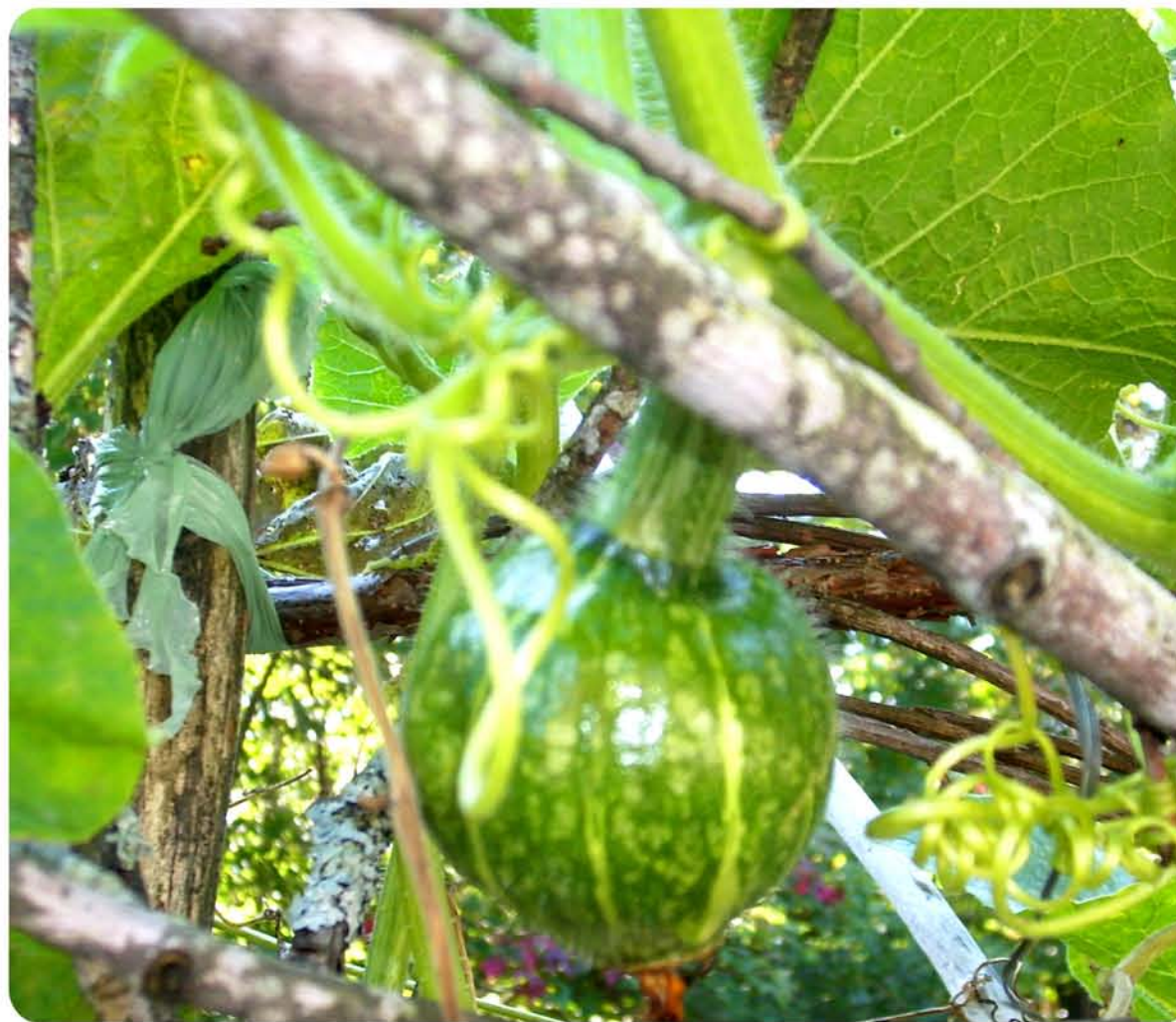
CHHALI MAYA BHANDARI

COUNTRY:

BHUTAN/NEPAL

GARDEN:

MOAIC



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“THIS IS A PUMPKIN THAT I GREW IN MY GARDEN, IT IS A SIMILAR VARIETY AS FROM BHUTAN. I USE THE TENDER SHOOTS OF THE PUMPKIN TO COOK WITH. I ENJOY GOING TO MY GARDEN, IT REMINDS ME OF MY CHILDHOOD BACK IN BHUTAN AND MY FAMILY. MY PARENTS AND SIBLINGS ARE NOT WITH ME IN CANADA.”

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“THIS IS THE DWARF VARIETY OF CHILIES THAT I AM FAMILIAR WITH. ALTHOUGH IT IS HOT, IT DOESN'T HARM THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM. SINCE A LONGTIME I WAS TOLD THAT IT WAS GOOD FOR PEOPLE WHO LIKE HOT FOOD, WHO SUFFER FROM GASTRICS (ACID REFLUX). DURING MY FIRST TWO YEARS IN CANADA WE DIDN'T HAVE A GARDEN, WHEN WE GOT THE GARDEN, I WANTED TO PLANT THINGS THAT WERE FAMILIAR TO ME. SO I PLANTED THIS ONE. IT'S BEAUTIFUL, IT'S ALL GREEN.”

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NAME:  
DHAN MAYA CHHETRI

COUNTRY:  
BHUTAN/NEPAL

GARDEN:  
MOAIC



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“MY FAMILY IS SPREAD ALL OVER THE WORLD. MOST OF THE TIME WHEN I STAY ALONE AT HOME I WORRY ABOUT THEM AND I GET DISTRACTED. AFTER I GOT THIS GARDEN, I STARTED TO PLANT THOSE CROPS THAT I KNOW FROM MY CHILDHOOD. THIS HELPED ME NOT TO WORRY. I GO TO THE GARDEN, WATER THE PLANTS AND TALK WITH MY FRIENDS FROM THE COMMUNITY. IT IS VERY RELAXING.”

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“THIS IS MY GARDEN AT MOAIC CHURCH. THE FRONT PART ARE PUMPKINS AND BEHIND IS MUSTARD. I CHOPPED OFF THE TOP OF THE MUSTARD TO SAVE THE SEEDS FOR NEXT YEAR. THE GARDEN HAS RELAXED ME MANY TIMES, SO I WANT TO KEEP THIS MEMORY OF THE TIME I SPENT IN THE SUMMER. IT REMINDED ME OF MY PAST IN NEPAL, SO THAT’S WHY I HAVE THE NEPAL FLAG.”

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NAME:

HOPE AWORI KABIONA

COUNTRY:

UGANDA/DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

GARDEN:

MOAIC



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“WE EAT THIS EVERY MORNING FOR BREAKFAST. WE STEAM IT, WHEN IT’S CRUNCHY WE EAT IT WITH BREAD AND TEA. WE GET HEALTHY FOOD FROM THE GARDEN. BECAUSE WE ARE HERE IN THE WORLD WHERE THERE IS SO MUCH MEAT AND CREAM, WHEN WE GET THIS ONE, IT IS HEALTHY. THERE ARE BEAUTIFUL COLOURS. THE MORE YOU EAT BEAUTIFUL COLOURS, THE MORE YOU ARE HEALTHY.”

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“THAT’S MY BABY ENJOYING THE PUMPKIN SEEDS. THIS WAS THE BIGGEST PUMPKIN FROM MY GARDEN. I HAVEN’T HAD PUMPKIN LEAVES SINCE I LEFT UGANDA ONE YEAR AGO. IT IS A DELICACY IN MY HOME. WHEN I WOULD GO DOWN TO MY GARDEN, PICK THE PUMPKIN LEAVES AND COOK IT FOR MY FAMILY, IT FELT SO GOOD BECAUSE I CAN NOT FIND IT AT THE STORE.”

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NAME:

JANUKA BHANDARI

COUNTRY:

BHUTAN/NEPAL

GARDEN:

GLEN FOREST



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“THIS REMINDS ME OF PLAYING WITH MY BROTHERS IN THE BEAN FIELDS IN BHUTAN. WE WERE TOLD SINCE CHILDHOOD THAT BEANS ARE NUTRITIOUS AND GOOD FOR HEALTH.”

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“I LOVE HOT FOOD, SO THAT’S THE REASON I GOT THESE RED CHILIES AT HOME. WE HAVE A SPECIAL DISH DACHI, THIS IS A POPULAR DISH IN BHUTAN. WE MAKE IT WITH A LITTLE BIT OF BUTTER AND SPICES AND CHILIES AND YOGURT AND SALT. WHEN MY HUSBAND BROUGHT THESE BACK FROM THE VALLEY, I MADE DACHI MYSELF.”

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NAME:

JUDITH MAWAZO

COUNTRY:

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF  
THE CONGO/BURUNDI

GARDEN:

GLEN FOREST



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"THIS PICTURE IS FROM THE GARDEN. I WAS HAPPY THAT I COULD HARVEST THE LITTLE VEGETABLES AND EAT THEM WITH MY FAMILY. YOU PLANT THE SEEDS, THEY GROW, YOU HARVEST THEM, PREPARE THEM AND SHARE THEM WITH YOUR FAMILY. IT'S SOMETHING THAT HELPS. YOU GET HEALTHY FOOD FROM THE GARDEN, HEALTHY FOOD FOR MY FAMILY."

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"I WAS VERY HAPPY TO GO AND GET SOME VEGETABLES FROM MY GARDEN. IT WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL WHEN IT WAS GROWING. THIS LITTLE GARDEN (FIELD) WAS VERY EXCITING TO ME! NEXT YEAR I WOULD LIKE YOU TO GIVE ME A BIGGER ONE! IT MADE ME VERY HAPPY."

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NAME:

KHARGA BAHADUR RAI

COUNTRY:

BHUTAN/NEPAL

GARDEN:

MOAIC



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“WE CAN GROW OUR FAVORITE ORGANIC VEGETABLES THAT ARE GOOD FOR HEALTH AND HELP SAVE SOME MONEY AS WELL. IN ADDITION, IT HELPS US TO REMAIN ACTIVE WHEN WE DO SOMETHING IN THE GARDEN EVERYDAY. WHEN I MISS MY BROTHERS AND SISTER, I FEEL LONELINESS, SO I GO TO GARDEN AND ENJOY GARDENING.”

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“FOR ME, A GARDEN MAKES ME STRESSED FREE WHEN I ENJOY GARDENING. IN ADDITION, IT CREATES A GREEN ENVIRONMENT AND LOOKS BEAUTIFUL. FURTHERMORE, IT RECALLS BACK MY CHILDHOOD WHEN I USED TO HELP MY PARENTS GROW CROPS IN BHUTAN.”

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NAME:

MENSO KIPILI

COUNTRY:

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF  
THE CONGO/ZAMBIA

GARDEN:

GLEN FOREST



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“THOSE ARE THE THREE ITEMS I PREPARED. I EAT UGALI WITH FISH, PUMPKIN LEAVES, AND TOMATOES MIXED WITH PEPPERS AND ONIONS. UGALI IS A STAPLE FOOD. THE PUMPKIN LEAVES ARE FROM THE GARDEN. GARDENING IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME, BECAUSE FOOD FROM THE GARDEN IS VERY HEALTHY AND TASTY. IF YOU DON’T HAVE MONEY YOU CAN TAKE THE VEGETABLES FROM THE GARDEN AND FEED YOUR FAMILY. GOOD FOOD, HEALTHY FOOD COMES FROM THE GARDEN!! NOT THE ONE’S THAT HAVE BEEN IN THE FREEZER FOR A LONG TIME, IT DOESN’T TASTE THE SAME.”

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“I GROW TOMATOES AND KALE IN MY GARDEN. IT MAKES ME VERY HAPPY. IT HELPS FINANCIALLY, IF YOU DON’T HAVE A LOT OF MONEY YOU GO AND GET VEGETABLES FROM THE GARDEN AND EAT. IT’S NUTRITIOUS, IT NOURISHES OUR BODY AND GIVES US ENERGY.”

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NAME:

MONICA MUSASA

COUNTRY:

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF  
THE CONGO/ZAMBIA

GARDEN:

MOZAIC



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“I EAT FOOD LIKE POTATOES, GREEN PEAS, CABBAGE, CARROTS, AND CHICKEN. THERE IS EVEN SHIMA/UGALI. THIS IS THE THING WHICH I EAT. I HAVE CARROT, PUMPKIN AND PUMPKIN LEAVES IN MY GARDEN. MY GARDEN IS IMPORTANT TO ME BECAUSE I LIKE THE PUMPKIN LEAVES.”

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“TO HAVE A GARDEN HERE IS A VERY GOOD THING FOR ME. IT IS GOOD TO GROW THE PUMPKIN LEAVES THAT I CAN'T BUY AT SOBEY'S. I KEEP SOME PUMPKIN SEEDS NICELY TO GROW NEXT SUMMER AGAIN. MY DAUGHTER WILL GROW UP HERE AND HAVING SOMETHING SHE USED TO EAT IN AFRICA IS IMPORTANT TO ME. I CANNOT STOP EATING WHAT I GREW UP EATING.”

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NAME:

FAWZIA MOHAMMADI

COUNTRY:

AFGHANISTAN

GARDEN:

MULTICULTURAL



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“I CAN PLANT MINT IN MY GARDEN. IT GROWS ALL YEAR AROUND, EVERY WEEK I HARVEST IT. I DRY IT AND USE IT FRESH IN MANY DISHES.”

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“FOR ME THIS IS LIFE, BECAUSE IT IS FRESH. IT’S THE SAME AS BEING ALIVE. THIS MINT NEEDS THE WATER, AIR AND SUN. AS A PERSON WE GROW UP EVERY DAY, JUST AS A VEGETABLE GROWS EVERY DAY.”

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NAME:

TABU KAPITA

COUNTRY:

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF  
THE CONGO/ZAMBIA

GARDEN:

GLEN FOREST



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“IN THE CONGO KALE AND PUMPKIN LEAVES ARE FAVORITE VEGETABLES, THE STAPLE IN MANY RECIPES. HERE, KALE IS EXPENSIVE. GROWING THESE IN MY GARDEN MEANS I CAN USE MY MONEY FOR OTHER THINGS.”

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“THIS PICTURE IS OF MY GARDEN. I WANTED TO BRING THIS SO THAT YOU COULD SEE ALL OF MY HARD WORK, AND THE END PRODUCT OF MY WORK. NOW I’M UPSET THAT I’M BACK TO BUYING GROCERIES WHICH ARE EXPENSIVE. I WISH THAT IT COULD GO THE WHOLE YEAR. IF I COULD GET A BIGGER GARDEN, I CAN GROW MORE VEGETABLES AND FREEZE THEM, SO THAT I CAN USE THEM WHEN THE GARDEN IS FINISHED. THE GARDEN IS VERY IMPORTANT TO US, BECAUSE OUR CHILDREN ARE USED TO THESE KINDS OF VEGETABLES.”

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NAME:  
TEJ BAHADUR CHAUHAN

COUNTRY:  
BHUTAN/NEPAL

GARDEN:  
GLEN FOREST

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“WHEN I SEE THE TOMATO PLANT,  
IT MAKES ME HAPPY. I CAN USE THE  
TOMATOES FOR MANY THINGS. I  
CAN MAKE SAUCE AND PICKLES  
THAT LAST FOR A LONG TIME, AND I  
CAN PUT IT IN MY CURRY.”

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“I CAN GROW THINGS THAT  
AREN'T AVAILABLE IN ANY  
MARKET IN MY GARDEN. WE  
BUY MUSTARD SEEDS HERE AND  
GROW THEM IN MY GARDEN,  
THE SAME AS FROM NEPAL.”

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NAME:

SOM MAYA RAI

COUNTRY:

BHUTAN/NEPAL

GARDEN:

MULTICULTURAL



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“IN MY HOME COUNTRY, NEPAL, WE HAD A LOT OF LAND AND GREW A LOT OF THINGS. HERE WE DON’T HAVE A LOT OF LAND, BUT WE HAVE A SMALL GARDEN AND IT MAKES US VERY HAPPY. IT REMINDS US OF HOME.”

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“I GROW SPINACH IN MY GARDEN. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR HEALTH (SKIN AND BONE) AND IT HAS LOTS OF PROTEIN, VITAMINS AND MINERALS. IT PROTECTS FROM DIABETES AND LOWERS THE RISK OF CANCER.”

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# DREAMS & OPPORTUNITIES



**We want more land to grow food:** the garden plots are great and more of our friends and neighbours see the food we get from them and want a plot themselves. We could grow more with more land and bigger plots.

**We want ways to grow food more months of the year:** we would use season extension infrastructure like cold frames and greenhouses to grow more food more of the year.

**We want to work as farmers:** we come from farming backgrounds and want to work as farmers and more broadly in the agriculture sector.

**We want more access to traditional foods and seeds:** we like to grow and cook with what we know from our country-of-origin. We know how to use those plants the best and they remind us of home.

**We want to have the same garden plot each year:** if we knew we had the same plot every year then we could invest more in the plots, building structures and planting things overwinter like garlic.



# THE GROUP EXPERIENCE



**We learned food skills:** we learned about other countries, about gardening and cooking in other places, as well as about new plants (and new parts of plants) to grow and eat.

**We had a good time together:** we had fun together.

"I AM SO HAPPY TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS, TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE AND HAVE SOMETHING TO DO."

**We made friends:** we made new friends from other countries that we will see in our gardens.

"GARDENING BROUGHT US CLOSER TOGETHER!"

**We learned language:** we practiced English and learned words from other languages.

"I LEARNED NEW WORDS LIKE NAMASTE."

**We shared food:** we enjoyed sharing local seasonal food each week and having a potluck together at the end to make all the food we had talked about and shown photos of.