

Tombreck Market Garden

Newsletter #8 September 2023

The weather madness continued in what was a remarkably wet September. We got 5cm followed by 6.8cm in our rain gauge on the worst pair of days, and at time of writing this might be exceeded by storm Babet. Tombreck burn was quite a sight – and sound! - to behold roaring down the mountain and we could see numerous channels on the other side of the loch in similar condition. Thankfully the drainage work undertaken in April seems to have done its job, and there were only a few spots of standing water. The worst that happened was a small stream running down through the polytunnel and puddling in the bottom corners where it couldn't get past the plastic. Hopefully we've averted this problem in future by digging a french drain on the uphill side of the polytunnel to intercept and divert the water flow. Done simplest (as is always our preference!) this involves digging a flat-bottomed trench angled downhill at a steady gradient then filled up with stones, though it's more effective & long-lasting with a perforated pipe at the bottom and a liner around the stones. Generally we feel lucky that the soils here have an impressive capacity for absorbing water and diverting it to a few main channels with minimal surface run-off or loss of topsoil. Our thoughts are with the farmers who have suffered severe losses from the flooding in lower lying areas.



The main focus on the market garden has been preparing the polytunnel for the overwintering salad crops. This has been an especially time-consuming task as there was a lot of couch grass in the part of the field where we decided to site the tunnel. This grows from a network of underground rhizomes, and new plants can grow from even small segments of root left in the ground so you have to go through the whole area with a digging fork and carefully lift out as much as you can. And then repeat for all the bits you missed. A big investment in time and effort, but once it's done it shouldn't need doing again. We've also had to put down potato traps to entice the wireworms away from the salad seedlings. These are usually a problem for a few years when you first cultivate on pasture or grassland, and they can kill small plants by munching through the roots and stems. We had a few losses, but they seem to like the potatoes more, so a daily inspection and killing spree (not for the squeamish!) is gradually lowering the population.



Otherwise, the new veg box scheme has got off to a reasonable start, and it has been good to have big harvest days on Wednesdays & Thursdays and to see all our hard work come together and go off to local customers. There is a new delivery hub in Kenmore in addition to the ones in Killin, Aberfeldy, Camserney and Tombreck itself. We could definitely be supplying more than the current eight-or-so boxes per week, so please spread the word! <https://tombreckmarketgarden.co.uk>