

# Tombreck Market Garden

Newsletter #12 February 2024

Nothing hugely exciting to report for February. It's still cold and wet, limiting what we can do outside, but nice as ever to see the first new signs of life coming through - snowdrops, crocuses and the first wild garlic. We planted eight apple trees in the awkward wedge-shaped area next to the polytunnel and supplemented them with a patch of rhubarb. After the willow hedge planting in January we decided to put in a small plantation of the especially vigorous 'viminalis' variety in a boggy corner of the field. Once it's established it will provide a regular supply of either woodchip, poles (as long as they're not in contact with the soil, so they don't take root) or even just firewood.



There have been ongoing problems with damp and mould in the polytunnel, leading to poor growth and losses in the overwintering salad crops. The french drain we put in on the uphill side worked up to a point (see September's newsletter), but really the need was for more ventilation. So one project for this winter was to replace the four polythene-covered sections next to the sliding doors with mesh panels to allow for a constant circulation of air. We put the top panels on central bolts so they can be swivelled open to allow even more airflow when temperatures get up in the summer. The plastic from the original panels was saved and rolled up on a piece of wood at the top so it can be rolled down for really frosty nights. The next step will be to put the lower doors on hinges so that they can be opened without covering the new panels and defeating the objective of installing them.



At the start of the month we had our one year anniversary of arriving here at Tombreck. It's been a pretty full-on experience for both of us but has been satisfying to see it all come together, though things always seem to take longer than you expect... Concerns remain about the financial viability of the project, especially when considering the unravelling of the wider economy which we're tied to whether we like it or not. However I think we've at least proved that it's possible to grow a wide variety of crops in this challenging environment and, more broadly, that there could be a greater diversity of land use and habitation in the Highlands, given the will and opportunity. So that's something, I suppose. Thanks again to those who have supported us in making it happen - onwards!

<https://www.tombreckmarketgarden.co.uk/>