

Bristol & Bath Organic Growers' Group (BABOG)

Local group case study



Background

- ◆ Farm walks & conversational networking/ learning in the apprenticeship scheme
- ◆ TOGs inspiration
- ◆ Surprising lack of competition/hostility between members; genuine comradeship & openness
- ◆ Beneficial for new growers to tap into knowledge from more experienced growers



Potted history of BABOG

- ◆ 3 founder members for preliminary meeting early November 2010 in pub
- ◆ First proper meeting Saturday 15th Jan included farm walk, general discussion and pub
- ◆ Number of interested growers now 7+, not all certified organic, but follow principles
- ◆ Primarily based around Bristol and Bath, but open to the whole area – anyone willing to come to the meetings can join
- ◆ Informal structure: almost no admin, volunteer host for meetings, postings & reminders
- ◆ No fees – no treasurer or accountancy

Why set up a local group?

- ◆ Share & gain information, growing tips, experience & knowledge
- ◆ Meet other growers in your area – it can be a lonely life!
- ◆ Forge new sales outlets, customers and growing opportunities
- ◆ Split bulk buys between members so reducing seed/packaging bills etc
- ◆ Borrow/share equipment or buy large pieces between members
- ◆ Swap produce – especially useful for box schemes and market stalls
- ◆ Influence wider organic policies & attitudes

Getting started

- ◆ At least two enthusiastic growers
- ◆ Pick a convenient location for first meeting (farm/garden/café/pub) & time – and stick to it!
- ◆ Tell everyone about it: OGA forum, certification notice boards, The Organic Grower magazine, CSA networks, local papers, neighbours, market stall leaflets, friends of friends...
- ◆ Very simple agenda – what will the growing group be/do?
- ◆ Rough minutes/bullet points for absent interested growers (and next meeting reminders)

The first meeting

- ◆ Group name & main objectives
- ◆ Membership eligibility – location, only certified organic, any charges to join?
- ◆ Structure – formal or informal?
- ◆ Blue skies benefits & schemes
- ◆ Attracting/informing new members
- ◆ Next meeting
- ◆ Contact details
- ◆ Action points & minutes
- ◆ Designated nag/prodder
- ◆ Reminders out for next meeting

Local groups & the market

- ◆ Immediate practical economic benefits: bulk buying, swapping equipment, recommendations, reassurance
- ◆ Collate produce from smaller growers for a group market stall/approach to offices/events
- ◆ Investigate parish charters to check for provision for roadside produce stalls
- ◆ Possibility of wholesaling to other members
- ◆ Recommending other members to customers when not in competition
- ◆ Possibility of web/wider presence

Future plans

- ◆ Next meeting at Arcadia Organics in March
- ◆ Develop buying groups, more farm walks & social events
- ◆ Share marketing info, resources & tools
- ◆ Joint BABOG market stall
- ◆ Our own pages on the OGA website
- ◆ More growers take on apprentices

