

# The potential for growing exotic crops in the UK



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Garden Organic

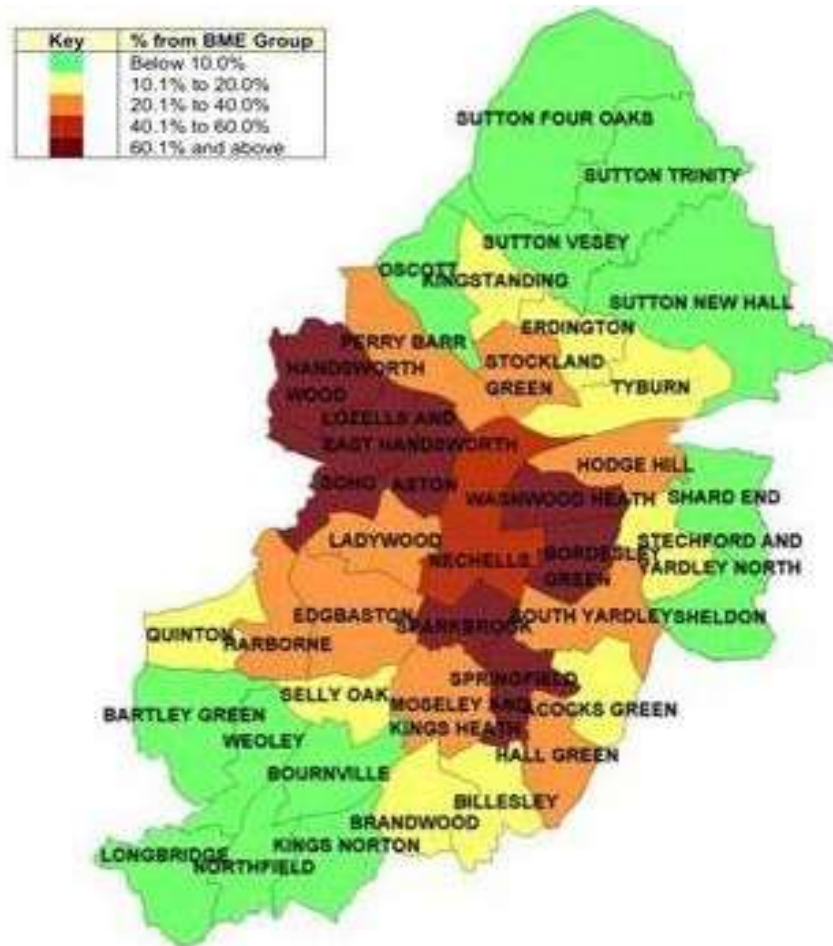


- Why grow exotic crops?
- What we are doing (and why we are doing it)
- What sort of crops could be grown?

# Why grow exotic crops?

- Total of 12% of UK population classed as ethnic minority (2007)
- Predicted to grow to 20% by 2051 (University of Leeds)

# Largest population of ethnic minorities in London, but West Midlands has next highest



Ethnic Groups in Birmingham

# Why grow exotic crops?

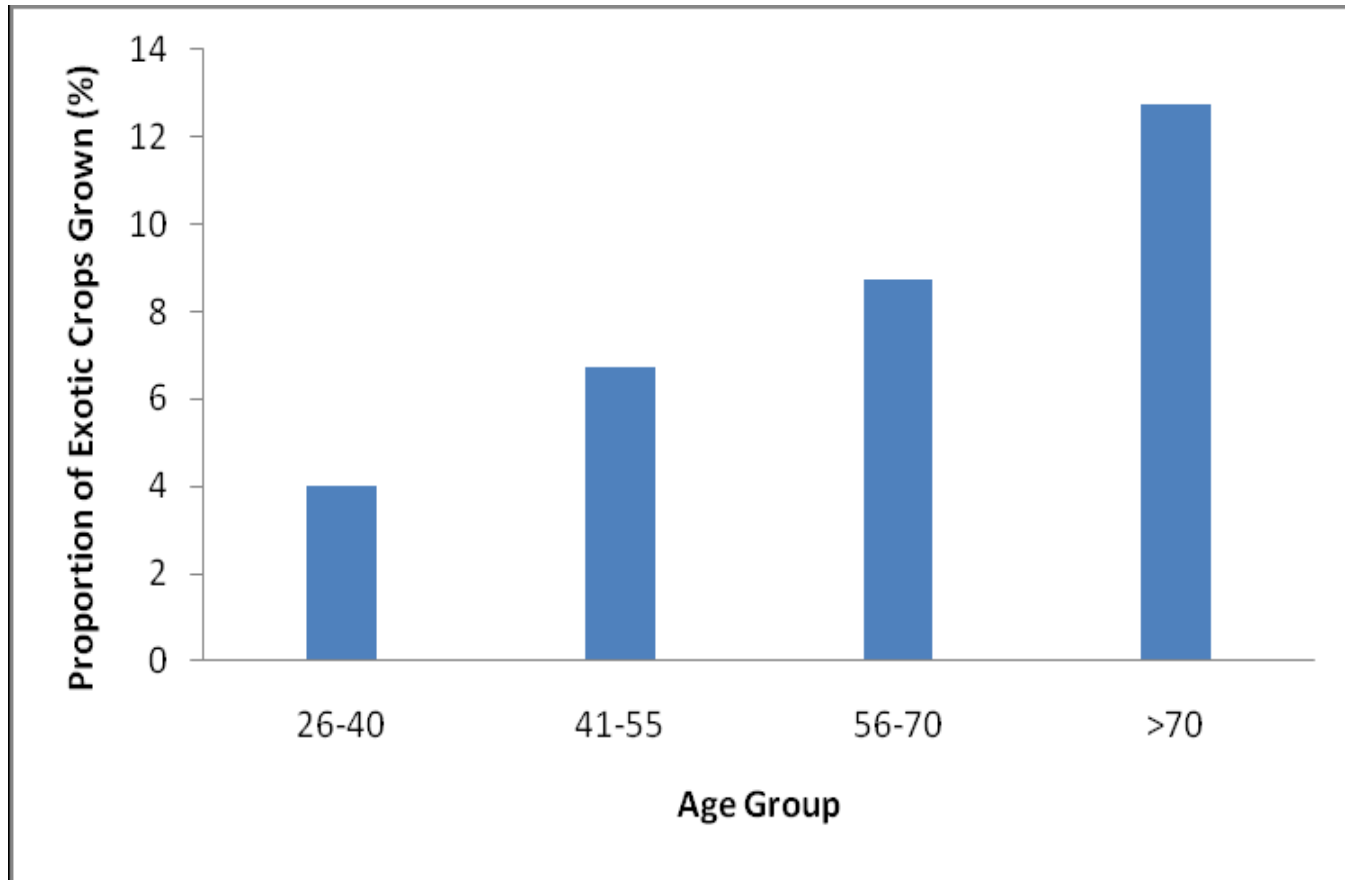
- With foreign travel and cookery programmes people exposed to a wider range of food cultures
- Survey carried out (Harper Adams, 2006) showed that in West Midlands only 8% of growers targeting crops to Asian market, 9% to Chinese and <3% to Afro Caribbean

# What are we doing (and why)?



- Why?
  - Recognised that there was a valuable resource of knowledge and seeds held within ethnic communities that could be lost

# Age of people growing exotics



Samantha Dobbie, MRes thesis, University of Birmingham



# How well adapted are the home saved varieties?





# What are we doing?

- Survey of growers to find what is being grown and how they are growing it
- Collecting seed material from communities
- Testing material we have collected (and commercial varieties too)
- Adding best varieties to our Heritage Seed Library to preserve and make more widely available
- Making information available through factsheets and dissemination events

# What crops could be grown?



Dudi



Calaloo (Amaranth)



Yard long beans



Chick peas

# Calaloo (*Amaranthus* spp.)

- Eaten like spinach
- Very easy to grow outside
- Wide range of types eaten by Caribbeans, Indians and Bangladeshis
- Can be sown directly or transplanted (after risk of frost)
- Can be cut continually throughout the growing season to stop it running to seed



# Dudi (*Lagenaria siceraria*)

- Type of gourd, eaten by Asian community
- Grows prolifically outside
- Generally grown with support



# Chick Peas

- Used fresh as a delicacy by Asian communities
- Can be sown outside from April onwards
- Grows prolifically and competitive against weeds





# Yard long beans (*Vigna sesquipedalis*)

- Need to be grown in a tunnel or glasshouse
- Treat like runner beans
- Need to be harvested 2 – 3 times a week as short shelf life)





# Other possibilities

- Karella (bitter melon)
- Papri (lablab beans)
- Shark fin melons
- Fenugreek
- Mouse melons
- Sweet potatoes
- White maize

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