

CAMBRIDGE ORGANIC GAZETTE

# courgette



The Sweetpea path to  
organic certification  
meet our newest local grower

Making Cambridge greener

Half price box for them & for you

Celebrating summer produce

## Comment from Duncan

Founder and owner of Cambridge Organic

**There's plenty to get excited about over the coming months, both on the field and off the field.**



Let's start with 'on the field'... We are on the cusp of the most abundant time of year produce wise, and we can look forward to those months when loads will be in season locally and being a member of your local box scheme really comes into its own. But what makes this summer especially exciting is that we will be putting produce from Sweetpea Market Garden into our boxes for the first time. Adrienne has just completed her conversion to certified organic status, and we can't wait to see what she has in store for us.

The really exciting news off the field is that we have recently been selected as one of four Food Hubs in the UK that will be participating in a major new research and development project looking at ways of making sure that more locally and sustainably produced food is able to make its way into schools, colleges, hospitals and other similar establishments. This is a massive feather in our cap and we're ever so honoured to have been asked. Addressing public procurement needs with local and sustainably produced food has long been

seen as a real game-changer in terms of transitioning to a more sustainable and healthy food system, but it is not an easy nut to crack.

Are you interested in seeing more local and sustainably produced food in our local schools, colleges and hospital? Would you like to support this project?

I'm sure many of our box scheme customers will have links with such establishments; maybe you work for one directly, or know someone who does? We'd love to hear from any people who work in catering management and who would like to engage with us for the pilot phase of this exciting project. If you can't support us in this way then know that by simply continuing as a member of our box scheme you are contributing massively towards this project; Cambridge Food Hub is self-funded, which essentially means it is funded by you, the members of our box scheme. Each and every delivery you have from us is contributing to positive change in our local food system.



CAMBRIDGE  
organic



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food hub



## Trees For Streets

**This is our campaign to plant more trees in Cambridge City**, spearheaded by our CEO Dean. We're passionate about trees for the benefits they bring; the power to cool our pavements during heatwaves, their ability to absorb nasty airborne pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> and the proven positive impact they have on our personal well-being.

All companies create CO<sub>2</sub> and we are no exception. To minimise this we operate a sustainable mix of operations, such as choosing electric vans, choosing local organic produce with low food miles, never buying air freighted produce etc. In addition we want to help offset our carbon footprint by planting trees directly back into the urban environments where we live.

- We are partnering with Trees For Streets, a national not-for-profit tree planting scheme that works with local councils. The trees are not only planted but also maintained for the first 3 years, maximising their chances of success.
- When planted the trees are already around 10 feet tall, so instant impact and strong roots.
- Each tree and its following maintenance has a cost of £200.
- We will be raising money up until November, for the planting season that runs December through to March. We hope to raise enough to plant 10 trees.
- The location for the trees is still undecided. We have the opportunity to request where they are located, or the scheme will choose for us. We will run a poll to decide this later in the year.
- **To donate you can add a one-off or regular donation to your veg box. Just choose 'Donate to Trees for Streets' under the 'add items to your order' menu online.**
- To be kept up to date we suggest joining our email list by emailing us at [hello@cambridgeorganic.co.uk](mailto:hello@cambridgeorganic.co.uk).



## Organic Certification

**Sweetpea is a 3-acre market garden near Caxton that has recently attained organic certification from the Soil Association. It's exciting to have a new local supplier; we expect to see their salad greens, spinach, and micro greens in boxes this summer.**

Adrienne is the force behind Sweetpea. Her passion for being in community spaces around food; where food is grown, cooked, and shared, was solidified during a cycling tour of New Zealand. Volunteering on organic farms and undertaking a traineeship on a small market garden led her to the realisation that, if done properly, you could feasibly make a living through growing.

“

It's about bringing people with me in this love of growing and sharing food, and doing it in a way that's good for the planet and good for wildlife. ”

In early 2020 Adrienne was working at Barcombe Nurseries in Sussex. Feeling motivated to move closer to home, she posted on an online notice board at the Oxford Real Farming conference. She was broadly looking for work or land in East Anglia, but through some serendipitous alignment she got one reply, from farmer Tom Pearson in Cambridgeshire, right near her hometown. Their attitudes and vision for regenerative farming were firmly written on the same page, and that's how Sweetpea began.



**Sweetpea became organically certified earlier this year. Certification involves a 2-year conversion process, plus increased labour, costs and administration throughout. What motivated Sweetpea to follow this path?**

### The Why

Adrienne fundamentally believes organic certification is essential to having recognisable standards and something people can trust in. It helps to retain the commitment to growing produce agro-ecologically; farming that works with nature. It is because these certification bodies exist that there has been so much research and development into organic growing. She, and other growers, have benefited from all the work that has been done by these organisations up to this point and will continue to benefit from them in the

future. The knowledge she has access to, the knowledge that's produced by people like the Soil Association, and the support for new entrants into the 'field' of organic growing, is indispensable.

The other reason is so she can sell to us! By being organically certified Sweetpea can scale up and sell to businesses that only sell organic food. The certification is a label of trust, meaning the customer, even if they don't know the farm personally, is safe in the knowledge that the produce they are buying and consuming has been grown and produced to high organic standards.

### The How

Adrienne explains that the additional costs and admin are potential barriers to certification, especially for smaller operations. During the initial 2-year conversion process you are paying a membership fee even though you are not making any additional income. For farms under 5 hectares this is currently £475 a year plus VAT. This fee continues throughout your certification.

There is a high level of ongoing record-keeping required. Starting from the seeds used, the where and when it was planted, the yield, and even where the

produce is sold. It means you need a complex system of documentation, which is a lot for a small operation to manage. Just because you can grow doesn't mean you have skills in Excel!

Certification requires a yearly inspection of both the administration records and the land. The use of organic seeds only is permitted (except in exceptional circumstances where you can rigorously prove a reason to use non-organic, such as the seeds are not commercially available). You must use approved compost and inputs and have the right approval for everything being used. If chemicals (that are allowed in organic systems) are necessary, you must

prove there is a strong need, only use them in limited amounts, and keep everything recorded. Luckily Sweetpea has not needed to do this so far.

Certification process can be challenging, with a steep learning curve, especially with

the administration. The templates available from certifiers are often geared to larger-scale operations. Adrienne has aspirations to work with the Soil Association to create documentation to support smaller growers, like herself, who are going through the process. Watch this space!

It's clear by Adrienne's knowledge, passion, and engagement with other local growers, community groups, and podcasts, that she is a dedicated and energetic young grower, who is helping to move our food system in the right direction. You can see her feature in the new British documentary film about British farmers 'Six Inches of Soil' (sixinchesofsoil.org).



## Sweetening up your veg box

There's been a mighty amount of product testing going on, as we look into new items to add to your grocery offerings. We look forward to new chocolate ranges from Seed & Bean and Benetto's and Equal Exchange teas, coffees and snacks.

First to make it to the online shop are these organic and vegan sweets from Biona. They contain only natural ingredients and "taste of real fruit!" says office champion Alice.

Fizzy Peaches....£2.50    Jelly Dinosaurs....£2.50    Sour Snakes....£2.50



## Summer Loving

**We get it; the summer season means trips away and growing your own. For us it means an abundance of local produce. We even run a 'surprise me' option from uber local, small scale growers. It's a great time to receive healthy and seasonal veg from us. We can be flexible too! We love our summer veg boxes and we are here to tell you why:**



SOOOO much is in season locally. With minimal food miles from growers in Reach, Audley End, Caxton, Abington and Lode (among others). If you grow your own why not opt for a Choice box for the summer so you can pick those items you aren't growing.



UK summer means fresh and local summer fruits!



We have a range of local and organic grocery items to add to your box, so you don't have to go out to shop for them. These are handpicked, ethical and low waste. Plus we are adding more exciting ranges this summer.

If you have lots of trips away booked (whoohoo!) and don't fancy faffing with the website - send us an email with your dates and we will sort it for you. That way you know, for the times you are home, you will have healthy, fresh and local produce being delivered to your door.



Help us pass on the love.... take a look at the back page and consider passing this on to someone just like you, who would benefit from a box over the summer.

If you are away all summer you can simply pause your account and set it to restart at a chosen future date. 🍌

# Half price box for them, Half price box for YOU!

Pass on this magazine...pass on the love

When you have finished with this magazine can you pass it on to a friend, neighbour or family member who lives in the area?

Through reading the COurgette they can get a true sense of who we are.

We are offering a special sign-up deal of 50% off their first box. and as the referrer you will also receive 50% off!



**New customers!**  
Use the code **MYFRIEND**  
when signing up to get  
**50% OFF** your first box.

Go to [cambridgeorganic.co.uk](http://cambridgeorganic.co.uk) and click on 'sign up' to get started. Or email [hello@cambridgeorganic.co.uk](mailto:hello@cambridgeorganic.co.uk)

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50% off applies to the veg-box only and not to any additional items added. Applies to any sized vegetable or fruit & vegetable box. For new customers the offer only applies to the 1st box. For the referrer, to receive the 50% discount ask the person you refer to give us your name and we will take half off the price of your next box. Valid until 01/09/2024