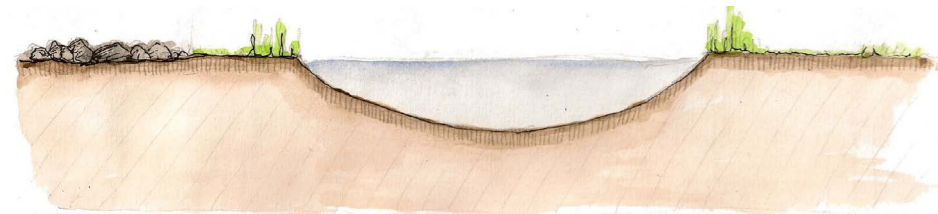
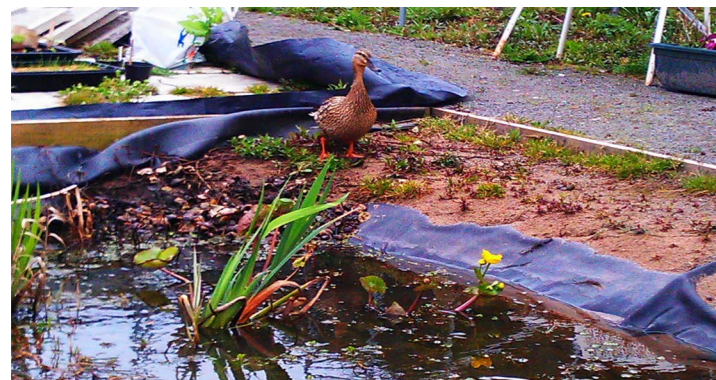


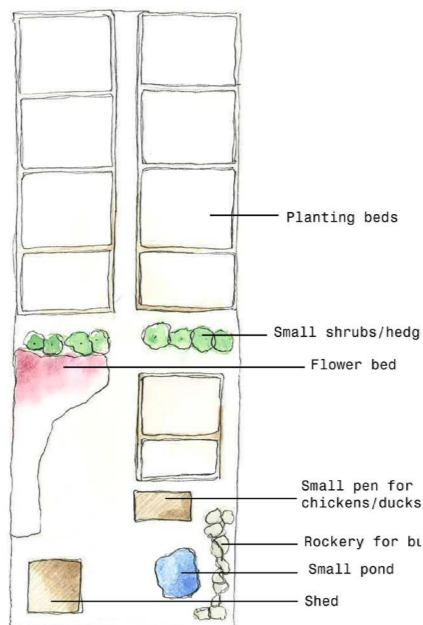
AGRICULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL LAND USE

The land at the Uplands Allotments is for both agricultural and recreational use. The plots are mainly used agriculturally for the production of crops. "Tenants must use Allotment Gardens for their own personal use", which is stated in the document of the Birmingham City Council Allotment Rules. The Uplands Allotments have been recognized and celebrated for their diverse range of crops grown. However, food isn't the only agricultural produce that can be generated from allotments.

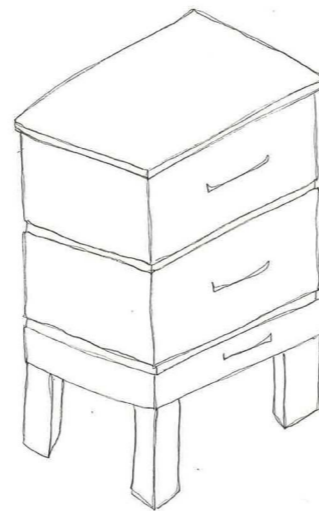
Can allotment users rear animals to produce food? "Animals or livestock (except hens or rabbits) must not be kept on site." Hens are allowed on plots if the husbandry conditions laid down by the City Council are obeyed. The hens can produce food such as eggs and meat. However, if chickens are permitted, then why not ducks? They benefit from a small pool of water yet they require exactly the same protection and maintenance as chickens. The introduction of a small pool can also increase the value of the ecology of the allotments.



Plan for ecological allotment



Example of standard beehive that can be used on site



The keeping of bees is also permitted if the proposal is agreed and also if the plot owner has public liability insurance and is a member of the National Bee Keepers Association. This will increase the agricultural produce of their allotment by allowing them to harvest the honey produced by the bees.



Another agricultural practice could be seen through growing cotton plant (Gossypium). Cotton needs a warm environment to grow in so would benefit from a built structure such as a greenhouse or poly-tunnel, both seen on site. As the selling of any produce does not comply with the allotment rules, the plot owner must be educated on how to manufacture from the primary stage of cotton found on the plants. If not, this could be an opportunity to learn and acquire new and valuable skills.

A more adventurous prospect could be to farm fish on the land. A small, protected pool could be built outdoors or in a structure, and would enable the production of healthy fish as food. This could also lead to an aquaponics system, which is designed to farm fish and plants together in a closed ecosystem using a minimum of water. "Fish waste provides the nitrates and phosphates for the plants to grow and the water is returned back to the fish tanks as part of a closed water system." "A community-led "fish allotment" scheme to farm fresh fish and vegetables in the city is being trialled in Bristol." (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-19499737>)

This proves the introduction of more advanced ecosystems and how beneficial they would be if implemented at Uplands.



The introduction of well looked after animals on the allotments would also increase the recreational use of the land. Caring and nurturing for animals is considered to enhance moods and decrease stress. Despite their additional responsibilities, they allow for a bond to be created through our need to provide for them.

There is also evidence of the allotments being used recreationally in other ways. From visitn this site we saw built structures, such as this timber deck



This shows an area to allow for relaxation and somewhere to enjoy the environment of the allotments.

"Working an allotment offers healthy physical recreation for all people... It is increasingly being recognized for its therapeutic value, to the extent that it is being prescribed as a treatment for stress by GPs in some areas." (www.wirralfedallotments.org.uk/allotments_and_government.html)

Why is this so? Owning an allotment and gardening creates the opportunity to enjoy quiet relaxation, a chance to escape pressures of modern life. It also creates a chance to be social and meet new people, and form a community spirit. It gives people the ability to learn a new skill, something which is self-fulfilling. A man who we met on the allotment site stated "how joyful it is to provide for yourself and for your family". (<http://urbanallotments.wordpress.com/>)

This also increases the psychological benefits of the allotments as it gives a huge sense of wellbeing and satisfaction in knowing you are providing a sustainable lifestyle for your family. Allotments are also used recreationally with people who suffer from mental health issues as "exercise and structure in their day encourages them to develop self confidence". (www.wirralfedallotments.org.uk/allotments_and_government.html)