

Ar Bruidair Autumn update

Ladies & Gents, we have received our first ever complaint about the blog. Well when I say complaint it was more of a disappointed observation about how little activity there has been on here recently.

But let it not be said that we don't listen... so here is the Ar Bruidair Autumn update.

The seasons are changing, we've gone from the – ha ha ha I was going to say summer, the couple of weeks of nice weather, to a bit of a nip in the air and the sobering fact that I've had to put the heating on while typing this update. Autumn and cold weather, wind and rain are always a bit sad so lets cheer ourselves up with the thought that Christmas in our new house is just around the corner and I have the joy of picking kittens out of the Christmas tree to look forward to!

So what has been happening since our last posts, well mostly eating.

One of the great pleasures to be had has been reaping the rewards of all of our hard work and eating lots of lovely veggies and salad as well obviously as looking at all the lovely flowers. So here are some little smiles we'd like to share.

1. Tomatoes.



We were giving them away we had so many.



We have three cherry tomato plants, two of which were giving us enough tomatoes on a daily basis for two lunches and two dinners. We ate an awful lot of a pasta dish called summer garden pasta which is basically spaghetti with lots of cherry tomatoes and lots and lots of garlic and some basil.

We also have two plum tomato plants which gave us enough for two big pots of pasta and meatball sauce and some Spanish chicken. Yum!

2. Pumpkins & Squash



The pumpkins and squashes were a bit of an experiment which we didn't expect to work. And excitedly they did.

We didn't get a lot, one or two from each plant, but given that we were told not to expect anything, I am really happy.

We did our lovely Baked Leeks and Pumpkin/Squash which you can get the recipe for on this blog.

It was so satisfying getting my little gardening knife out and cutting pumpkins from the plant. The only disappointment is that we didn't get more. I'm about to brew some pumpkin beer

and had to get pumpkin from a friend for it, I would have loved to make this using our own pumpkins.

3. Radishes

The radishes were the biggest event of the year I think.



Kate had never eaten radishes and was very dubious about it. They are now firmly one of her favourite veggies from the garden and we've just planted out third batch.

I just can't keep up with the demand, she eats them in salads, in sandwiches, in curries in stir fries.

4. Carrots and Beetroot



The carrots and beetroot were two of my favourites this year. I love beetroot and the biggest issue for me was leaving them long enough to get bigger, I just wanted to be picking and eating them RIGHT NOW! I liked them roasted and we even blogged a recipe.



We have discovered though, that later on in the year the carrots were ravaged by what I think might have been carrot fly and we ended up throwing the last 15 or so in the bin.

To make up for this, I have another couple of batches going in the greenhouse just now (both carrot fly resistant).

What we did do which went down an absolute storm with friends and family, was we had a barbeque as a birthday celebration at the end of July and as part of the feast, we made a salad with all our own produce and a potato salad with our own potatoes.

Wow, what a fabulous night. The food was great and so was the beer, well obviously as it was our home brewed beer.

So that leads us onto potatoes I suppose.

5. Potatoes

Would you believe we only ate the last of them last night?

Like the tomatoes, the beetroots and the carrots, our own potatoes tasted so amazing, better than anything we've bought from the shops. So good in fact that I've planted some more and we will be pulling them up on Christmas morning for our Christmas dinner.

Now I have obviously missed out some of the fabulous foods, like the herbs and the salad and the spring onions, but I can't finish up on veggies without mentioning our little blog celebrity, Colin.

The absolute star of our garden this year has to be the courgettes which we ate with almost every meal for months and then started leaving courgettes on other people's desks at work to try to use them up.



We only had two plants but the amount of courgettes we got from them was amazing.

So going forward, our plans and ideas... well just now we're

starting to think about what we want to be growing for next year as well as learning about what the different seasons mean for the garden.

We also have some ideas for making things even more pretty, so watch this space.

The tattie harvest

An other exciting day here at Ar Bruidair as we turn out the tattie bags and enjoy our harvest. (For our friends in other parts like [The Soulsby Farm](#). Tattie is what we call potato in Scotland. It comes from the gaelic buntata.)



We hadn't originally intended to plant tatties as we don't use them all that much, but our friend Luke gave us some of his chittings so we thought why not give it a go.

We planted up the Arran Victories which are a native Scottish variety and some Maris Pipers and wondered what would happen.

I should probably tell you about the fun of planting them... As I said, we hadn't intended to plant any tatties so we hadn't done any research. I stood in the garden for a good ten mins

trying to work out which way up they went. Thank the Great Geek for smart phones, Google and a Wi-Fi signal that reaches my greenhouse.

Anyway once that was worked out, we planted them in the Tatties bags and waited.



You will have seen the growth of the plants through other blog posts and seen just how big the tattie plants got so the next photo of trying to turn them out should raise a small smile.

I decided that the best thing was to cut off the foliage and then turn the bags upside down. (Mostly cause these wasn't a hope in hell that I'd be able to pick them up).

So what kind of harvest did we get?

Not a bad one... Two piles of tatties from two plants.



Remember that pumpkin?



squash on the plant we have indoors and the squash plant in the greenhouse is starting to flower.

Well here is a little update for you on the pumpkins... it's getting bigger everyday and the plants have completely taken over both the greenhouse and our spare time. We have also got one little

and the squash plant in

Yay! Pumpkin pie with our own pumpkins – I can't wait.

The hard work is really paying off

A little walk around the garden this morning really showed how all the hard work we have put in has started to pay off.

It helps of course that it's a sunny day and of course things always look great in the sunshine.

When we first planted our seeds back in March, I really and truly didn't believe we would actually get any veggies out of it. I'd only ever tried tomatoes before and I got lots of flowers and only a handful of tomatoes which never ripened, so why should this be any different?

Well I can't explain why but it just is. Looking around the garden today I am genuinely amazed.

We have potato plants which are almost as tall as I am. Which ok is not very tall but still. We have already got to the point of too many courgettes to eat and have started giving them away. We have radishes taking over the third bed, all different colours. There are carrots and beetroot which will be ready in a few weeks and most impressively... there are about nine pumpkins.



I am excited about the pumpkins as I have been told either I wouldn't be able to grow any or I would only get a couple.

They are obviously small yet, but how pretty. We have just the recipe for these once they are ready.

The three raised beds we built are looking lush and green and I can wait till the carrots and beetroot are ready to eat. They are small just now, but the couple I taste tested were gorgeous.



The big thing today though was the potatoes. I never knew how pretty the flowers on potato plants were. They are little bursts of purple and really are a treat.



We'll definitely update the blog once the beetroot and carrots are bigger but tonight I'm going to put the radishes to use.

Wish me luck.

Monster courgettes



We are struggling to keep up. Even after taking a couple of courgettes for mum and dad when we went to visit, we still had seven on the plant and look at the size of them!

It's hard to use more than one per meal.

I suppose I shouldn't complain. When we planted the seeds at the beginning of the year, we really weren't very hopeful... Now look at us.

Teaser....

The pumpkins have started to flower, and so have the chillies... watch this space.



Our first harvest. (However small)

Big fanfare!

Last night, we ate from our own garden.

(Insert trumpet fanfare)

The weather seems to have turned a corner recently and the

courgettes are producing fruit like it's a fashion statement, so last night we sat out in our garden and ate courgettes which had grown on Colin (remember Colin?)

We cut them as ribbons and sautéed them with some garlic and served it with a tomato and mozzarella salad (using our own basil from the kitchen window ledge).



It's not earth shattering I know, but it was super exciting for us.

I felt like a real gardener getting to cut the first courgette from the plant and getting to use my gardening knife which Kate had bought me for just this occasion.

So there we have it... Courgette and basil... Home grown.

From our garden (which is looking great)

Growing veggies is quite exciting

The garden is really coming alive now with both courgette plants flowering and what looks like courgettes on them and even the dwarf French beans I'd given up on seem to be starting to sprout.

The carrots now look like carrots, with their little feathery leaves and as Kate pointed out...

You can actually see the plants without standing over the raised beds now.



We also planted some radishes yesterday just for fun.

I'm worrying a little about the green house plants and the whole pollination thing. Obviously the bees and other insects don't get much chance to do their job in there and I don't

seem to be very adapt with a cotton bud.

Fingers crossed.

Kate's hard work

Well this bank holiday weekend has seen some cracking weather so Kate got out and did some tweaking to the back garden.

The big deal was our new picnic bench which meant on Saturday, we had a barbeque and subjected the eleven year old next door to some of our music.

Oh the joys of being the grown up.



We also planted some new flowers during the week, you can see them in the background. The hope is that they will climb and spread along the back fence screen and give some colour.

I took it easy this weekend and just did some greenhouse tweaking yesterday.

The courgette plants had outgrown their pots so I replanted those and did the same with the pumpkin plants too.

Just have to cross our fingers that it wasn't too traumatic for them and they will still produce courgettes (and pumpkins).

Kate is working on her shed today, she'd replaced the frames on the windows as the wood was rotten, and she's added some new shelves to help store my endless supplies of plant pots.

She also built me a fab stand for hanging baskets in the greenhouse, cause I have a couple of trailing tomato plants.



The front garden looks amazing

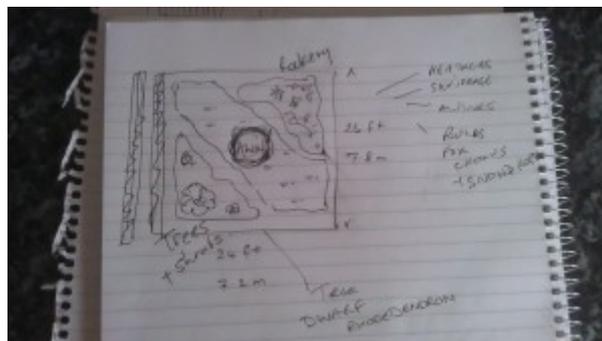
Well finally, after all that hard work. The front garden is done.

We started with a completely monoblocked front garden. Nothing pretty about it, but you could park four cars there. That's always a bonus but it wasn't what we wanted. We wanted a proper garden with flowers and grass and somewhere to enjoy life.



This was what the house looked like when we moved in

So that's where we began. Kate drew out some rough ideas to see what we could do.



After some mucking about, we decided that we would go for something a bit different, rather than the square lawns like everyone else in the street. (our street is full of square lawns with willows or cherry blossoms in the centre)

Task one

We spent a morning with some chalk drawing out our ideas on the actual monoblock so we could get a proper idea of size. This was a good plan as once we saw the actual dimensions, we

decided on some small tweaks, as to be honest... the size scared us a little. Although we're thankful it didn't rain and wash our ideas away.

Task two

Once we knew what size and shape we were going for, we decided to start small, we lifted the monoblock to make space in the two corners so we could put some colour in to make a start on making it pretty.

Task three

This was the fun bit. We went and bought loads of plants that we liked in a mad afternoon in B&Q and then we came home and we built a rockery with loads of colours and different types of plants and then on the opposite side of the garden we built a shrubbery with a little tree.



Task four

This was probably our big mistake. We left lifting the section for the lawn till last and it was hard going. We lifted 1500 blocks just for the lawn.

Out of all the garden work we've done so far, I think this was the hardest task, not because the blocks individually were heavy, but because there were so many and it wasn't just about lifting them, we had to carry them through the driveway to the back garden and then stack them there out of the way so that we could work.

This was a long job, but thankfully a neighbour saw us and came across to lend us his wheel barrow. The neighbours here really are lovely.

We got the blocks lifted ok... But it left a huge big empty space.

We had to dig over all the soil in the huge space where the lawn was to go. That was the hardest job ever and at one point I thought I was going to collapse.

Ok so I suppose this is the bit you are all waiting for,... You just want to see photos of the finished garden don't you?

So recap, just to make you wait.

We had a huge square blocked area. We created two flower gardens, one a rockery full of alpines and one a shrubbery with Kate's tree.

The we lifted the space where the lawn will go and dug it over.



Well ... Today... We finished it.

