

# Mandala Garden Project near Nairn, Scotland

UTE WEGENER AND ANNEKE KRAAKMAN

Pictures courtesy of Mandala Garden.

## Biodynamics in Scotland

To recognize the work of the biodynamic community in Scotland, this is the first in a series of articles. Scotland's land is strong, and it is reflected in the people who decided to start growing vegetables, grains or care for animals. An important influence has been the Camphill movement that started its communities in the 1940s in Aberdeenshire, The Findhorn Foundation in Moray where in the 1960s a magical garden was started, has been another source of inspiration to many.

As a Demeter inspector I have visited Mandala Garden Project last year. They have been Demeter certified now for 4 years.

Anneke Kraakman



Apple tree planting photo with team and volunteers in the community orchard.

**Mandala Garden Project is a biodynamic Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) scheme at the sunny North East coast of Scotland, between Findhorn and Nairn.**

Over the last 5 years we have grown not only veggies and have an orchard, but also our team and business are now a registered charity and social enterprise. I started here 5 years ago, on a 5 acre stony pasture and by now harvest much more produce than stones from our field. The orchard grows more than 100 apple trees which we grafted ourselves as well as many berries. For me, the connection to and support from our CSA members is really what drives the place. It's the personal connection that benefits both sides. However, it's a long road to becoming financially sustainable for a small market garden. I felt very drawn to live within the wider field of the Findhorn

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Team photo in a polytunnel.

Foundation and have put my roots down here now. Having previously lived on the West Coast, off the Isle of Arran on Holy Isle as part of the Samye Ling Buddhist Community, I have spent in total 12 years in Scotland. What a blessing! For a small market garden, the intensity of the northern seasons is a challenge, as well as the lack of warmth. Our CSA members don't get away without training in seasonal eating! Hail to the kale and cabbage - don't expect peppers...

The vision for Mandala Garden includes consciously working with nature and honouring the sacredness of all life. Although we are not tiptoeing through the garden, we

put in practice every day our resolve to not intentionally kill any creature small or large who is sharing the garden with us. Two Kune pigs and a flock of free-range hens belong to Mandala Garden and are co-creating with us. We are very lucky to have Gomde Scotland as our neighbours - a Buddhist woodland retreat centre with similar values and a shared sense of interconnectedness of all life. This autumn, we will offer a mindfulness garden retreat week, in cooperation with Gomde Scotland.

For now, I'm looking forward to a joyfully, busy spring, connecting with new and old volunteers and friends and to start growing in our new polytunnel. In no time I will be doing the delivery rounds again! We offer space for local volunteers, WWOOFers (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) and work-based- trainees from the Biodynamic Agricultural College to join the Mandala Garden team.

Our vision is to help connect more people to the land, the seasons and the food they eat. Inspired by Buddhist worldview and the sense of interconnectedness of all life.

I like Scotland, it is wild and the nature energy is very strong.

**Ute Wegener** has been a biodynamic market gardener for a number of years. She previously gardened at Waltham Place in Berkshire

To read more about the project see: <https://mandalagarden.uk/>



Overview of the vegetable field, with two tunnels.