

Arsonists wreck allotment scheme shed

KATIE COOPER
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A co-operative which helps people in the city to grow their own organic vegetables has had a shed burned down by arsonists.

The scheme at the Bluebell South allotments, on the corner of The Avenues and Colman Road, encourages people to learn about and grow their own vegetables.

A dearth of allotments and disappearing open spaces in cities means many children and adults feel they know less and less about growing food.



Mahesh Pant at the Bluebell South allotments.

But the organisation's plans to throw the allotments open to the public in a bid to educate children about growing vegetables has suffered a setback following the arson.

The shed, containing about £300 worth of tools, seeds and other gardening items and shared by the growers, was destroyed in the blaze and the police and fire service believe the blaze was started deliberately.

Mahesh Pant, who runs the group, said: "It is a bit worrying to think that for all the good that we do here, someone would deliberately burn this down.

"These tools cost a lot of money and we are worried because we have just got a lottery grant to build a composting toilet and a teaching centre.

"We want to be able to offer a park where all the community can gather, relax and learn about how to grow their own food.

"We would like one day to show groups of children around and already plan to build access for disabled people who would otherwise find the allotment difficult to get to."

The co-operative has 12 plots measuring 250sqm and have divided them up to cover a smaller area to make them more manageable. They can then be used by people ranging from the retired, wanting a hobby, to children keen to learn about growing their own vegetables.

People taking part in the scheme can take home the vegetables they grow, as well as selling them to others.

Vicky Leconte joined the scheme a year ago to do something worthwhile with her retirement.

She said: "I don't have a car and this is somewhere in the city where I can enjoy the peace and quiet of the countryside as well as getting something wholesome to bring home. I can really see where my food is coming from and where my hard work is going. I can't believe someone deliberately burned our shed down though."

Do you have a story about a special project in your community? Call Katie Cooper on 01603 772326 or email katie.cooper@archant.co.uk