

BEE HIGHWAY & EDIBLE GARDEN ON THE ASHTON CANAL

A 'bee highway', connecting communities and wildlife, has been created along the Ashton Canal in Manchester. It follows a communal vegetable plot at Lock 4, which was set up by IWA's Manchester Branch and Incredible Edible, a network of groups around the country that encourage communities to come together by growing food and supporting local food businesses.

A raised bed beside the lock was planted with a variety of edibles and herbs, including strawberries, beetroot, chives, onions, parsley and peas. The timber for the bed came from old lock gates which, along with the gravel and top soil, were donated by the Canal & River Trust. Volunteers sowed wild flower seeds as the first part of the 'bee highway' along the route of the canal.

IWA Manchester Branch supplied all the plants, created signage out of recycled timber and its volunteers gave out spare baby pea plants to passers-by, complete with instructions on their care.

Since then further edible gardens have been created at other locations along the Ashton flight. People who use the waterway for walking, cycling, boating and relaxation are encouraged to pause a while to tend the garden and pick vegetables and herbs in return, enjoying the improved biodiversity of this very urban environment in the process.

