



CULTIVATING EQUALITY:

WOMEN WORKING WITH LAND

SOPHIE GERRARD

AN EXHIBITION FROM WE FEED THE UK: THE NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN TELLING
GROUNDBREAKING STORIES THROUGH RADICAL COLLABORATION, TO CELEBRATE THOSE
NOURISHING PEOPLE AND PLANET



Nikki Yoxall is a regenerative farmer living in North East Scotland in the foothills of the Grampian Mountains, between the hills and the sea. She runs her farm business utilising agroforestry and holistic planned grazing; restoring soils, wildlife and plants with her herd, via Grampian Graziers (#theweemob). She works for Pasture for Life and is also undertaking a PhD to explore the role of nature connectedness in farmer decision making.

"As we move the cattle across the landscape their grazing encourages and stimulates the grass to regrow which then stimulates the root to exude even more nutrients and carbon. In order for ecosystems to function and to cycle effectively they need to be nudged along by all of the component parts and large herbivores are one of those component parts.

Our statement of purpose is to enable diversity and abundance to nourish our community which I guess is a very succinct way of saying I really like there being lots of plants, lots of wildlife and I like feeding people. This job is the best of both worlds, combining my love of producing food and people frequently tell us that our beef is the best they've ever eaten, with being part of holistic and crucial landscape restoration. The whole experience is incredibly connecting and grounding.

Part of my work is to work with other farmers, guiding, facilitating & supporting them to think about their landscapes differently and in a more balanced way.

I really enjoy sharing what we do here. I feel my teaching background influences my desire to share. Talking and connecting with people is such an important thing. Representation is important too. There's a lot of people who get to speak on behalf of agriculture who don't think this way, and yet there are lots of people who do think this way. Women also often don't get represented and although that is changing I do feel there's always space, particularly for young women to have the opportunity to say their piece.

Farmers often get held accountable, not by scientists, but by the media and the public, for climate change, the biodiversity crisis, the human health crisis, they're expected to carry the weight of the world on their shoulders and I think it's really important that we show people that there's stuff happening and they can be part of that.

As new entrants we don't have a farm or a herd to inherit nor are we tied to a specific way of working, and that is incredibly freeing. This is the first time we've done it, we're learning as we go. Obviously if you inherit a farm there is a huge privilege and responsibility with that and I admire farmers who take on the mantle from their forebears. I think there's probably loads of other people out there who are doing it for the first time who might feel alone. So by sharing what we do with them and with non-farmers, it just feels very positive."

CALL TO ACTION FROM PASTURE FOR LIFE

ONE THING YOU CAN DO THAT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

- Strengthen the connection to the food you are eating and to those who produce it by buying from your local Pasture for Life farms, who actively work in harmony with nature, helping supercharge it's recovery.

PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP:

- Everyone can get involved! Whether it's connecting with your local pasture-fed farms or buying from your local butcher, which supplies pasture-fed produce. The small changes can often help create the biggest impacts.







Lisa Houston is one of the driving forces and co-founders of Lauriston Agroecology Farm, a 100 acre site run by a workers co-operative that is focused on food growing, biodiversity, and community. When it started in 2021 it was the largest urban farm in Scotland.

"We are wedged between one of the poorest areas of Scotland and one of the wealthiest areas of Scotland. Groups of at least 3 neighbourhood households, or organisations working in the local area with local people can apply for a community allotment. We've got a Ukrainian group, a Polish group, a group from Hong Kong, a group from South Africa. Then we've got neighbours from mixed backgrounds. We've got people from Ecuador, people from France and it's a really nice mixture which means you've got very diverse and international crops. It's cool seeing the exchange between people when they ask what they're growing.

The community orchard has been designed and planted by the local community. The north field is devoted to wetland wildlife habitat specifically for coastal migrating wading birds and in the summer highland cattle will keep the grass the right height.

We've done lots of stuff for biodiversity, we've planted 900 metres of double hedgerow, and about 12500 trees in the last 18 months and put in ponds for amphibian life. We have 20 acres of deer fenced area for our market garden and food production from which we did 50 veg boxes last year and we have a veg stall here every Thursday. We're also doing agro-forestry, growing wheat and other indigenous heritage seeds.

What we are doing is at one level so simple and I think for most of us working here, it's just common sense. People need to know where their food comes from, they need to understand nature, the world of wildlife that we share this earth with and now more than ever we all need to be getting a chance to engage with the world in a way that feels like we are working with nature rather than against us. We need community resilience and that comes from people getting together and doing stuff like growing food, planting trees, sharing meals and cups of tea, saving seeds. Like I said it seems like a very simple thing to me, but I recognise that it's also for some people quite revolutionary. For me personally, I just like to be outside, doing physical work and chatting with people, that feels natural to me."

CALL TO ACTION FROM SEED SOVEREIGNTY UK & IRELAND PROGRAMME

ONE THING YOU CAN DO THAT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

- If you are growing this season, use seed that is local, organic, and open-pollinated.

PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP:

- Find seeds and community at the Glasgow Seed Library, buy from the country's first commercial seed producers Seeds of Scotland, or learn how to grow, save and share seed yourself with the Seed Sovereignty UK & Ireland Programme.





Sophie Gerrard is an award-winning photographer based in Edinburgh. Her practice is characterised by a sensitive and evocative visual exploration of the natural environment and landscape and our relationship to it. Central themes in her work are people, environmental connection, identity and belonging.

With a background in environmental science her work is often as much an exploration of other people's lives and connections with landscape as her own

Sophie's work has been exhibited widely including Paris Photo, The Martin Parr Foundation, The Photographers' Gallery, The Scottish National Portrait Gallery, OFF_festival Bratislava, FORMAT International Photography Festival, The Fox Talbot Museum, and Perth Museum & Art Gallery. She has also been published in The New York Times, The Guardian, The Financial Times Magazine, The Washington Post, The Telegraph, Esquire Magazine and Harpers and her work is held in private and national collections including The Sir Elton John Collection, The National Collection of Scotland, The University of St Andrews Special Collection and Coutts Bank private collection.

Sophie is lecturer and research in photography at Edinburgh Napier University and is represented by The Photographers' Gallery in London. In 2012 Sophie co-founded Document Scotland, www.documentscotland.com, a collective of internationally acclaimed photographers dedicated to chronicling the social, cultural and economic life in Scotland.

We Feed The UK – grown by The Gaia Foundation – is a storytelling campaign pairing photographers and poets with the UK's best custodians of soil, sea and seed, for events through 2024-25. Across islands that are 70% farmland, producing food with care for human and more-than-human communities can restore people and planet. We Feed The UK celebrates regenerative farmers, urban growers, sustainable fishers and grain rebels: the quiet revolutionaries with grassroots solutions to climate, biodiversity and social crises. These are the positive stories that can sprout real change.

The food producers featured as part of We Feed The UK are flourishing against a backdrop of climate chaos, a cost of living crisis, and post-Brexit changes. In one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, where less than half of our biodiversity remains, the project aims to show that nature-friendly and community-centric farming practices are at the root of our future resilience. #wefeedtheuk

Cultivating Equality – the Scottish story from We Feed The UK – is inspired by Lauriston Agroecology Farm and Grampian Graziers, photographed by Sophie Gerrard with verse from Hot Poet, Iona Lee. Sons inherit Scottish farms 85% of the time, yet over half of the UK's family farm workers are women. The Scottish government's own Women in Agriculture Taskforce concluded that their contribution can be "undervalued, downplayed or simply unseen". Lisa and Nikki are inspiring examples of those blooming beyond barriers, in urban and rural landscapes. Let's change the face of our food systems.

www.sophiegerrard.com

www.wefeedtheuk.org

www.grampiangraziers.co.uk

www.lauristonfarm.scot

www.hotpoets.org

www.ionalee.com

www.seedsovereignty.info

www.pastureforlife.org

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WE
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HOT POETS



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

**PASTURE
FOR LIFE**





The Seed Kist by Iona Lee

The seed kist,
quite unassuming,
this weather beaten box, this once discarded ark,
forgotten, was left collecting cobwebs in the fallow dark.
But look at what's locked inside: keepsakes from seasons
past.

The seed kist, sowing kit, now sits
on this once forsaken seam: between the Firth of Forth and
the outskirts of our city, feeding a dream.

Think of it
like a library, containing books that could be written,
conserving what will be - given half the chance.

Seeds,
at once alive
and latent, waiting
with the patience of grain
for winter's revolution,
for faithful spring's refrain,
to do their lifework.
They have imagination,
so do the people here; the curiosity of water.

Can you see
the orchard in that empty field; What stirs beneath the
earth?

Pass today through a riddle. Winnow the future from the
past. They've planted willow, wych elm, aspen, alder,
asked: what if? Why not? Let's try.

Next year, they'll harvest sweetcorn, sweet pea and
dumpling pumpkin from the seed-kissed soil.

Let them feed you a secret: abundance is endless, and
ever-replenishing. It's a perpetual motion organic
machine.

Like that old adage
of rice on a chessboard - the hours on a sunflower's
clock-face add up to infinity.

Community's the cure for nihilism, when apathy is routine.

The bees' ignition,
To restart the garden,
it begins with a spark,
a bulb, the seed of an idea.

Someone to lift the lid
and see that what remains
in the box is hope - homegrown.

This disenchanting landscape can disclose, un-forgetting
what it's always known: that there was never nothing
here, only everything - and that matters.

For what's
a stretch of barren land but an understorey? What's a
seed, if not the promise of a tree?

And what is one? There's never 'one', only many.

So, say: what is woodland, but nature's green-hinged
invitation; that canopy to which the future climbs.

Concert hall
for an orchestra of songbirds. And what is a tune made
of, but time?