

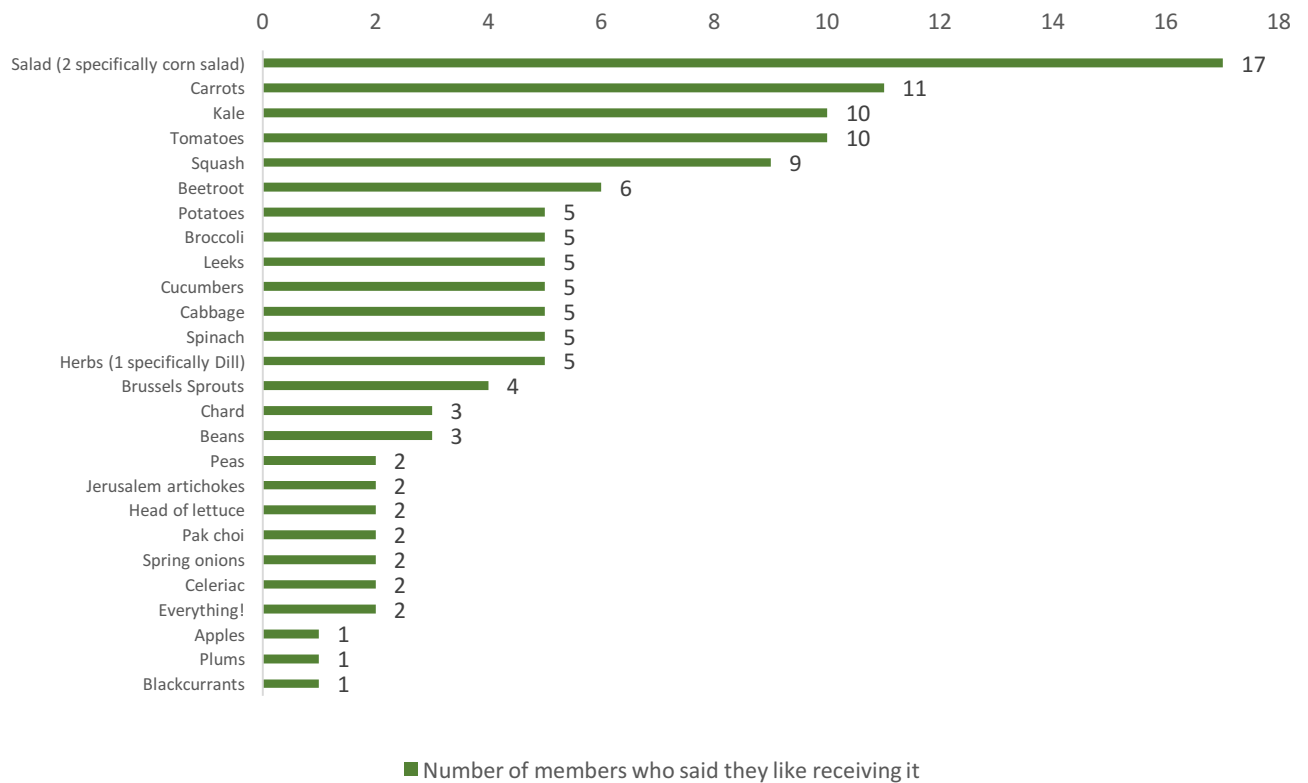


# Member survey results – January 2024

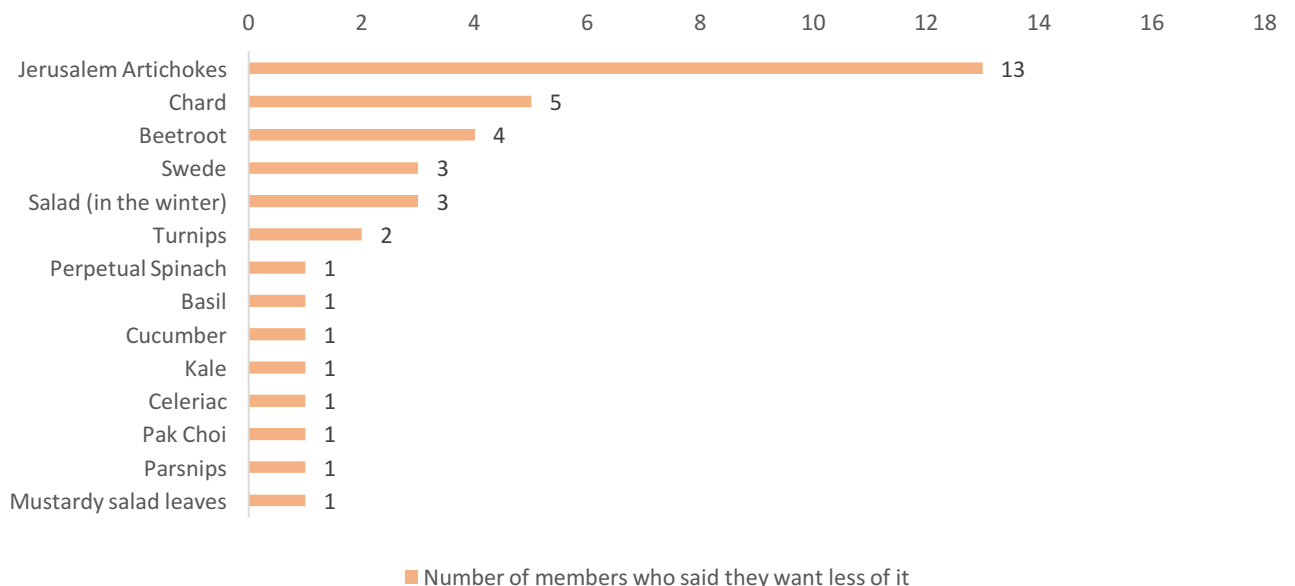
The Common Soil online member survey was sent to all 56 Vegetable members (including half-share members) in December 2023. Thirty-four responses were received, which are summarised below and will be used to inform crop planning and organisational planning for 2024, as well as to report to funders.

## Vegetables

### 1. Which veg have you particularly liked receiving in your boxes or want more of?



### 2. Which veg do you not enjoy/use and want less of?



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### 3. Is there any veg you haven't received and would like to?



## Outcomes/changes

### 94% of vegetable members who responded agree that they:

- have reduced their carbon footprint in buying local food and in the way the food is grown (15 agreed, 14 strongly agreed, 2 disagreed, 3 said not relevant. Those who disagreed noted that they used to purchase veg from the farmer's market).

### 100% of vegetable members who responded agreed that they:

- feel more connected to where their food comes from (8 agreed, 26 strongly agreed)

Vegetable members also added the following changes they have seen in their lives, as a result of being a member of Common Soil (free text box in survey):

- Eleven people mentioned that they're now **eating more healthily, using more or different vegetables or new recipes**. For example:
  - "We're eating more veg, cooking more soups and eating more salad."*
  - "I've tried new vegetables, been excited about vegetables!"*
  - "We're eating a much broader range of veg (aiming for the Zoe recommended 30 a week)."*
  - "We've tried out different recipes, eating things we wouldn't otherwise buy if we saw them in the supermarket."*
- Seven people wrote specifically about feeling **more connected to the seasons and seasonal food**. For example:

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*“Being more led by seasonal food has felt excellent.”*

- Six people said that a key benefit for them has been the **community element and feeling more connected to people and the area:**  
*“Definitely meeting new people and feeling more connected with the local area. I’ve felt part of a community with like-minded ethos.”*
- Three people said that they’re feeling **healthier or have better wellbeing** as a result of eating Common Soil veg:  
*“Even though I have a high veg diet, I feel so much more nourished after this year on Common Soil veg, at a much deeper level!”*
- Two people mentioned simply **enjoying the experience of collecting the veg:**  
*“Our toddler loves coming to collect the veg! Loves the space/freedom to run down the path!”*
- Two people benefited from the **potential for volunteering and learnt about food growing.**
- One person noted that they’d **reduced their plastic waste.**
- One person appreciates that they can **support local employment.**
- One person noted a negative effect, which is that they **miss going to the farmer’s market.**

### General notable quotes:

*“It has definitely changed the way I cook and eat for the better. I love feeling more connected to my food, and the seasons. It’s also lovely to feel connected to the Common Soil community.”*

*“I feel more connected to seasonal produce & have a healthier relationship with buying food, it’s also great to not need plastic bags!”*

*“I’m cooking with more seasonal produce (which also means trying new recipes/ways of cooking, I’ve met new people and built community, learnt more about growing organic food and how a CSA works. It really helps my wellbeing on a Monday (through volunteering) as it’s really fun and great to be outside and more connected to what we eat.”*

*“Cooking more seasonally, loving collecting my box, feeling so nourished by the quality of the veg and feeling the connection with the veg and land so local.”*

## Volunteering, events and workshops

20% of members (n=7) who responded to the survey had volunteered at Common Soil at some point.

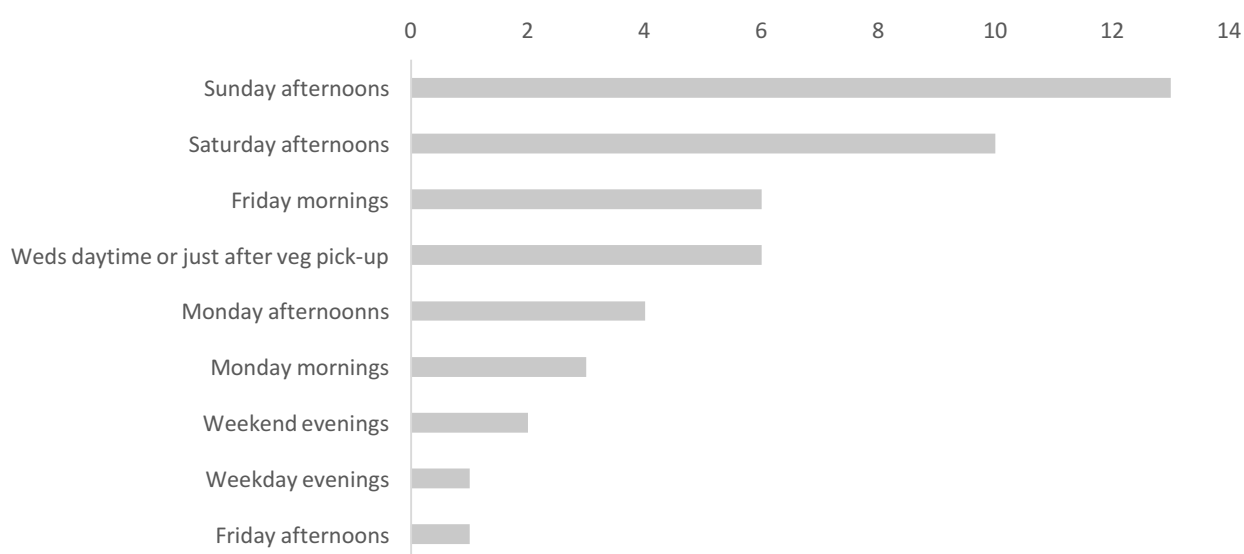
All of them agreed or strongly agreed that they:

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- Feel welcome at Common Soil
- Feel supported in tasks when they volunteer
- Feel part of a community doing purposeful work together
- As a result of volunteering they're doing more physical activity or are more connected to nature
- They've learnt something about food growing and/or the environment

*"Love my Monday volunteering as it's a lovely way to start the week - it's great to work outside, learn about growing and connect with other volunteers and staff."*

### When would you be most likely to attend volunteering sessions or events at Common Soil? (please select up to 3)



■ Number of members who said they would be likely to attend at this time

One member commented that the *'occasional Saturday volunteer sessions - focusing on an achievable task (e.g. last Saturday's digging) feel like a good option.'*

When asked if there's anything that holds them back from events or volunteering:

- 20 People said **time pressures, work or other commitments**
  - "No time and a garden to tend in spare time but I would if there was a strong one-off need and I was available."*
  - "Life takes over, and the week gets busy! But always feels good to have done it."*
  - "Time - I work 35 hours a week and commute to my workplace, it doesn't leave me much time to rest and do life admin let alone volunteer."*
- 4 people said **disability, health or getting older**
  - "Health issues & the demands of tending my own land which is more than enough for my limited energy & pain levels."*

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- 2 people said it's **hard to engage their young children** in the activity.  
*"It's just not worth the hassle with toddler in tow, I wouldn't contribute and it would be extra work to keep her happy."*

### Is there anything else you'd like to say about events you've attended or about getting involved in future?

5 people made a general comment that it's great to have events and workshops offered at Common Soil and they hope to attend more in future.

Several people shared that they'd enjoyed the events they had attended:

*"I have enjoyed all the events I have attended - even digging a very deep hole for a pipe!"*

*"I loved the social in autumn. Cooking over the fire in good company, on that land, it's wonderful."*

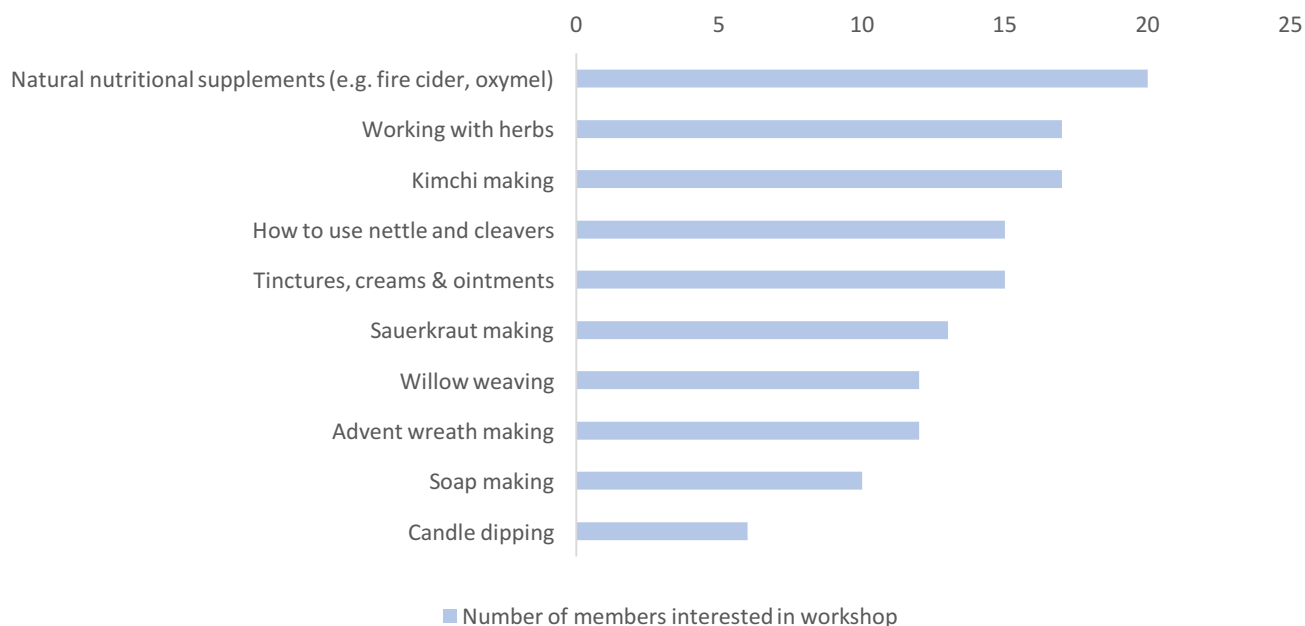
*"We have loved it when we have made it there."*

*"Really enjoyed the celebrations especially the harvest festival one with the lovely poem around the fire and delicious food."*

One person commented that events in winter are less appealing to them:

*I'm not so energised for the events in winter and not sure I would have energy for them when I work some evenings and have regular dance evenings / weekends.*

### Which of the following workshops would you be interested to attend in future, if we offer them? (Please select all that appeal to you, if any)



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One person also suggested a workshop on ‘natural dyes from onion skins’. Another commented that they would like any workshops to be on a weekend or evening so they can attend.

### Overall

#### What have you most liked about being a Common Soil member so far?

- 18 people said **the veg itself** is what they’ve most liked – that it’s fresh and tasty.

*“I love having fresh vegetables every week & how much longer they last than supermarket veg and how tasty everything is!! Also, I really enjoy going to the farm to pick them up.”*

*“Thank you all for your work all this year, it’s been such a joy having such local amazing quality veg... just makes me smile and feel glad over and over.”*

*“Delicious veg - you can taste the love that goes into growing & nurturing it.”*

- 13 people mentioned the fact that the veg and farm **is local to them**, the increased connection to where their food comes from and the experience of coming to collect it, as the things they like best.

*“I think the future of food production should be small scale, local, organic and community based, and it feels really good to be a part of this.”*

*“Being able to walk up our road to collect the veg box. Feeling connected to the land and seasons.”*

*“Being more connected to the food we eat, eating organic and locally, eating more seasonally, being more in touch with how things are grown and experiencing the full cycle of growing to harvesting to cooking and eating.”*

*“Knowing we're eating delicious, seasonable veg grown a couple of miles from our home.”*

- 13 respondents said that the **people and the farm community** are the things they like best.

*“I feel involved and like the farm community is very welcoming.”*

*“The warm enthusiasm of all involved.”*

*“Feeling like part of a community that is growing food for everyone.”*

*“Great food and sense of meaningful community.”*

One person noted how they appreciate the small things like going to the veg shed and the Common Soil newsletter and recipes:

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*“The veg shed, the smell of the shed, the chat, the veg, the newsletter with tips and input from naturopaths/nutritionists.”*

### What would you like us to change, or any ideas for the future?

One person said that they find collecting the veg in the dark at 4pm difficult in the winter. This is something that we have now changed for winter 2024 (offering a 3pm collection for those who want to avoid the early dark) and will ensure that for winter 2024 the collection is moved to 3pm. A 4pm collection is still needed in summer to ensure time for larger harvests.

Another said that they find washing and sorting of veg tricky:

*“I don't have a lot of free time and live on my own - I have found the washing and sorting the veg for storage to be labour intensive, especially if I'm not feeling well or have little energy. I expect it isn't viable for you to wash the veg etc. for collection but wanted to be honest in my feedback.”*

This is something we can discuss at our next core group meeting and see if a solution can be found.

One person noted that the price is higher than in supermarkets, which is a challenge for people when money is tight. It is acknowledged that we can't compete with supermarkets on pricing. A report by the Sustainable Food Trust ([True Cost Accounting](#)) estimates that for every £1 people spend at the till in supermarkets, we're all spending another £1 in hidden costs of environmental clean-up from poor agricultural practices, impact on health, and pollution from food miles. We could do more in future to share this research and explain the reasoning behind our model and pricing.

One person requested more workshops in future, so that's something we're building into 2024 plans.

**One of our particular ambitions for next year is getting more young people (aged 10 to 20) involved at the farm - if you have any ideas or contacts around this then please share with us.**

There was general enthusiasm for this plan and five people made general comments of support, for example:

*“Yes, I feel that youthful energy is the way forwards. I wish someone would have taught me how to grow food as a teen/young adult.”*

*“I think some kind of hanging out with tea option and/or educational events would appeal to me.”*

Then suggestions for organisations to connect with around engaging young people were offered:

- *“The school I work at could be interested but this would be a series of sessions as opposed to all year round due to transport issues...”*
- *“SGS college Stroud students like getting involved with gardening.”*

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- *“I work at UWE Bristol in the Careers team - organisations can advertise volunteering opportunities via the Universities 'job site' to students. You can sign up via this webpage to post about the volunteering <https://recruitingtalent.infohub.uwe.ac.uk/>”*
- *“Maybe some links with Gloucestershire wildlife trust and local schools.”*
- *“The Grove. Acorn School.”*

## General comments

Finally, there were a couple of general comments offered at the end of the survey:

*“Just so thankful to have you and I know it’s really hard work so I will try to think of people to suggest the volunteering to.”*

*“Thanks for all the hard work and love that goes into Common Soil, it's a really special project and place!”*