



Film Making at a School Allotment

By Louis Johnson, Lead Film Biographer at
The Papillon Project



Example 1: The Allotment Project: A Short Documentary.
Please [click here](#) to view online.

In this short guide, Louis will introduce some of the things to think about when making a film about a school allotment!

Here's some questions to consider:

Why?

Why are you making this film? This is one of the most important questions you will ever ask when setting out to make a film. Think about what you want to show the people watching; what makes you excited about the idea of making this film? To use gardening as an example: is it the colours of flowers, the visual transformation of the land, the use of recycled materials or people enjoying the space? Concentrate on the things that excite you, and your audience will more than likely feel that too.



Example 2: A short film about Thorpe St Andrew's school allotment. Please [click here](#) to view this online.

What is it about?

When making a film, it's important to have an idea of what the subject of your film will be. You could be making a tour, therefore it'd be important focus on showing your allotment clearly. This may seem like a simple idea, but defining what your film is about will help you channel your passion into something that is intentioned and well-made.





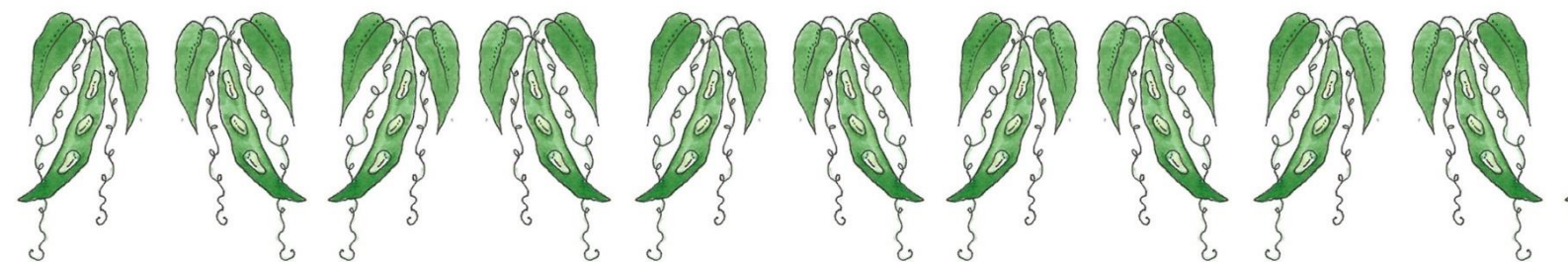
Example 3: Litcham School's allotment virtual tour.
Please [click here](#) to view this online (by Louis Johnson).

What does it mean to you?

When you have an idea of your passion and focus, it's a good idea to bring some more emotion practically into your project. One way of doing this is to ask what the subject means to you.

This was a common question I used in my short documentary film 'The Allotment Project'. I'd ask people what a certain thing (building, plant, the area) meant to them, and this always prompted some wonderful answers. Ask yourself this question and it'll help you to refine your focus. You might be making a 'how to' video in your allotment; thinking about what it means to you might reveal that this 'how to' is important to you because it allows you to be creative. You can then focus on that creativity in your video.

These might seem like fairly simple questions but taking time to think about it will really help you create an engaging film. When you've got a clear, compelling focus, you'll find the making so much easier. When making your film you're gathering 'materials' to then edit and when you know your focus, it'll make that easier.





Example 4: *No Straight Lines*: a good example of big film project. Please [click here](#) to view this film's prologue: *Why?* online (by Louis Johnson).



Example 5: *Thoughts From the School Allotment series*: a good example of a small film project. Please [click here](#) to view an example of this series created by Louis Johnson.





Now, let's move on to some more practical questions:

What equipment do you have?

I'm a big advocate of the ability to film-make with whatever you have. Most of the time you can make a decent film with just your phone. I know people say this about filmmaking a lot, and it's very true. However, it's not only important to think about what you have, but what you can do with it. For example, if you only have your phone, that's great! But, you'll have to also think about something like sound; a phone's microphone usually isn't very strong. So, if you wanted to interview/hear someone, you'd need to be in a quiet place with shelter from the wind. Sometimes, something as small as keeping your hand cupped over the microphone while you're outside can make a world of difference. Film with anything, but don't forget the needs of the technology you have!

How will you organise it all?

File storage is very important. Organise your files into a specific folder on your computer, that way you'll find them easier to access when it comes to putting your film together. You can group interviews together, different types of scenery, actions shots; it will all make it easier for you!

How will you put it together? Are you editing on your computer? Would you like music in your video or not?

When editing your video, come back to those questions we discussed to help refine your focus and the presentation of your video. This is where your film is really made! Do you need titles to help the audience understand? Do you want to just visually present your focus with pictures and music?

When editing it's important to understand what these things are to help you craft your final film. Bring some excitement to your editing and make sure you remember to think like the person who will be watching it!

I hope this is helpful to you; have fun and happy filming!

