

# CORONATION COMMUNITY ORCHARDS GUIDE



**Community orchards can be a real asset for a community, church or school. They can bring people together, improve the local landscape, provide an outdoor amenity for people's wellbeing, boost biodiversity, and grow healthy local fruit.**

**This brief guide will help you to:**

- Find the right site
- Get the right volunteers
- Choose the right trees
- Plant and care in the right way
- Use it in the right way



North  
Northamptonshire  
Council



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



ROCKINGHAM  
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## FIND THE RIGHT SITE

### Size - The orchard should be any size of more than 5 trees

- But it must be manageable by your volunteers
- The grass must be mown or grazed
- The boundary may need a hedge, fence or shelter belt

### Shape - The orchard could be any shape

- Square - the conventional shape
- Linear - like a fruit hedge
- Triangular - in the corner of a field
- Circular - around an open space or feature
- Scattered - around the local area

### Access - The site must be accessible to the public

- A playing field or recreation ground
- A churchyard or cemetery
- On or near a school ground
- An allotment or open ground
- Around a residential care home
- On a hospital ground
- Alongside a path or roadside verge
- On a new housing estate
- On the edge of farmland

### Permissions - The public or private owner must give formal permission

- Explore the pros and cons of a community orchard with the owner
- Confirm the site plan formally in writing
- Get a long-term legal agreement for public access if on private land

## GET THE RIGHT VOLUNTEERS

### Volunteers - A range of people with different interests, skills and resources

- People with links to schools, youth groups, other groups
- People with gardening and growing interests
- People with food, drink and cooking interests
- People with useful tools and equipment

### Roles and tasks - Different tasks may suit different volunteers

- Promoting to the local community or school
- Guiding and supporting volunteers
- Mowing or scything under the trees from Mar-Oct
- Formative pruning for the first 5 years in Feb/Mar
- Maintenance pruning after about 5 years in Feb/Mar
- Picking and using fruit after about 5 years from Sep-Oct



## CHOOSE THE RIGHT TREES

### Trees could include:

- Pome fruit - apples, pears, quinces
- Stone fruit - Plums, greengages, damsons, medlars, sweet and sour cherries, apricots
- Nuts - Cobnuts
- They could be planted over several years

### Apples, pears and plums grown on:

- Half-standard rootstock, with 1m trunk, up to 4m tall, fruiting after 4 years, living up to 80 years
- Standard rootstock, with 2m trunk, up to 6m tall, fruiting after about 8 years, living up to 150+ years

### Varieties:

- Varieties sold and grown locally will suit the local climate
- Taste - sweet to sharp
- Picking time - from early August (apples, plums and cherries) to late October (apples, quinces, medlars)

## KEEPING TIME

Apples from 2 weeks to 6+ months.  
Plums, greengages, damsons, cherries, apricots only keep a few days



## PLANT AND CARE IN THE RIGHT WAY

Big issues - water, wind, frost, grass and mammals

- **Drought** - Planting is best done in late Nov, early Dec giving a long time to establish roots before summer. A thick covering (woodchips, old carpet, cardboard) over the root area holds moisture in the soil. Vertical roots in a deep hole can reach deep moist soil.
- **Wind** - Well-spread roots and a straight vertical trunk can support trees in strong winds. Untied trees can adapt to the wind. Hedges can protect from high winds.
- **Frost** - Late flowering trees, like some apple varieties and quince, may avoid frosts damaging the blossom in late April or early May. Frost hollows are best avoided.
- **Grass** - Grass grows from Mar to Nov and needs at least 3 mowings in Mar, Aug and Oct.
- **Mammals** - Spot the potential grazers on the site - voles, rabbits, deer. 1 cm plastic or wire mesh, 1.2m high with a 1.5m stake will protect from most grazers.
- **Planting** - by volunteers, including families and children in late Nov/early Dec. Square hole of spade depth, with stake, mesh guard, ties and mulch.
- **Aftercare** - with mowing, checking and watering from Mar to Oct 3-6 times. Formative pruning in following Mar with secateurs to make 1m trunk with goblet shaped branches at 45 degrees.

## USE IT IN THE RIGHT WAY

### Use as public amenity

- social and cultural events – picnics, play area
- School visits – forest school activities, pollinators, fruit
- Quiet area – for dog walks, sitting

### Use as food or drink

- People pick from the tree with a notice about best time to pick
- People pick from the ground as windfalls with guidance on washing and further use
- Longer-term potential processing - dried for fruit chips, leathers or butter, sweetened for jams, pickled for chutney and relish, made into juice, fermented into wine or cider

## FURTHER READING

- **Community orchards case studies**  
Department of Communities and Local Government
- **Orchard guides and advice**  
The Orchard Project
- **Planning and designing an orchard**  
The Orchard Project
- **Grant funding for your community orchard**  
The Orchard Project
- **Involving the community in your orchard**  
The Orchard Project
- **Starting up community orchards**  
Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens
- **Learning Guide to Traditional Orchards**  
Core Project
- **UK Orchard Network**



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