



South
Cambridgeshire
District Council

Community Orchards

Health, Heritage and Biodiversity



Advice on:

- Getting started
- Choosing a site
- Caring for your tree
- Involving your community
- Grants

www.scamb.gov.uk
03450 450 500

South Cambs community orchards

South Cambridgeshire District Council is supporting local people to establish or restore community orchards. We aim to have six projects up and running in 2010/2011 but the more that can be achieved the better. Community orchards are local projects set up and run by local people. We will help by steering you towards guidance and funding. For more information on the scheme and grants contact the Ecology Officer on (01954) 713402.

Getting started



To restore or replant? Restoring or expanding existing orchards should be the priority where possible as it keeps the heritage link to our past. It can also retain old varieties and conserve the biodiversity interest of a site that may have taken years to establish.

If you have no orchard to conserve then planting one is the right path to follow. Choose your site to avoid exposure to the wind, frost pockets, or water logged land.

Ideally, the site should be near to your community so that people can access it easily and regularly without using a car.

A well used site is likely to become a well-loved site in years to come.

You should form a group so that responsibility can be shared.

Choosing the tree stock

An orchard is a term given to a collection of five or more fruit or nut trees. Fruit trees, such as apple, pear or plum are usually grafted onto a rootstock. The rootstock controls the vigour (height and spread) of the tree.

When choosing your trees plan a how you would like your site to look in 30 or more years, and choose a size and variety of tree to suit your site.

Traditional orchards have trees of more than five metres in height with wide spreading branches. These grow to form attractive landscape trees. Dwarfing rootstocks will give more compact trees that can be grown in smaller spaces.



Fabiola Blum

Many fruit tree nurseries can supply a wide range of trees. Some are available for immediate planting, while others, particularly old varieties, are grafted to order and so must be chosen a year in advance of planting.

To maximise the production of blossom and fruit, most fruit trees need a nearby 'pollinating partner', a different but complementary variety of tree which flowers at the same time.

Your fruit tree nursery can offer advice on rootstocks, the best tree varieties to choose and which pollination partners will be most productive. Local growers and established community orchard groups can also be a useful source of information.

Conservation of old fruit varieties is important, and some may have local connections to Cambridgeshire such as the Cottenham Seedling or Histon Favourite. However, modern varieties can give regular cropping and greater disease resistance. A balance of old and new varieties could make for an attractive and productive orchard.

Caring for your tree

Trees should be planted in well-prepared ground, avoiding freezing or waterlogged soil. A supporting stake should be provided to prevent rocking in windy conditions.

Initially weeds and grasses should be removed from around the base of trees in order to reduce competition. A 75mm layer of mulch or wood chippings can suppress weeds and increase water retention in the soil.

You must be prepared to water the trees during dry periods, possibly for at least two years.



Involving your community

There are many ways in which orchards can bring your community together:

- 🌳 Planting days
- 🌳 Management tasks
- 🌳 Recording species and habitats
- 🌳 Holding apple days to collect and divide up the fruit
- 🌳 South Cambs staff may have further ideas



Grants

The following sites should be searched for their suitability:

- www.scambs.gov.uk - “wildlife enhancement scheme”
- www.scambs.gov.uk - “funding tool kit”
- www.cambscf.org.uk - “the natural environment”
- www.biglotteryfund.org.uk - “community wildlife”
- www.sitatrust.org.uk - “enriching nature programme”
- www.biffaward.org - “small grants”
- www.veoliatrust.org - “Veolia Environmental Trust”
- www.defra.gov.uk - “Higher Level Scheme”

Sources of further information can be found at:

- www.commonground.org.uk
- www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/natureconservation/action/partnership
- www.england-in-particular.info
- www.applesandorchards.org.uk
- www.treecouncil.org.uk
- www.nat-orchard-forum.org.uk
- www.transitioncambridge.org
- www.trumpingtonorchard.org
- www.plymouthtrees.org
- www.brogdale.org

