

ORCHARD LINK *NEWS*



'Cider making at Mr. Hunt's farm at Yalberton'.

MAKE THE MOST OF THE APPLE HARVEST

Now the trees are bending low with fruit, you might be wondering how to use, rather than waste, your harvest. For Orchard Link members – even if you have been with us for several years – here is a reminder of how Orchard Link can help.

First of all, I'll assume you can eat or cook and then freeze a reasonable quantity of your eaters and cookers. For those which are surplus – you have three options: – If you have a large quantity, then Orchard Link can help you to sell it to a local juice maker during the autumn, we operate a 'Harvestline' service. Simply call the Orchard Link mobile number – 07792 664710 and Ben Pike will try to find local juice producers who may require your type and quantity of fruit. The same applies to surplus cider apples – since if your orchard is a typical traditional one, it may be mainly cider trees – Then Ben will ring around cider makers to see who might buy your fruit as locally as possible.

You can of course use it all yourself – Orchard Link members have the unique advantage of being able to hire apple presses and mills – easy to use – and with all the buckets, sieves and all the other equipment

you will need. The kit enables you to turn your surplus eaters, cookers and cider apples into apple juice. Mixed with a few eaters and cookers, almost all cider apples will produce delicious juice – leaving none of the tannin taste which makes cider apples inedible. Once made, you can pasteurize the juice in bottles – or take the simplest option – as most members do and freeze it – (in plastic bottles or tubs – not glass as it may break or the juice might expand on freezing and crack the glass). Of course, having all that juice means you can make wonderful cider – just ferment it in barrels or demi-johns, as the apples carry their own yeast on the skins. After a few months of doing very little you can impress family and friends with your own brew!

If you need a reminder – apples for cider and juice don't need picking – just wait for them to fall off the trees – but do wash them well before pressing and discard any badly bruised ones.

If you do have quantities of nice eating or cooking apples in good condition (i.e. picked from the tree!) You are welcome to bring them along to Orchard Link stalls at local farmer's markets. (See "What's On" for dates and details). You can sell your fruit directly to the public – in recent years Jackie Stephens has brought a variety of apples plus pears and plums. Hence shoppers at the market have enjoyed the opportunity of tasting and buying varieties which are seldom found in the shops.

So – the choice is yours – only please don't choose to waste your fruit this autumn. If you really don't want to press it or use it – call Orchard Link and we shall happily press it at one of our pressing days and offer you some juice back, whilst raising awareness and some much needed funds for our organization.

In this issue:

- ❖ 2 pages of events and pressing days.
- ❖ Try planting apple trees from pips.
- ❖ Use your harvest.

The Rough Guide to hiring a press

Here is a quick refresher on the presses and mills and what's on offer.

We currently have two presses – one large wooden 'community' press on its own trailer (great for Apple Days and public events or large group pressings). We also have a smaller, easy to use and transport press. Both come with a 2hp powerful mill – it's like a cross between a food processor and a garden shredder – and makes a fine pulp of the apples – so you can easily extract the maximum juice. These, together with a selection of large buckets etc will fit into most cars – so you can collect, drive home and simply plug into the mains. Then you're ready to go!

People often ask us how many apples they can press over a 2 day hire period. It all depends on how many helpers you have and how juicy your apples. If you can keep the machinery working all day (have lots of help) – you can work your way through $\frac{3}{4}$ of a tonne of fruit a day, which will produce around 500 litres of juice. If only 2 people are pressing with plenty of tea breaks, you'll get through $\frac{1}{2}$ a tonne of apples per day – still an impressive 250-300 litres! So, if you intend to hire press and mill, gather your apples and friends around and share out the juice – share the cost and your freezer will soon fill with juice at a few pence a litre. Save all the plastic bottles and extra juice cartons and ice-cream tubs that you can – and if you need more, Orchard Link has plastic bottles for sale.

So how much does hiring cost?

For the community press and mill – £60 for 2 days. The standard press and mill costs £35 for a 2 day weekend hire, but is just £25 for 2 days in the mid-week. The mill alone (for those with their own press), costs £35 over a weekend and £25 for 2 days mid-week.

The equipment is stored near Modbury and needs to be collected from there. Delivery can be arranged but costs £10/hour plus 40p per mile. All hiring is organized through Dick Ensor on 01548 831544 – though Dick tells us that the hiring diary is filling up quickly – so do call him soon to reserve a press and mill, especially if you need it for a particular time. Hirers do also need to be Orchard Link members – though Dick can join anyone instantly when they hire.

The kit comes with instructions – is easy to use and hose clean – and it's great fun to make your own juice from your own apples. I wish you a happy, enjoyable harvest season.

Trudy Turrell.

Your membership is due!

Unless you joined within the last month or so, your membership is due in September.

Our membership now runs from the 1st September to 31st August each year and membership of Orchard Link costs £18. This entitles you to receive Orchard Link News, use our telephone advice line, hire presses and mills, benefit from discounts on orcharding courses and attend our Annual Gathering, with lunch for two included – not bad value!

Orchard Link receives no grant aid – so your membership fee is vital to keep our organization running. Please send your **cheques made payable to 'Orchard link'** to PO Box 109, Totnes, TQ9 5XR. Thank you.



Lots of events mean less news!

The Autumn season is so busy this year that all the time your newsletter editors and writers can spare is taken up with organizing the farmers markets and shows which are fast approaching. As you can see from the "What's On?" page – there are lots of pressing and other events at which Orchard Link would welcome your help, or just to see you – so put those dates in your diary now.

Usually the newsletter is produced by myself with regular articles from Ben Pike and occasional contributions from outside organizations and other Orchard Link members. Ben Pike is busy moving house (For anyone wishing to contact him at home, his new phone number will be 01803-732212, from October 1st.) and I realized that this newsletter would be the 27th that I have produced! Luckily Jacqueline Sarsby has offered to take up the pen – just for a year.

A new voice behind the newsletter will make a refreshing change for everyone and I will be able to focus my contributions of time on other aspects of Orchard Link.

Trudy Turrell

Orchard Link's Annual Gathering at Druid Orchard, 7th August 2005

This year, Orchard Link's Annual Gathering was held at Druid Orchard near Buckland in the Moor. It is a very special place: we had our lunch on trestle tables in a barn shared with swooping swallows, and in the morning and afternoon, we learned about the history and restoration of the garden and orchard. Fiona and Anthony Walters have been restoring this 'country house orchard' with Ben Pike's help, and it was a real opportunity for Orchard Link members to visit such an old and unusual orchard. After coffee, Fiona showed us the new planting in the garden and then Ben Pike took us on a tour of the orchard, pointing out that it had been planted over 100 years ago with varieties of apple, pear, plum, cherry, mulberry and medlar to provide, first and foremost for the needs of the household and not the planting of a commercial orchard. Anthony helpfully put up a plan of the new planting for us to look at, and in the afternoon, Ben gave a demonstration of summer pruning for young plum trees.

We are especially grateful to Fiona for all her help in organising the barn beforehand so that we had tables, chairs, kettles, flowers &c for our 'picnic' lunch, and her further tremendous help in preparing, salads, strawberries and cream and much else to make our day enjoyable. About 38 people came (some at the last minute, or unexpectedly, so a little more notice that they are coming, next time, will help the catering!) and the day was a very happy occasion for members to renew acquaintance and talk about everything from grafting and grazing to honey bees and the shortage or abundance of fruit, in fact all things to do with orcharding. Very many thanks to Fiona and Anthony for their hospitality and to Trudy for organising the day.

Jacqueline Sarsby

Ensuring the survival of young trees

When visiting local orchards I am often asked why trees haven't established well after planting. By far the most common cause is that they have been planted into grass with no attempt made to keep an area of grass free around the trunk. If you are not familiar with this problem, then it may seem rather bizarre to think of such a "small" thing as grass competing with such a big thing as a tree, but underneath the ground everything looks different. When trees arrive from the nursery to be planted, their root system is usually fairly small and often damaged by the lifting of the tree. We then place these roots into a new environment and expect them to provide nutrients for the tree. Even if there were nothing hindering this

process, it would take a while for the roots to adapt to their new home and establish well. When young, the roots of fruit trees are very close to the surface, and so can be in close proximity to, or even interwoven with grass and weed roots. For this reason it is most important to keep an area of about 1 metre diameter around the tree free of vegetation. There are various methods available to achieve this. Most are physical means, but the other possibility is spraying with a herbicide. This could either be diquat/paraquat or glyphosphate based. Both decompose to harmless substances upon reaching the soil (at least that's what the label says). Diquat/paraquat based herbicides have the advantage that they are effective during the winter, whereas glyphosphate must be used while vegetation is actively growing. One simple method is to cut a circle in the grass at the time of planting and then to keep this clean by hand-weeding. This can be used in conjunction with mulches of various kinds, such as compost, bark chippings or manure. Using a mulch such as bark chippings may sound ideal, but don't expect it to take away the necessity for weeding altogether as weeds are tough and will find a way through. One danger if using compost or manure is to be careful not to feed the tree too much nitrogen as this can promote sappy growth, which is very prone to canker.

Mulching and hand weeding is fine if you have a few trees planted in your garden, but if you have a larger orchard you would be well advised to consider mulch mats, as these are effective and cut down on labour considerably. There are two materials I would recommend, woven polypropylene and a material fairly new to the market, flax. The polypropylene is ideal in that it lasts well, and being woven, can be quickly secured by chopping in the edges with a spade. For some reason it is usually sold with garish stripes printed on it, (so you can find your trees in the dark?), so those of you who are more concerned with beauty could consider flax matting. This is designed to slowly decompose and is secured with large metal staples pushed through the mats into the soil. A polypropylene mulch mat, 1 metre square will cost around a pound, whereas a flax mat will cost nearly twice as much.

Once standard apple trees (on MM111 or M25 rootstocks) are established they will have sufficient vigour to not be concerned with competition from grass, whereas semi-dwarfing trees or smaller will benefit from a grass-free area throughout their lives. One final word of warning – if weeds or grass do get the better of you, don't resort to the strimmer. One slip and you can kill a young tree instantly!

Ben Pike

What's On? – Lots!

Contacts for events

Charles Staniland. (Pruning courses)
Tel. 01364 653169.

Coast and Countryside Events.
Tel 01803 861384.

Orchard Link events - contact us
Tel 07792 664710

Orchards Live – contact Jane Schofield
Tel 01884 861181

To volunteer your help at Orchard Link events, call the Orchard Link number above or call direct.

SEPTEMBER 2005

Saturday 17th 'The Fruits of Sharpham'.

A rare opportunity to visit Sharpham estate's newly planted orchard (with Ben Pike), the walled garden, with apples and soft fruit and tour its famous vineyard beside the Dart. 2-5pm. Adults £8, children £6- £7 and £4 to Orchard Link members. Booking essential, call Joanna on 01803 732542.

OCTOBER 2005

Saturday 1st.

Orchard Link will be pressing apples and having a stall at Kingsbridge Farmer's Market on the quay. 9am-1pm. Do come along and lend a hand if you can. You can also come and sell your eating and cooking apples, pears and plums on the stall.

Saturday 1st. Dartmoor Society Annual Debate at Lustleigh Village Hall. See advert opposite. All welcome.

Saturday 8th.

Orchard Link stall and pressing at the new Dartmouth Farmer's Market – in the Old Market, Dartmouth 9am-1pm. Again helpers very welcome.

Sunday 9th. Avon Mill Autumn Festival.

A colourful, enjoyable event with craft stalls, local food, storytelling and more. Orchard Link will be bringing the big wooden press – so volunteers and apples needed!

Saturday 15th. Bere Apple Fest

1.30-5.00pm at Bere Ferrers village hall. An extravaganza of pressing, pruning demonstrations, displays, children's competition and more – see the advert for full details. If you can help, call Brian Lamb on 01822 – 841309.

Bere **APPLE** **FEST** **Saturday** **1 5th October**

Bere Ferrers Village
Hall and Social Club

1.30pm - 5pm
Grand Opening by Peter Corton
from the Horn of Plenty

Featuring
The Story of Apples •
• Grafting & Pruning
Demonstrations of
Apple Pressing
Turn your apples into juice!
Displays and Expert Advice
Refreshments • Activities

CHILDREN'S COMPETITIONS
including
MAKE AN ANIMAL FROM APPLES
LONGEST APPLE PEEL
and much more!

APPLE PIE BAKING
COMPETITION
To be judged by Peter Corton, Head Chef at
The Horn of Plenty, Torquay
LIMERICK COMPETITION
featuring apples!

FREE ADMISSION

In aid of the Bere Ferrers Playground Fund and the Bere Ferrers Villagers' Group.
Supported by Tamar Valley Services, Tamar Orchard Volunteers and Orchard Link

Saturday 15th. Come and be a Cider maker for a day!

Join Steve Mittler, producer of fine cider and apple juices, to collect apples in his historic orchard at Stoke Gabriel. Then watch how they are pressed into juice – and learn how to turn this into cider. Expect tips and tastings plus a bottle of juice to take home. Yarde Farm, Paignton Road, Stoke Gabriel from 2pm. Adults £3, children £1.50. Bring your apples to press - but please just email: steve@realdrink.org to let him know if bringing larger quantities. A joint Coast & Countryside/ Orchard Link event.

Sunday 16th. Apple Day Food Festival at Cockington Court, Torquay.

10am-4pm. Cider pressing, food tasting and children's activities make this a great event. Adults £3, concessions + Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust members £1.50, children free.

Sunday 16th. RHS Apple Day

Another extravaganza of apple activities, crafts, demonstrations and stalls in beautiful Rosemoor Gardens, near Great Torrington, North Devon. For more details contact Orchards Live.

Saturday 22nd + Sunday 23rd. Apple Weekend at Eggesford Garden Centre, North Devon. For more details contact Orchards Live.

Saturday 29th. Orchard Link stall and pressing outside Totnes Farmer's Market, 9am-1pm. We usually bring the big press – so help very welcome! Apples welcome too.

NOVEMBER 2005

Saturday 5th. Orchard Link stall and pressing at Kingsbridge Farmer's Market 9am-1pm. Again volunteers and apples needed.

Sunday 20th. 'Bootiful Apple Sale' at South Molton pannier market 10am-2pm.

Bring your surplus fruit to a unique apple car boot sale! Call Jeanne Nightingale at Orchards Live on 01837 83288 if you would like to bring fruit to sell or can help on the day.

JANUARY 2006

Sunday 15th. Learn to prune – a practical day course tackling old mature trees and young ones too at Berry Pomeroy led by expert Charles Staniland for Orchard Link. 10.30am-4pm. £20, or £15 to Orchard Link members. Booking essential

by January 8th. For further details or to book, call Charles Staniland.

Saturday 21st. Orchard Wassail at Stoke Gabriel.

Come and see the spectacle of the wassail queen wassailing the trees, watch Morris dancing, hear musicians and a storyteller. Enjoy a barbecue or apple cake under the stars! 6pm onwards outside the Victoria and Albert Inn, Stoke Gabriel. Adults £2, children £1, families £5.

Sunday 22nd. Learn to prune – Another expert course led by Charles Staniland – this time in Dartington Primary School's old orchard. 10.30am-4pm. £20, or £15 to Orchard Link members. (free to parents of Dartington school pupils) Booking essential by January 15th. Call Charles Staniland.

Sunday 29th. Another of Charles Staniland's day courses – this time in historic orchards around Stoke Gabriel. 10.30am-4pm. £20, or £15 to Orchard Link members. Booking essential by January 22nd. For further details or to book, call Charles Staniland.

THE DARTMOOR SOCIETY

www.dartmoorsociety.com

'an independent voice for those who find Dartmoor a source of livelihood or inspiration'

PO Box 38, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0XJ

WHAT FUTURE FOR DARTMOOR ORCHARDS?

Lustleigh Village Hall 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Saturday 1 October 2005

PRE-BOOKING ESSENTIAL

The Dartmoor Society is hosting its 8th public annual debate on the subject of Dartmoor apple and cider orchards. Orchards are amazingly rich on account of their apple varieties, but also very important for their ecology and what they mean in cultural terms. In 1960 there were 780 orchards within the national park boundary. By 1997 only 46 were still being 'managed' and 321 had been destroyed.

How could this catastrophic situation have arisen, and what can be done about it?

The day at Lustleigh (starting with coffee at 10 a.m.), in a new hall next to the village's famous community orchard, will be a *celebration* of Dartmoor orchards, with information on their history and use, and is intended to stimulate good practice for the future of orchards, using examples of community projects.

Speakers will include Dan Keech from the national organisation SUSTAIN on the importance of orchards; Tom Greeves on the history of Dartmoor orchards; and several others (including Celia Steven) on community projects, cider production and ways of getting help for the future.

The day is open to everyone, and there will be plenty of time for discussion. Products from three Dartmoor cider orchards will be on sale.

Places for the day must be booked in advance (by 23 September), at a cost of £6.50 (cheques payable to The Dartmoor Society) per person, to include coffee, ploughman's lunch and tea. Send to The Dartmoor Society, PO Box 38, Tavistock PL19 0XJ. Further information at 01822 617004.

Planting From Pips

In this Spring's edition of Permaculture Magazine (a great read on all things 'green'), I spotted an article on local apples for local climates. As I read, the author, Richard Brambrey reminded readers that in the past- before nurseries and plant catalogues, most apple trees were grown from seeds.

Whilst we know that the Romans grafted apple trees (Brogdale has a Miel D'Or apple which is said to be a Roman variety- its purity of course kept by grafting,) many more farmers planted apple seeds or came by their apple trees by mistake: They were simply the seedlings which sprouted from discarded apples or apple pulp after cider making. Although they didn't know about genetics, farmers and gardeners knew that apples were hybrids- trees planted from pips were never quite like the parent tree. So a particularly popular tree which grew from seed was often propagated on by means of grafting- graftwood passed on to neighbours and beyond.

Today we still appreciate the way in which local varieties of apple are adapted to the local conditions in which they grow. That's why we at Orchard Link often recommend that orchards are replanted with local traditional apple varieties- its not just for conserving old varieties. Richard Brambrey reminded me that it was the local conditions of climate and soil type which originally decided which apple pips, from a pile of apple waste would thrive and grow: Only those apple pips which grew into strong healthy trees and tasted good into the bargain, would be selected for propagation by grafting. Nature had to do its own process of natural selection before man could have a hand in it- it was evolution on the local scale.

With this in mind, Brambrey urges us to look at the 'rogue' apple trees which can be found outside orchards- on the edges of woods and on patches of waste ground. Each has probably sprouted from a discarded core but survived despite human care. He reminded me of some of the stunted apple trees I have come across on the coast path- which often have surprisingly good apples despite a hostile location. These are a case of natural selection if ever there was one. And of course, some of our best loved apples were planted from pips quite intentionally. Have you ever wondered where the Bramley's seedling came from?

So Brambrey encourages us to try planting a few apples from seed. If you are given some tasty local apples this autumn, why not give it a try. Nature will sort out the fittest seeds from the batch and I'm told that you may have to wait ten years to taste the fruit. If you have a small spare patch of garden or orchard, experimenting will cost you nothing but a

little time. None of the resultant trees will be quite like the parent, but you may find a very likeable variation, unique to you and your location.

Pip planting tips.

Brambrey says that the best way to plant pips is wet from the apple. Just take them out of the core and plant 4 or 5 in a 6cm/2 1/2 pot of moist compost. Don't forget to label. Leave outside or in an unheated greenhouse over winter and germination should happen the following spring. Brambrey says that with this simple method, germination rates of 80% have been achieved. If you are pressing apples this autumn, you'll have a ready supply of thousands of pips to maybe restock your orchard. Happy experimenting!

News from Around

Much Marcle

Every year, they have a wonderful weekend of orchard celebration at Much Marcle in Herefordshire: there are usually apple displays, demonstrations of cider-making, cider tastings, music and farm visits. I wish, one year, a whole group of us could mini-bus ourselves up to join in and to meet other orchard enthusiasts! The weekend is called 'the Big Apple', and this year it is on 15th - 16th October. The programme of events is on the internet on:

www.marcherapple.net/bigapple They also have a Blossom-time event on 30th April-1st May 2006. Details of local accommodation can be obtained from Ledbury Tourist Information Centre tel.01531 636147.

Brogdale

Brogdale Horticultural Trust, Faversham, Kent is the home of the National Fruit Collection and it is open to the public. They are holding a Cider Festival on 24th and 25th September and an Apple Festival on 22-23rd October, 2005 with other events earlier in the week. They offer a special fruit identification service to people who come to these events, and it costs £5 per variety. Normally, the postal identification service costs considerably more than this 'personal callers only' service, so if you feel like a trip to Kent, take your unknown apples, plums &c with you for the Cider or Apple Festivals. To find out more about Brogdale, see their web-site: www.brogdale.org.uk or e-mail them at info@brogdale.org.uk Telephone for more information about identification on 01795 535286.

RHS Garden Rosemoor

If Kent seems too long a journey, Rosemoor is holding its Apple Day on 16th October, 10am - 5pm, this year, and you can take your apple for free identification to the Plant Centre on that day. Their address is Great Torrington, North Devon, EX38 8PH Tel: 01805 624 067.



A Blossom Walk to See a Commercial Organic Orchard on a Grand Scale

On Sunday 8th May 2005, Jeffrey Nicholls and his son, Reg Nicholls of Berry Farm, Berry Pomeroy took Orchard Link members on a fascinating walk around one of their orchards. This was far more than a chance to enjoy apple trees in blossom. The farm is organic and abounds in wildlife including cirl-buntings, skylarks, hares, even peregrine falcons and greater horseshoe bats. It also abounds in the old varieties of apple tree which are the stuff of Devon history. We walked under the branches of the rare Paignton Marigold, which Jeffrey says is 'a terrific yielder, it's fairly plastered with apples', and he showed us Slack My Girdle, again a famous tree, which was not yet in bloom. But the orchards are not only wildlife-friendly, they are also part of what is really a traditional mixed farm on a grand scale.

The Nicholls family came into Berry Farm 100 years ago as tenants of the Duke of Somerset. In the 1960s, Jeffrey took on a second farm so that now they look after 700 acres with about 600 ewes, 130 suckled South Devon cows and their progeny, 200 acres of arable as well as their 16 acres of orchards, the rest being grass leys and permanent pasture. The orchards are grazed in the spring and summer. Last year's lambs come into the orchards when the grass is young, followed by the ewes which are going to be culled, and their dung fertilises the ground and feeds the apple trees in a natural way. About a month before picking starts, the sheep come out of the orchards. Then with the help of a picking-machine, they pick an average of about 50 tons of apples to sell to cider- and juice-makers. Last year they picked up about 90 tons, marking the trunks of the trees for taste, and collecting into potato-boxes. Finally, the apples which they keep for their own use are stored in a shed in boxes, each apple sitting separately (not wrapped in paper) so that air can circulate around it.

Reg explained that the 16 acres of orchards are kept organically under a Countryside Stewardship agreement. Under the scheme they have agreed to prune a certain number of trees each year and also to plant a certain number. Charles Staniland, (who walked round with us,) has been pruning the trees, and showed us that some trees which used to crop biennially now crop every year. The Nicholls have planted about 200 trees since they came into the scheme. Reg tries to buy stock local to the area so that the trees will be more canker-resistant, and when they are planting a new tree, they fill a hole with soil from the arable fields so that the ground will be fresh.

We are most grateful to Jeffrey and Reg Nicholls for taking us on this memorable walk around their orchard and for telling us all kinds of fascinating information about the orchards and the way that they fit into their farming system. There was so much that was interesting that I have failed to mention how beautiful the orchards are at Berry Farm when they are in blossom! They are well worth another visit.

Jacqueline Sarsby

A Network of Contacts

Orchard Link member Robert Jubb suggested that members may wish to be in touch with each other over common areas of interest – perhaps because they are living close by or are making their own cider, or are learning to prune etc.

Whilst we at Orchard Link cannot publish a list of member's names, contact number's and email addresses, if anyone would like to volunteer to be on a contact list – circulated amongst those Orchard Link members who are also listed – please let us know. After all, we are an organization which thrives on networking and skill sharing. Any other good ideas for keeping in contact or helping each other out?

Contact Orchard link at:-

**ORCHARD LINK, PO BOX 109,
TOTNES, TQ9 5XR.**

Or call – 07792 664710.

Don't forget to visit our website at:-

www.orchardlink.org.uk

You can email us there or at:

info@orchardlink.org.uk