



ORCHARD LINK *NEWS*

Welcome Aboard!

Since Orchard Link started we've always had lots of interest and feedback from the Tamar Valley area. Once a major nursery area; developing and growing new varieties of apples and its own famous Tamar Valley cherries, there are still many farmers and smallholders with orchards, who are keen on managing them and using their produce.

So we'd like to extend a special welcome to the Tamar Valley Countryside Service, who have just joined Orchard Link as corporate members. Now, orchard owners in the area will receive copies of Orchard Link News and will be able to join our network for support, information and apple sales.

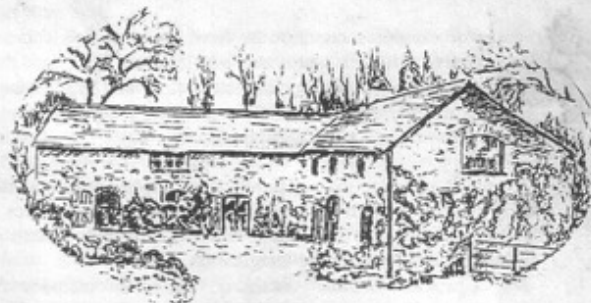
Orchards are high on the agenda in the services newly launched management plan for the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Plan is the culmination of two years of consultation and discussion between many groups in the area. The Plan aims to conserve the landscape of the Tamar, Tavy and Lynher Valleys – which is recognised as being one of the most important examples of England's countryside. It has received widespread support and is expected to attract funding into the area for work to conserve the environment and boost the local economy.

Although the Management Plan focuses on conserving the Tamar Valley's landscape, it also looks to the social and economic well being of the area, considering such things as development, traffic, tourism and education. The Plan sets out 25 objectives for the area and proposes 125 actions for agencies and local groups to tackle together over the next five years. For further details contact the Tamar Valley Countryside Service on 01822 610676.



Inside:

- ◆ Come to our Annual Gathering
- ◆ Learn to prune, courses and expert tips.
- ◆ Plant colourful crab apples



Don't miss Orchard Link's Annual Gathering – Sunday 25th February at Lower Grimpstonleigh

A chance to meet Orchard Link members in a great atmosphere, to learn more about apples and orchards and find out about Orchard Link's plans for 2001.

For our second annual gathering we've been invited to Lower Grimpstonleigh by Kevin and Petina Frost. Kevin and Petrina make cider and apple juice using Orchard Link's and their own apples, which they are producing from three new, traditionally planted orchards.

Our visit will include a talk and tasting by Keith Goverd who produces over a hundred single variety apple juices, and a hot pasty, pickle and cider lunch.

Members of Orchard Link are entitled to two FREE tickets to this event. Non-members are welcome to attend at £5 per head although places are limited and tickets need to be booked in advance.

Programme

10.45 onwards	Arrival and coffee
11.10	'A Year in the Life of Orchard Link' – a brief update on your organisation.
11.30	'Producing Single Variety Apple Juices' talk by Keith Goverd, after which there will be a chance to taste several single variety apple juice.
12.30	Hot pasty lunch, with salad, pickles and Grimpstonleigh cider or apple juice.
1.30 onwards	Optional stroll around Grimpstonleigh's three new orchards and a look at the cider press.

New Orchard book from Common Ground

Common Ground, creator of Apple Day, celebrates orchards as our best relations with nature in a new unique and sumptuous book. It explores how orchards continue to shape local culture from custom to kitchen and urges us to value old orchards of tall trees for their delicate ecology and local distinctiveness.

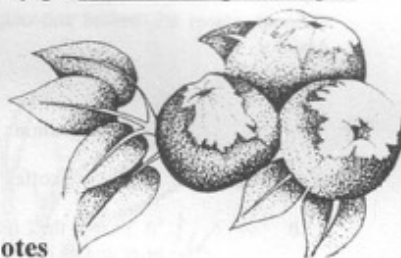
Scores of examples demonstrate how, in town and country, Community Orchards provide wholesome food, wildlife havens, arenas for communal celebration and inspirational places where the development of orcharding knowledge across generations and ethnicity can flourish.

The result of more than a dozen years of campaigning, this book presents a positive survival plan for orchards as places in which everyone can take part. It offers those in search of sustainability a feast for the imagination.

The Common Ground Book of Orchards includes 50 photographs of westcountry orchards by James Ravilious. They show how people have worked with nature to create great richness and beauty. James patiently captured a way of life proud of the hard won knowledge passed from generation to generation.

Contents include: Local Distinctiveness, Community Orchards, Saving Orchards, Planting New Orchards, City and Country, Orchard Fruits, Sharing with Nature, Inspiration (arts, crafts, poetry, customs, recipes) Apple Day, Produce, Passing on Knowledge (education formal and informal), An Apple a Day (health) Everyday Tasks (maintenance) Appendices include a county gazetteer of local varieties, useful organisations, courses, publications, nurseries, fruit suppliers, funding sources and much more.

This is sure to be a fabulous collection of knowledge and ideas; we've got our copies on order already! If you order the book direct from Common Ground before 31st December it's available at the special price of £17.00 post free a saving of £6.95. Send cheques to 'Common Ground' at PO Box 25309, London NW5 1ZA web page: www.commonground.org.uk



Some pruning notes

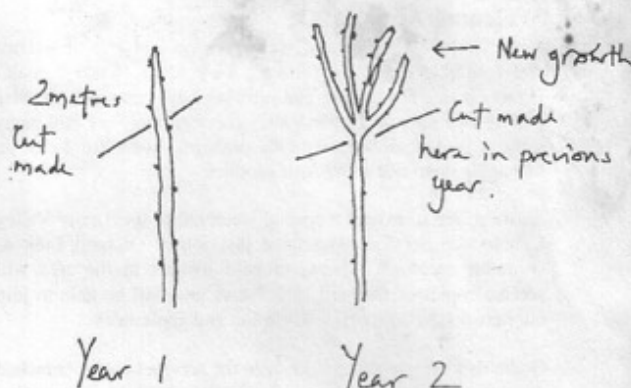
By Ben Pike

It's that time of year again, no not Xmas pudding and turkey, but time to prune your apple trees. As I write the rain pours and pours making most jobs in the garden impossible, yet pruning your trees can well be attempted now.

I have just been to visit a client who in an attempt to better her beautiful old orchard has been to four different talks on pruning apple trees, and has come back confused because she now has four different methods.

I suppose that in theory, pruning should be an exact science, but different schools of thought have always existed and probably

always will. My views on pruning young trees on M25 root stocks have been changing recently. I was taught by several people to cut the leader (main stem) when it reached about 2 metres, in order to encourage branches to shoot from around this height. And it is true it does encourage branches to form, let me explain in a diagram.



The growth that forms from just below the pruning cut is usually a cluster of upright branches all competing to be a new leader. The disadvantage is that these new young branches are all growing close together, and are not at the desired angle to the trunk. If branches are left to develop naturally they will usually form at a much wider angle to the trunk. These are stronger branches later in life, and encourage the desired horizontal rather than vertical growth. If a tree is reluctant to grow any laterals (new branches), then I may use a technique known as notching. This is using a very sharp knife (not that rusty Swiss Army knife that your son left behind when he went to college) to cut a crescent - shape a nick in the wood just above a bud that you want to break.

However, most apple trees will form a crown on their own and pruning can be limited to cutting out crossing or badly placed branches, and competing leaders, and choosing to keep branches that form a wide angle to the trunk. Also beneficial is the gradual cutting back of the feather (small branches low down on the main trunk). These will not be kept as they are below the required height for the first branches, but cutting them back gradually helps to build a strong trunk.

Other things to check at this time of year include rabbit guards and correct staking. Most damage to young trees caused by rabbits occurs in the late winter when food is short, so check or fit spiral guards now. It is also worth checking the condition of stakes and tree ties after the recent storms. I have seen more trees die from poor staking than no staking. If a tree rubs against the stake, or is strangled by a tie that is too tight, the resultant wound can be infected by canker, and being on the main stem, that can be the end of your tree. I'd better stop now before I sound like one of those books about pests and diseases that makes you wonder how you could ever grow a healthy plant. Have a great Xmas.

Don't forget that Ben Pike offers FREE advice to Orchard Link members. See the South Hams Orchard Services advert on the inside back page for details.

Plant some Colourful Crabs.

If you're planting a new orchard or adding new trees to an existing one this winter, it's well worth planting a few crab apples amidst the apple trees.

As well as producing crab apples from which you can make delicious jellies and a welcome splash of autumn colour, they'll easily cross pollinate between many varieties of apple trees, ensuring that your apple trees will bear fruit too.

Kevin Croucher from Thornhayes Nursery gives an expert view and tempts you with some exciting varieties.

Crab Apple. It's an odd name for a very pretty and useful group of plants. The *Crab* element is probably from Middle English, possibly derived from Scandinavian, simply meaning sour. This would have been the description applied to the native crab apple *Malus sylvestris*, which would have been harvested in the ancient past, for it's sharp autumn fruits before the introduction of improved apples from abroad. It can still be harvested at this time of year for making into excellent crab apple jelly. Whilst it is still planted in hedges and woodland margins for its conservation value, as a garden tree it has mostly been replaced by more visually attractive exotic species and hybrids. These can provide useful and decorative autumn fruits, striking autumn leaf colour and of course spring blossom in a range of colours. So let's explore the arboretum.

One thing to remember when growing crab apples, is that they are prey to the same diseases that cause us problems with apples in the Westcountry. We have to be careful to avoid varieties that are prone to the dreaded trio of scab, canker and powdery mildew. This means that some of the varieties recommended in the gardening press, which is largely centred on the south east of England, need to be viewed critically. Even so, there is a great wealth of beautiful crab apples that thrive 'down yer'.

Perhaps before venturing further we should ask the question, 'Where do crabs come from?' (This is really a two fold question, with at least that many answers)

Botanically speaking, crab apples form part of the genus *Malus*, within the family Rosaceae. There are hundreds of wild species, originating from the northern temperate zone, across Europe, Asia and North America. They inhabit everywhere from high mountains to lush lowland forests and range from shrubs to trees of 30 feet plus. Added to this are the thousands of hybrids and cultivars bred and selected by man from the wild species.



From a practical viewpoint, crabs are propagated from seed in a few cases, or more commonly by budding or grafting on to an apple rootstock. Normally the rootstock is a semi vigorous sort and will give you a small to medium sized tree, depending on the species or cultivar in question. However some nurseries and garden centres sell what are referred to as patio trees. These are crab apples grafted on to a dwarfing M27 rootstock, for growing in tubs. At best they will make a plant of 6-8 feet if cosseted. If planted in the garden they struggle and make a sad little bush.

So from this vast wealth of crab apples available to us, what do we choose? Below is a table of some choice crab apples for various uses, other than their lovely displays of blossom.

Attractive large fruit, suitable for jelly making. *Malus* 'Dartmouth', 'Malus' John Downie', *Malus* 'Veitch's Scarlet'

Attractive, but smaller, brightly coloured fruits. *Malus baccata*, *Malus hupehensis*, *Malus x robusta* 'Red Sentinel', *Malus transitoria*, *Malus x zumi* 'Golden Hornet'.

Bright autumn foliage colour. *Malus hupehensis*, *Malus prattii*, *Malus sargentii*, *Malus toringoides*, *Malus transitoria*, *Malus trilobata*.

This article was first commissioned by Devon Country Gardener magazine.

From Juice to Crafts

Those who visit Dartington Cider Press Centre may be interested to know that the press was not used for cider but rather for juice. Following on from the 1920's German health movement, it was installed by the Elmhursts, who were using the whole of their estate as a new 'experiment in living'.

Henry Williamson, author of 'Tarka the Otter', and a contemporary writes:

Apple wine/juice

'I read that Germany's production of apple wine, the sort of cider made from ordinary apples which I drank on my recent holiday, bottled unfermented and therefore non-alcoholic, has risen from 2,500,000 litres in 1928 to 50,000,000 litres (about 12,500,000 gallons) last year. Thousands of bushels of apples which would otherwise be wasted are thus used. And what a good drink it is!

Dartington Hall, Devon

'Since writing in my journal last week about the German manufacture of apple wine I see that an experimental plant has been installed at Dartington Hall, Devon, which it is hoped will pioneer a new industry and may prove of importance to the fruit growers of this country. The method employed is a new cold process recently perfected in Germany, in which the fresh apple juice is stored in tanks under a constant pressure of 120lbs to the square inch, by carbonic acid gas. The apple juice is released from the tanks when required for bottling. It has no preservatives added, is unfermented, and in every way equal to fresh apple juice. Scientists claim that the fruit sugars of natural apple juice have an extraordinary value, as they are immediately absorbed unchanged into the system, giving instantaneous energy, stimulate glandular activity, and improve the whole balance of the digestion. The process is, unfortunately, more expensive than cider making, but this is offset by the fact that thousands of tons of surplus and damaged fruit, which is now wasted, can be used'.

Taken from 'Norfolk Life' by Lilius Rider Haggard and Henry Williamson. Published by Faber & Faber 1938

Eat the view

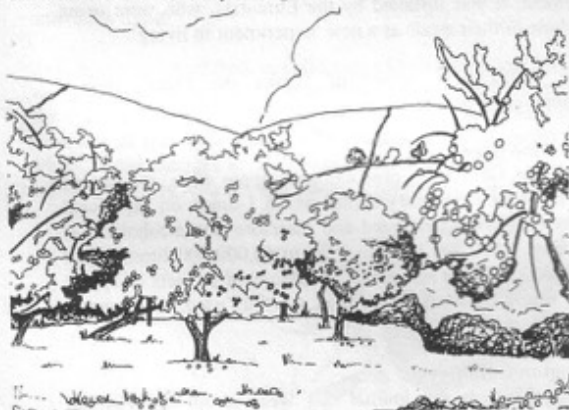
'Eat the View' an ambitious new initiative by the Countryside Agency seems to offer support for Orchard Link's ethos of conserving landscape by making its product more viable. We were encouraged to hear more -

By taking on the role of intermediary between food producers, local activists, consumers and government, the Countryside Agency aims to promote and accelerate the production of 'sustainable, local produce' - to the benefit of producers, consumers, local rural economies, the environment and the landscape.

The Agency identifies a number of current trends which suggest a growing momentum for change:

- Increasing public concern about food safety and demands for more information about production methods.
- A growing emphasis within government on sustainable rural development and the integration of environmental, social and economic goals.
- A recognition that buying local produce can help reduce transport miles and hence our contribution to global warming and pollution.
- A growing interest in alternative forms of retailing, such as farmers' markets, at the farm gate and mail order.

While acknowledging the scale of 'barriers to progress' ranging from public ignorance of farming practices to the might of the large food retailers and the local of collaborative working among British producers, the Countryside Agency nonetheless sets itself a series of goals - educating the public about the effects their purchasing decisions have on the rural environment and economy and the positive steps they can take; helping to develop and implement production, marketing, distribution and accreditation strategies for local sustainably-produced foods. These will be achieved by a range of measures:



- Articulating the issues and providing information about the relationship between products, how they are produced, and their impacts on the countryside.
- Advising government and influencing the development of policy and support measures.
- Initiating and supporting demonstration projects at both national and regional level.
- Acting as a facilitator to bring together local partnerships and to establish new initiatives.
- Undertaking research and disseminating the results.
- Collating and disseminating information on good practice.
- Building public and political support for increasing the assistance available to encourage the development of new markets.

If you would like more information about the 'Eat the View' initiative, contact Andy Neale or James Markwick on: 01242 521381 Fax: 01242 584270 (website: www.countryside.gov.uk)

Think Globally, Shop Locally

Talking of the environmental benefits (let alone those to our health) of eating locally produced food, we liked this poem and thought it might amuse you:

The universal shopper

She buys apples from New Zealand, although just across the way
Is an orchard full of apples which she passes every day.

Her mushrooms come from Ireland, a place called Killybone.
Her carrots and tomatoes in the Netherlands were grown.

From Italy some pears, and then some celery from Spain.
There's butter from Australia, flour made from Canadian grain.

Her milk has been collected from farmers far and wide
Then all across the country it's had a merry ride.

She gets strawberries out of season from the good old USA:
And mangoes and papayas from X thousand miles away.

From Denmark, ham and bacon; French cheese (a tasty bite)
And a loaf that came this morning, after travelling all night.

She must have new potatoes, although it is not Spring.
But never mind, Egyptian ones are right there in the bin.

Her joint of beef from Scotland has journeyed far and near,
From the farm, through various depots, until she bought it here.

Her eggs? Well, where they came from she simply does not know,
They're taken from the shelf and quickly in her trolley go.

Her purchases are all wrapped up in card and cellophane.
She takes them to the checkout - where they're double-wrapped again.

She uses lots of plastic bags to put her shopping in.
When she gets home and empties them, they'll all go in the bin.

She drives home, round the corner from the Hypermarket store.
Her bill was thirty-one pounds ten - the cost was much, much more.

(Reproduced with the kind permission of Veronica-Mae Soar)

Don't forget the South Hams Farmers Markets - see the diary for details!

Apples from Cornish Orchards

For those in the Looe Valley area, there's a new outlet for cider and dessert apples. A new company 'Cornish Orchards' has established a press and pasteurising unit in Liskeard and is looking for supplies of apples. You can if you wish even help to mill and press your own apples at special pressing days. Call Andy or Jenny Atkinson for details on 01503 269007

Make a Devon Kissing Bough

Here's something you can make from your orchard using a few hard small apples and things from the hedgerow – and its totally free! Instructions are given by expert local basketmaker Hilary Burns.

Long before the Christmas tree came into fashion evergreen foliage was brought indoors to celebrate the midwinter festival. A kissing bough was traditional and apples were used for decoration.

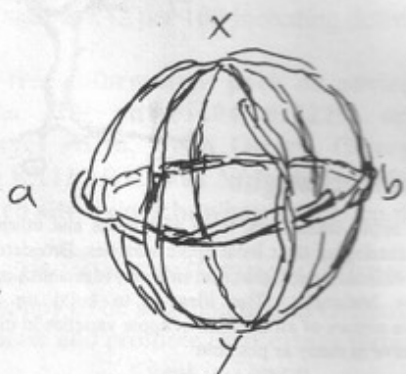
To make a round kissing bough you will need:-

6 or more lengths one year old hazel, willow or pliable hedgerow material, at least 6' long and about ½" at the thick end. Lengths of small-leaved trailing ivy and greenery. Raffia/garden twine. Fine wire. One or more small rosy apples. A sprig of mistletoe.

Make the first hoop by slowly working the first hazel rod into a circle avoiding any kinks (work on the thick end to stretch the fibres). Twist the tip end round the hoop several times, and secure with wire if necessary.



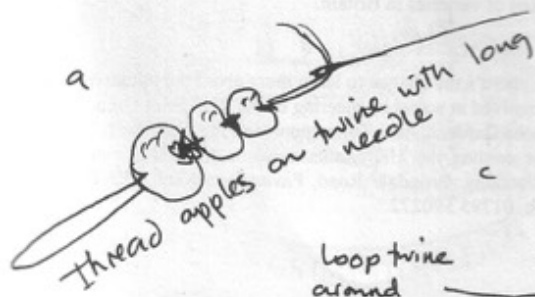
Make a second hoop in the same way, it should fit around the first ring. Wire into place at a and b. Keep the thick ends of the rods on opposite sides.



Identify the top and bottom axis and mark points x and y. The next two hoops must intersect at these points to make segments. They should be added directly to the existing framework, winding the rods over and under the hoops to secure them. Space out the thick ends. When hung from point x the ring should balance and hang level.

Twist the ivy around the framework so that it is well covered, but leaving the gaps visible. Thread apples onto the raffia or twine. Use a small peg to hold them at the bottom. They should hang in the top half of the hoop so that they can be seen through the gaps. Make a loop to hang the kissing bough up and hang the sprig of mistletoe underneath.

Hilary Burns teaches courses, will make baskets on commission or has a large range for sale.
Call 01803 553144 for details



Loop twine around



b
cut peg of wood + secure with a knife

What's on?

For Coast and Countryside events call 01803 861140. For Tresillian Garden Project courses call- 01548 853220. For Dartington North Devon Trust events call 01272 376365

January

Tuesday 16th

Orchard Wassail. Join traditional celebrations to ensure a good apple crop next season, in the Quarry Orchard, Buckland Abbey. 7.30pm. Wear warm clothes, bring a torch or a lantern. Booking essential. Call the National Trust on 01822 853607.

Saturday 20th

Orchard Wassail. Join the traditional celebrations in Stoke Gabriel's beautiful community orchard. 7pm onwards Adults £2, children £1!

Saturday 27th

Improve Your Pruning. For those who have done some basic pruning or attended a previous basic pruning course. Based at Berry Pomeroy £14. Booking essential. Call the Coast and Countryside Service.

February

Saturday 17th

Learn to Prune in a Kingsbridge orchard with expert tuition from Ben Pike. Organised by Tresillian Garden Project.

Saturday 24th

Grafting Course at North Tawton Rugby Club with Kevin Croucher of Thornhayes Nursery. 10am - 3pm. Practice wood, wax and knives provided but please bring grafting knives if you have them and graftwood from varieties of apple trees you wish to propagate. £6. Organised by Dartington North Devon Trust. Please book places in advance.

Sunday 25th

Don't miss Orchard Link's Annual Gathering, with lunch at Grimpstonleigh. BOOKING ESSENTIAL. Call the Coast and Countryside Service.

March

Saturday 24th

Meeting of the Royal Horticultural Society's Fruit Group, at Rosemoor North Devon. Pippa Palmer from Brogdale will talk about the UK Malus network. Organised by Dartington North Devon Trust.

Saturday 31st

Composting workshop, with Nick Scott at Tresillian Garden, Kingsbridge. Turn Orchard and Garden waste into valuable compost! 10am to 1pm £7.50 (£5). Book via Tresillian Garden Project.

South Hams Farmers Markets

Support your local farmers and buy the freshest of produce!

In Kingsbridge on the Quay

Saturday 6th January

Saturday 3rd February

Saturday 3rd March

In Totnes in the Civic Hall

Saturday 27th January

Saturday



Malus Aforethought

Whilst many apple enthusiasts, local authorities and others are carefully cataloging their local apple varieties, Brogdale, home of the National Fruit Collection in Kent, is establishing a UK Malus Network. The idea is to build up a comprehensive picture of all the known apple varieties in the UK and conserve as many as possible.

The database currently hold a list of 7379 malus domestica, of which nearly 6000 are described in the National Apple Register.

By spreading the word, standardising how apple varieties are described and finding out how and where living tree stocks exist, the network will be doing a vital job in saving the vast genetic pool of varieties in Britain.

In March, there's the chance to learn more about the initiative and get involved at a special meeting of the RHS Fruit Group at Rosemoor Gardens, near Torrington. See the diary for full details, or contact the UK Malus network at the National Fruit Collections, Brogdale Road, Faversham, Kent, ME1B 8XZ. Tel: 01795 590272.

Remember your membership!

After three years of sending individual subscription reminders to members, we've decided to save some admin time and money and let membership run from 1st January to 31st December each year.

For those of you who should have renewed during the Autumn (not your fault, as we chose not to do individual reminder letters!) that means you have up to three free months of membership. All existing members should have received a renewal form with this newsletter, and if you'd like to join as a member for the first time, now is an ideal time.

Membership entitles you to:

- 4 seasonal newsletters a year; full of news, events and advice.
- Two free tickets to our Annual Gathering (with food and drink!).
- Advice over the telephone from Orchard Link or Ben Pike (South Hams Orchard Services).
- The Harvestline Collection service (for members in South Devon).

So it's excellent value! Especially with our superb Annual Gathering coming up in February.

Membership also makes an ideal gift for a friend who is keen on orchards. What's more we'll send them a special Christmas card, newsletter and a message from you – so there's no wrapping or posting to do! Call and send a cheque by 18th December to ensure Christmas subscriptions arrive in time.

Caught in the Web?

If you've had trouble accessing our web pages, you're not alone. Last year ADAPT who are promoting schemes which made traditional landscapes more viable, designed three pages free for us, but you'll need to look for them under their site.

Over the year, the address changed slightly but now it's easy to locate on:

<http://telematics-ex.ac.uk/mlp/resource/orchard.htm>

You'll also find some interesting pages on Silvanus woodlands, culm grasslands, all of interest to landowners.

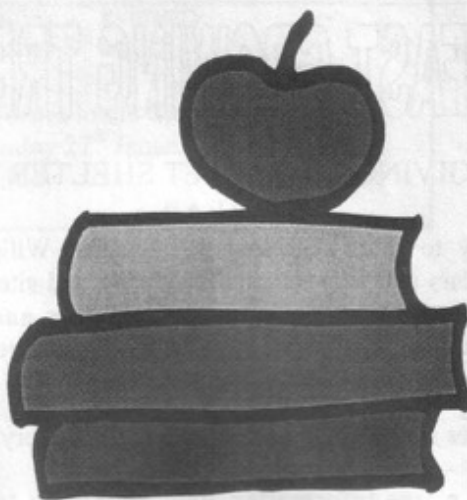


We wish all our members and supporters a very happy Christmas and a fruitful new year!

Stocking Fillers – or a new year's read?

Don't forget that we offer some very useful books to help you care for and manage your orchard. All are available by post from Orchard Link. Just add £1 for each book (50p if only order the cider book, to cover postage).

- 'Burcombes, Collogetts & Queenies' by Virginia Spiers, with fabulous paintings by Mary Martin and details on many rare Tamar Valley, Devon and Cornish apple varieties researched by James Armstrong Evans. £15.00
- 'Orchards – a practical guide to management' a pack of 12 informative sheets, published by Devon Books for Devon County Council. £5.00.
- 'Farmhouse Cider and Scrumpy' by Bob Bunker, a useful little book, full of colour photographs. £2.99.



Keep in Contact

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<http://telematics-ex.ac.uk/mlp/resource/orchard.htm>

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