

## Community Orchards



The idea of community orchards came from Common Ground's campaign to save vulnerable old orchards. In starting the Apple Day movement they used an annual event as a way of raising the profile of orchards. This has now extended to the planting of new orchards.



Blossom at Bowling Park Community Orchard

Orchards are collections of fruit trees. Typically apple, pear, plum, cherry, cob nuts are planted in orchards. There are culinary varieties including perry pear and cider apples, the range of varieties ensuring succession of fruit for much of the year (including those varieties that were bred for storage and late ripening. Traditional orchards consisted of tall standard trees with grass underneath, where animals were grazed for part of the year. These orchards often have many wildflower species amongst the grass. Newer plantings can offer diverse

wildlife habitats too and with modern dwarfing rootstock the trees are low enough for the smallest member of the community to learn how to manage and care for the trees. New plantings may be regional heritage varieties or modern ones.

While individual community orchards may vary considerably they all share the same core features of public access, community space in which to celebrate local fruit and to hold festivals and events as well as places to learn about our fruit heritage. They help revive an interest in fruit growing and often give people the opportunity to learn how to manage fruit trees as well as providing a space for people to relax and observe the wildlife that colonise these small havens. Community orchards are also places where people from different backgrounds and ages can meet and start to build shared experiences.

Community orchards have to be open and accessible. The land may be owned or leased by the community or held in trust on behalf of the community by local group, parish council, local authority or voluntary body. The community is part of the orchard, sharing in the work of the uptake and in the harvest too. Commercial production is not part of the purpose of these orchards so their design and use can be whatever the community can imagine.

Pressure on land for home building combined with the loss of income due to cheap imports means that we have lost many commercial and traditional orchards. At one time every farm house had a small orchard with varieties growing across the UK. Orchards at the margins of towns and villages are often in prime development areas. You can still see some of these remnants in the gardens of developments. The acreage of commercial orchards has declined rapidly: from 62,200 hectares in 1970 to 46,600 hectares in 1980 down to 22,400 hectares in 1997. A 64% decline in 27 years.

If an orchard near you is under threat, Common Ground have produced a range of advice notes. Their web site is very useful: [www.commonground.org.uk](http://www.commonground.org.uk)



## Community Orchards in Bradford & District.



The community orchard movement is young in Bradford & District with a few small sites. Most are run by volunteers and welcome people who may be interested in supporting or getting involved in their project. They will not have regular opening times to the public but most welcome visitors by prior arrangement.

**Bowling Park Community Orchard** The largest Community Orchard in the District so far is Bowling Park Community Orchard, planted in 2003 on six disused allotments at the Bowling Park Allotment Site. The planting was facilitated by BEES (Bradford Environmental Education Service) and undertaken by a group of volunteers who now form the management team for the orchard. The orchard now has 26 types of apple, including old varieties, six kinds of pear tree, and other soft fruits.



A volunteer day at Bowling Park Community Orchard

The fruit is cultivated organically without the use of chemicals, and the harvest offers a variety of flavours and textures never found in the local supermarkets. Traditional Yorkshire varieties have been planted as well as some soft fruit. The trees are already attracting wildlife such as Comma and Peacock butterflies, linnets, bullfinches, and a kestrel.

**Location:** Bowling Park Allotments, Bowling Park Drive, West Bowling, Bradford

**Contact:** Julia Pearson, BEES, YMCA, Trinity Road, Bradford BD5 0JG  
Tel: 01274 741223, email: [bees@bradford.ymca.org.uk](mailto:bees@bradford.ymca.org.uk).

**Redcliffe Community Orchard.** A small orchard of 17 Trees in Highfield area of Keighley. It was planted March 2002. This was the first orchard planted by BEES in a plot of land behind houses on a path linking Devonshire Street and Redcliffe Grove in Keighley.

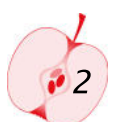
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**Lost to the Woods Community Orchard, Heaton Allotments** A newly established site comprising mostly apple trees of local or unusual varieties with wildflower meadow underplanting. Access is via Emm Lane, Bradford. The orchard is at the far end on left from the Quarry Street entrance.

**Contact:** Sam Lawrence, email [samdavidlawrence@hotmail.com](mailto:samdavidlawrence@hotmail.com)

## Community Orchards in Yorkshire

There are many new initiatives that include community orchards as part of environmental improvements and preservation or promoting healthy lifestyles





blossoming in our region. Below are a few examples, some of which may welcome visitors. Do try to contact the organisation if you intend to visit. Most voluntary organisations will welcome people who are interested in what they are doing and who are often keen to make links with like-minded people and organisations in the region to exchange ideas and often visit each other's projects.



Cobden Orchards Project is run by West Leeds Healthy Living Network. This is a new project just starting on allotments in Farnley. Web site [www.farnleyandwortleyward.info](http://www.farnleyandwortleyward.info)

Ecclesfield Park Community Orchard, at the north-east corner of Ecclesfield Park in Sheffield has a wonderful carved oak bench as part of art in the park.

Glass Park Community Orchard, near Doncaster. A registered charity formed by Kirk Sandall Community Wildlife Group. They have a large site between the villages of Kirk Sandall and Barnby Dun, north-east of Doncaster. Information on the project can be found on [www.doncaster.gov.uk](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk)



Children from Bowling Park Primary School planting apple trees

Low Moor Allotments Association, York. They have a comprehensive web site worth visiting [www.sitemeter.com/stats.asp?site=sm9LowMoorAllotments](http://www.sitemeter.com/stats.asp?site=sm9LowMoorAllotments). The secretary is Al Oswald, email: [al.oswald@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:al.oswald@english-heritage.org.uk)

Pickering Community Orchard in Hull is another allotment based project started in 2003 supported by the Hull and East Riding Five-A-Day programme. [www.hullcc.gov.uk](http://www.hullcc.gov.uk) has links to articles on the project and contacts for people interested in visiting with a view to starting a similar project.

### Orchards to Visit in Yorkshire

There are several traditional orchards worth visiting in Yorkshire plus some newly planted ones. Here is a list with contact details where possible of some of the places you can visit. This list also includes some community orchards. These may or may not be open to visitors. Contact them before you visit to check opening times and charges (if any).

Ampleforth Abbey Orchards near Thirsk situated between the villages of Ampleforth and Oswaldkirk. These have been producing apples for over a century having over 65 varieties including old regional ones and is run by monks from Ampleforth Abbey. Open to visitors and customers between 2 to 4 pm between July and November most working days. Visitors are welcome to enjoy the blossom from late April to May. Call beforehand to check. Tel: 01439 766899

Beningbrough Hall & Gardens near York has one of the largest collections of fruit trees in a National Trust walled garden. They serve fruit dishes in their restaurant and also hold an annual Apple Day, tel: 01904 470666.

Cannon Hall Museum near Barnsley has a historic pear collection. 30 varieties grow in a walled garden built in 1760. Open all year. Pear Day is celebrated in September. Tel: 01226 790270



East Riddlesden Hall, near Keighley, has a small walled garden with espalier pears and a recently planted orchard. Tel: 01535 607075

RHS Harlow Carr, near Harrogate, home to the Northern Fruit Group, runs day courses throughout the year on fruit growing and specialises in varieties that thrive in the north of England. Tel: 01423 565418.

Helmsley Walled Garden near Thirsk has been planted up in 2001 by the Northern Fruit Group with 50+ varieties of apples including heritage local varieties. Contact either Harlow Carr or the secretary, Brian Gable 01325 720571.

[www.helmsleywalledgarden.org.uk](http://www.helmsleywalledgarden.org.uk)

Hudson House Walled Garden in Reeth, North Yorkshire in the Yorkshire Dales National Park has a community orchard and often has events. Reeth Community Office is based there. Find more information on [www.yorkshiredales.org.uk](http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk) or the council web site [www.richmondshire.gov.uk](http://www.richmondshire.gov.uk).

Nunnington Hall another National Trust property began planting an orchard with varieties traditionally grown in Ryedale in 1984. They also celebrate Apple Day. Tel: 01439 748283

Oakwell Hall Country Park, Burstall has a small orchard and gardens and also runs events including Apple Day. Tel: 01924 326240

Parcevall Hall Gardens, Syreholme near Skipton, has extensive gardens and woodland walks as well as an orchard featuring traditional Yorkshire varieties.

[www.parcevallhallgardens.co.uk](http://www.parcevallhallgardens.co.uk) Tel: 01756 720311.

Yorkshire Orchards, Wilberfoss near York. A family farm with recently planted orchards, some of which are managed organically to encourage wildlife. They have a few varieties of apples for sale. Check their web site:

[www.yorkshireorchards.co.uk](http://www.yorkshireorchards.co.uk).

National Trust properties often have gardens and many have old orchards. All have a story to tell. For more information on these properties look up the Trust's web site [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk) for events and contact information.



There's plenty of opportunities to socialise at community orchards