



METFORD ROAD COMMUNITY ORCHARD



Overview

The community orchard on Metford Road offers people the chance to join a group growing apples, pears, plums, nuts and soft fruit. Everyone pays a small membership fee and is entitled to a share of the harvest in return for at least 16 hours of work on the orchard over the course of each year. The group runs the orchard collectively, under the guidance of our more experienced members using organic and largely permaculture principles. Occasionally we hold workshops on pruning or grafting, as well as seasonal social events. The orchard occupies five former allotments. It is a long, sloping, sunny site, going down to a stream, in which a wide variety of produce is grown:

- **Fruit Trees:** 15 apples, 6 pears, 20 plums, 1 cherry plum, 2 damsons, 2 gages, 2 medlars, 2 quinces, 1 fig, cherries, mulberries
- **Soft Fruit:** blackberries, gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, grapes, red/white/black currants and more.
- **Other:** herb and chutney patches, an almond tree, plus hazel and cob-nuts in the hedgerows, plus down by the stream a Gunnera ("giant rhubarb") with leaves over a metre wide, 2 side borders created by hedgelaying in 2018/19.

A map detailing everything grown in the orchard is available on the group website (see below). On a sunny day, the orchard has plenty of bees, butterflies and grasshoppers and is always hopping with frogs! There are various uncovered water troughs seething with life.

Working Days

Regular 'Orchard Days' are held - generally between 12pm and 5pm on the 1st Sunday of each month (also on other days organised on an ad hoc basis) - you are of course welcome to come at other times too. There are various tasks to be done according to the season: you can join in the general tasks (clearing paths, cutting back undergrowth, mulching the trees, step building, harvesting the fruit, pruning trees), or maybe take on a project of your own. You can come for as many or as few hours in the day as suits you. Bring snacks and something to drink. Stout boots, gloves and your own secateurs are always useful, though all tools are provided. The site has its own compost loo (recently rebuilt by one of our members in 2020).

Children are welcome at the Orchard with no charge, but they need a responsible adult watching over them and aware of their safety. Access to the site is via combination lock on the gate allowing members to visit the site at any time.

Communication

In order to keep up with orchard news (such as details of Orchard Days and group decisions) as well as general conversations about the orchard, members are recommended to subscribe to the Google Groups email list (details of will be sent on joining).

The group has a website (<http://mrco.wikidot.com/>) containing information on the orchard and regularly updated lists of tasks and events. Members are encouraged to register so they can edit it and add comments. For any questions on membership you can also email us on:

mrcobristol-membership@yahoo.com