



April 2019

Welcome to our regular bulletin with the latest news from our 3-year Heritage Lottery funded project in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

New orchards Across East Anglia!

We have had a very busy winter planning and helping plant new community and collection orchards across the east of England. 25 sites have been planted, including collections of local Bedfordshire fruit varieties at two sites, Etonbury and Limbury in Luton. The first of two stages of a wonderful collection at the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket has been completed, and heritage varieties have been planted by a group of volunteers at Wandlebury Country Park (Cambs), where they'll be trained in espalier form.

Lots of community groups have taken on ownership of new sites, including at Middleton and Clare in Suffolk. Middleton was organised by Lucy Smith, with help from the local WI, while two new orchards in Clare are the brainchild of Davina Neale, with help from the fire service!



Middleton



Clare

New sites include Steeple Bumpstead and Langford in Essex and Ulting, Burwell and Chatteris in Cambridgeshire. With help from Jo Metcalfe and team at Greener Growth, a number of school sites in Suffolk and Norfolk have also received new trees.

Orchards are a fantastic tool for bringing people together, as the photos show! After a couple of years care and attention, mulching and watering (5-10 litres of water per tree a week in dry weather) the trees will provide copious fruit, a setting for gatherings and events, and much enjoyment for their local communities.



Steeple Bumpstead



Burwell

MENUS FOR APRIL

Monica Askay

APPLE LEATHER

Fruit Leather is a brilliant way to use all fruit and even tomatoes. The fruit leather I describe here is not part of our culinary heritage, as it originally relied on a warmer and sunnier climate than ours. It is a thin, semi-transparent, flexible sheet of concentrated fruit. It has a really intense flavour which can be further enhanced by the addition of spices such as cinnamon and can be sweetened to taste with honey.

1 kg apples (or any other fruit)
Juice of a lemon (optional)
Honey to taste (optional)

Prepare two 24x30 cm baking sheets by lining them with baking parchment. Preheat the oven to 60°C. Peel and core the apples. Place in a pan and cook gently, stirring frequently, until the fruit is very soft. Purée. Stir in honey if using. Spread the fruit pulp thinly and evenly over the baking parchment using the back of a spoon. Place in the oven and leave for 12 – 18 hours (or longer!) until the

purée is dry and easily peels off the baking parchment. When cold, roll the fruit leather sheets in fresh baking parchment and store in an airtight tin. The fruit leather will keep for some time.

This can also be done in a dehydrator. I shall be experimenting with a dehydrator in the coming fruit seasons so watch this space!

APPLE SAUCE CAKE

280g / 10oz self-raising flour

1 tsp baking powder

110g / 4oz caster sugar

110g / 4oz demerara sugar with an extra 2 tbsp to sprinkle over the top

110g / 4oz salted butter, melted

2 large eggs

300 ml unsweetened stewed apple (use 1lb or more apples --- any extra puree can be sweetened with sugar or honey to taste and eaten with Greek yoghurt for breakfast or pudding)

1 tsp ground ginger

Preheat the oven to 180°C / Gas mark 4. Line the base of a 23 cm / 9" tin with baking parchment. Butter the sides of the tin.

In a large bowl, mix the flour, baking powder, ground ginger and both sugars. Making a well in the centre, add the butter, eggs and stewed apple. Beat thoroughly then transfer to the tin. Sprinkle the remaining demerara sugar evenly over the top. Bake for approx. 45 mins until firm to the touch and an inserted skewer comes out clean. Cool in the tin for at least 15 mins.

This makes a lovely moist cake which can also be turned into a pudding when served with stewed apple sweetened to taste.

It is a very flexible recipe which can be made with a range of different fruits and flavourings. Try rhubarb with orange and ginger, plums with cinnamon, or gooseberries with elderflower.

Grafting Workshops

The technique of grafting fruit trees is thousands of years old, its origins still a mystery, although it is likely to have been discovered in the Tien Shan mountain range in central Asia. This area, straddling the border between China and

Kyrgyzstan, is the home of the apple and pear forests from which our familiar orchard fruits originally came to Europe via the Silk Road, an ancient network of trade routes. Grafting may have been practiced in China 2,000 years BC and is frequently described in Greek and Roman literature.

Grafting is usually the only way to ensure that a particular variety is produced. If apple tree seeds are planted, a tree may grow, but it will be a different variety to the parent. This is because most fruit and nut trees need to be pollinated from neighbouring trees by insects such as bees, so the resulting saplings will be a cross between the two varieties.

The grafting technique is used to propagate a clone of a specific fruit tree variety using buds or twigs from an existing tree (the 'scion wood') and fusing them onto the branch or stem of another tree (the 'rootstock'). Fruit trees are usually best grafted in late February using scions removed during pruning.

School children in the UK in the 1930s and 1940s were taught grafting as a practical and useful skill. Unfortunately, this incredibly useful technique is being steadily lost today, even amongst horticulturalists. This is why Orchards East believe it is important to run workshops to train people in this invaluable skill.

In early 2019, Orchards East ran grafting workshops at Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Foxburrow Farm, near Woodbridge, Suffolk; at the Green Sand Trust, Maulden Working Woodland in Bedfordshire; and at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden. Paul Read was teaching the whip and tongue method of grafting which requires the cambium rings of the scion and rootstock to match. The cambium is the actively growing layer of cells just below the bark.

Participants learn to graft using a very sharp knife and a strong glove for protection on the other hand. The scion and rootstock then have to be bound together with appropriate tape and the whole join is then covered with a sealant, such as wax, to exclude pathogens. The grafts are labelled and planted in a 3 litre pot. After 3 months, the tape can be removed to check if the graft is showing signs of life i.e. the graft has been successful.



Dormant M25 rootstocks ready to have scions grafted onto them at Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Foxburrow Farm.

The type of rootstock determines the height of the tree. For example, M25 rootstock produces large vigorous standard trees which grow to 6 m or more and fruit after five to six years.

At the other extreme, M9 is a dwarfing rootstock which produces fruit after only two to three years and grows to only 2.5 m. The smaller trees cannot



Grafting in action

Paul gives instructions such as “Cut the tongue in an angle about one third of the way down, using the knife in a ‘heel and toe’ motion. Cut a matching tongue in the rootstock and push the two together so they engage firmly.” There is also the memorable instruction to “leave a small ‘church window’ of scion wood sticking over the top of the rootstock.”



Maulden Woods grafting workshop in March. Paul is demonstrating the process before participants have a go themselves.



The workshops are hands on, with everyone getting individual training.



Students at the Cambridge University Botanic Gardens grafting course

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LOTTERY FUNDED



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