



Chignals & Mashbury Community Orchard

THROUGH THE SEASONS





WELCOME TO THE ORCHARD

A Community Orchard, close to the Village Hall in Chignal St James, was created in 2012 by Chignal Parish Council to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II and is maintained with help from volunteers. There are now 73 fruit trees, mostly unusual old Essex varieties of apple, pear and plum along with quince and a mulberry. In addition to producing fruit, the orchard is a lovely peaceful place to stroll, sit and have a picnic.

To increase its value for wildlife and nature recovery, native fruit-bearing shrubs were planted around the orchard perimeter and the grassland is managed as a traditional wildflower meadow supporting a wide range of pollinators. Two bee hotels provide nesting sites for solitary bees and boxes have been installed for hibernating hedgehogs, nesting birds and roosting bats. Invertebrates, lizards, grass snakes and mice make use of the heaps of warm dry hay as winter shelter.

You may notice a green metal container near the bench, this is an air monitoring station which is used as a benchmark against which air quality is assessed in urbanised parts of Chelmsford.

Orchard events and tasks change with the seasons. The trees produce fruit at different times from July through to November and there are jobs to do all year to maintain the orchard.

Join us as we take you through a year in the orchard!

SPRING

MARCH – MAY



Fruit trees

Clouds of pink and white frothy blossom appear from Mid-April to mid-May. Solitary bees and other insects are busy doing the vital job of pollination whilst getting a nectar and pollen reward. Late frosts and birds can damage these precious flower buds. Trees are checked regularly for pests and diseases.



Meadow

Cowslips and violets carpet the meadow. Paths between the rows of trees are mown throughout the spring and summer.



Wildlife

Solitary bees emerge from their nesting holes, fledgling birds are reared and hedgehogs come out of hibernation.



Orchard events

Coffee in the Orchard events are a great way to get together during apple blossom time at the end of April.

ORCHARD TREES



Mulberry

1 Nigra Wellington

Pears

2,3,4,5,6,13 Improved Fertility
8,14 Gansel's Bergamot
7,10,11,12 Johnny Mount

Plums

9,15,16,17,18,19,20 Monarch
21,22,23,24,25,26 Golden Transparent

Apples

27,28,29,68,69,70 Braintree Seedling
30,31,32,33,34,37 Montfort
35,36,38 Dr Harvey*
42,43, 44,45,46 George Cave
47,60,64 D'Arcy Spice
52,56 Tun
48,53,57,61,65,67 Chelmsford Wonder*
49,54,62,66 Seabrooks Red
50,51,55,59,63 Pearl
58,71,72 The Queen*
73 Twining's Pippin

(* Culinary apples)

Quince

39 Vranja
40 Mammouth
41 Meech's Prolific



SUMMER

JUNE – AUGUST



Fruit trees

Fruit develops and is thinned by the end of June if there are too many fruitlets close to each other or there are too many for the branch to support. Our two varieties of plum trees are pruned between June and September as plums are susceptible to silver leaf, the spores of which are released outside of these months.

Newly planted and young trees are watered until established using water bags filled from our water butts.

Golden Transparent plums are ready for picking at the end of July with the first George Cave eating apples harvested in August. If the birds don't get there first, there should be some Mulberry fruits to enjoy in late summer.



Meadow

In early summer beautiful Pyramidal and Bee Orchids emerge in the long grass, followed by the “meadow maker” Yellow Rattle. These plants are semi-parasitic, feeding on the roots of grass thus reducing their vigour. This allows space for rare native wildflowers, such as, Scabious, Knapweed, Betony, Birdsfoot Trefoil, Ox-eye Daisy, Agrimony and Lady's Bedstraw. These plants are visited by a host of pollinators: bees, hoverflies, beetles and masses of beautiful butterflies and moths.

By the end of August these plants will have dropped their seeds. The orchard grass is then scythed and a week later the hay is removed by volunteers using traditional wooden rakes and stacked in piles around the edge of the site. A small area of long grass is retained to provide shelter for wildlife.

SUMMER

JUNE – AUGUST



Wildlife

Solitary bees are busy laying eggs in the holes drilled into wooden blocks in the bee hotel and covering them with leaves which they cut to shape to protect their young during the winter. Mice make cosy nests that are well hidden in the long grass which also provides habitat for toads and lizards.



Orchard events

The Coffee in the Orchard events carry on into July amidst glorious wildflowers and we celebrate Midsummer with a big community picnic along with live music and games.



AUTUMN

SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER



Fruit trees

This is the main harvest season for the dessert and culinary apples, pears, Monarch plums and quinces. Each fruit is tested for ripeness before picking and then stored carefully ready for distribution at the monthly parish Coffee Mornings in the Village Hall and at the annual Fruit Celebration in mid-October.



Meadow

The grass will have grown since scything and is mown again before the winter.



Orchard events

Our mid-October Fruit Celebration is the culmination of a year of productive work by the trees and the small band of cheerful and energetic volunteers who look after the orchard whilst enjoying each other's company. Each fruit variety is described and comes with recipes on how to enjoy them. Plenty of tea, homemade cakes and orchard related activities too.

Wildlife

Badgers, mice, squirrels, birds and insects feast on the windfall fruit. Hedgehogs inspect the boxes provided for them and mice, grass snakes and other reptiles and insects burrow into the dry hay heaps as the weather gets colder.



WINTER

DECEMBER - FEBRUARY



Fruit trees

Whilst the trees are leafless and dormant, winter pruning of the apple, pear, quince and mulberry trees begins in December through to early March. This aims to open the tree to sun and light, renew growth and keep branches well-spaced and at a suitable height for harvesting. Most of our trees are spur bearers producing their fruit on knobbly growths, (spurs) on two-year or older wood. Recording the health of each tree, and its pruning and fruiting each year is another important task.



Meadow

After the winter rains, we mulch around the trees with hay to maintain soil moisture, suppress competing plants and provide some organic matter to feed the trees



Orchard events

Traditional Wassailing events have been held in the orchard between New Year and Twelfth Night to bring good health to the trees and to ward off evil spirits. More recently, we've enjoyed getting together just before Christmas to sing carols in the orchard with mince pies and mulled wine!



Wildlife

The orchard hedges provide food for birds and other animals: rosehips, hawthorn, blackthorn, elder berries and hazelnuts.

WE HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED
LEARNING MORE ABOUT
THE ORCHARD AND WILL
VISIT SOON!



There are two picnic tables, a bench and information board. The orchard is always open to pedestrians. Car parking is available in the playing field opposite during events.

ORCHARD FRIENDS



Orchard Friends receive regular email updates on events, volunteering days and tree sponsorship opportunities. You can sponsor trees for 3 years with an inscribed plaque for you or a loved one.

If you would like to become an Orchard Friend, please email us.

chignal.mashburyjubileeorchard@hotmail.co.uk

HELPERS ALWAYS WELCOME

We should really welcome
some more helpers!

Here's a reminder of some of the
ways you could become involved
throughout the year:



DECEMBER - FEBRUARY

Carols in the
Orchard, apple
and pear pruning,
mulching around
the trees.

MARCH - MAY

Blossom time,
cowslips and
orchids and
enjoying Coffee
in the Orchard.

JUNE - AUGUST

Plum pruning,
fruit thinning,
wildflowers,
fruit harvesting,
Mid-Summer Picnic.

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER

Hay raking,
Fruit harvesting,
Fruit Celebration.

If you'd like to participate in any of
these activities, please drop us an email:
chignal.mashburyjubileeorchard@hotmail.co.uk

HOW TO FIND THE ORCHARD

Chignals & Mashbury
Community Orchard,
Mashbury Road,
Chignal St James,
Chelmsford
CM1 4TP

What3Words: swims.waltz.lions



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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