

## Advice sheet for local varieties of fruit

### Introduction

Selecting varieties that have originated from, or are local to your own county, many of which may be less well known, can be an interesting exploration of local heritage. These are likely to favour the local conditions too, so are often a good choice (although in this time of climate change, this may no longer hold true - apples that were developed hundreds of years ago may no longer be the best choice in terms of local climate with future projections).

You won't find many of these varieties in the garden centre - instead it's best to order your trees from specialist fruit tree nurseries. It's worth considering however, that some of the heritage varieties fell out of favour as they were very hard to grow, being prone to pests and disease, so old and local isn't necessarily the best choice! Good research is key to successful fruit choice and we recommend a mixture of interesting heritage varieties for local interest and newer varieties that are good for organic culture (that is they have high pest and disease tolerance which negates the need for chemical sprays).

### Apples

Your choice of variety will depend on what you want to do with the apples and how you'll be managing the trees. There are two main categories of apple - dessert varieties (eating apples) which are eaten fresh and culinary or cooking apples which are generally large in size and very sharp if eaten raw and need to be cooked before eating (usually with some sugar). A few varieties are dual-purpose - they can be used either for cooking, or eaten raw after a period of storage which allows the apples to sweeten. There are also varieties grown specifically for cider-making.



With thousands of varieties to choose from it's worth trying to taste some of these varieties first. There's a saying that goes: *'if you don't like apples it's just because you haven't found the apple for you!'* With crispy, crunchy or soft and fluffy varieties along with ones that taste (faintly!) of pine apples, strawberries, lemons or even bananas, there's a huge diversity of

flavours and textures for you to get to know...and they'll make the 'usual suspects' from the supermarket seem bland and boring!

Although ideally your fruit trees will be planted somewhere in full sun, you can get away with planting cookers somewhere they'll only get half a day's direct sun; your site survey should highlight how many trees you can plant and where.

In most urban areas, you needn't be concerned about 'pollinator partners' as there are likely to be enough other apple trees around, either as intentionally planted garden trees, 'chance seedlings' from discarded pips, or crab apples.

### Fruit-full tip

Apple days and harvest festivals provide a good range of varieties for you to sample - so if you want to look around and taste some varieties to get an idea of the sort you like, go along to your local apple event during autumn time. Some varieties of apple can be harvested as early as late July, but most will be ready for picking in September or October. Farmers markets are increasingly stocking a wider range of UK varieties in the autumn in response to a demand from the public. Taster boxes of different apple varieties can be bought by mail order from the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale.

<http://www.brogdalecollections.org/>.

**APPLE** - varieties listed below are an example of some which will be ready for harvesting at the start of the school year in September. Most of these have some disease resistance and are fairly easy to grow.

Dessert varieties	Picking time*	Pollination group**	Storage life
Katy	Early September	B	Best eaten fresh
Early Windsor	Early September	A	Best eaten fresh
Lord Lambourne	Mid-late September	A	2 months
Egremont Russet	Mid-late September	A	2 months
Fiesta (Red Pippin)	Mid-late September	B	2 months
Red Devil	Late September	C	2 months
Kidd's Orange	Early October	B	4 months
Bright Future	Early-mid November	C	3 months
Saturn	Mid October	C	4 months
Adams's Pearmain	Mid October	C	4 months
Culinary varieties	Picking time*	Pollination group**	Storage life
Lord Derby	Late September	C	2-3 months
Howgate Wonder	Early October	C	6 months
Bramley	Mid October	B	5 months



**PEAR** - relatively easy to grow and reliable varieties.

Dessert varieties	Picking time*	Pollination group**	Storage life
Beth	Late August	D	1 month
Concorde	Late October	C	2 months
Conference	Late September	B	2 months
Fertility Improved	Late September	B	1 month
Louise Bonne de Jersey	Late September	A	1 month
Onward	Mid September	C	2 weeks
Winter Nelis	Late October	C	2-3 months

\* Actual date of harvest will vary with region and weather conditions during the growing season.

\*\* See 'What about pollination?'

### Pears

There are far fewer pear varieties compared to apples – the variety Conference is probably the best known and most widely available in shops. Although it is possible to grow culinary and perry pear varieties – where space is limited to just a few trees, it is best to grow dessert (eating) varieties as these can be eaten fresh and, when firm, are also good to use in cooking. Pears tend to be a little fussier than apples, and many varieties will not grow well without ideal conditions. However, the varieties listed below are generally reliable and with care and attention will produce regular crops when grown with a suitable pollinator nearby. Some, but not all, have disease resistance.

### Stone fruit

Many of the stone fruit (plums, cherries, gages) can be grown easily and once you've tasted a ripe plum straight from the tree...there's just no turning back to the uninspiring offerings of most shops! As with apples and pears there are both dessert and culinary varieties, and some that were developed for 'canning' (jam making).

Both peaches and nectarines can be grown in the UK, although they need a warmer climate, so fair better in the south and usually require a warm microclimate like a south-facing wall (they also need to be sheltered from rain splash on their leaves which can be tricky). There are also some apricot varieties ('Flavorcot', 'Tomcot') that crop well in warmer areas and/microclimates in the UK, so your orchard could include a real mixture of fruit.



## Plums

- Avalon
- Blue Tit
- Belle de Louvain
- Cambride Gage
- Oullin's Golden Gage
- Czar
- Farleigh
- Jefferson
- Opal
- Shropshire Damson
- Victoria,
- Warwickshire Drooper

## Cherries

The UK has a rich cherry-growing heritage and there are many varieties that are easy enough to grow. However, they may need protecting from birds with netting!

- Stella
- Celeste
- Early Rivers
- Merton Glory
- Morello
- Stardust
- Stella
- Summer sun
- Sunburst
- Van
- Vega

## Other fruit

Apples, pears and plums may be the obvious fruits that come to mind when people think of orchards, but there are many more that can be planted as part of an orchard in the UK. Medlars, quinces and mulberries are all beautiful trees that produce interesting and delicious fruits. Figs are worth planting in warmer, southern climes, and suitable micro-climates in towns and cities further north.



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## Nuts

Hazels, sweet chestnuts and almonds can all be grown in the UK, providing a tasty source of protein to your orchard. Arguably the UK should be growing much more of its carbohydrates in the form of nuts from trees; a far more sustainable crop than field after field of high-input grains!



Hazels are probably the most hardy, and can be grown in most places in the UK and in partial shade (as long as the soil is well-drained) and can be planted in windy spots as they are wind pollinated and so don't rely on insects. The sweet chestnuts and almonds will do better in the South, requiring a slightly warmer climate. Late-flowering almond varieties like 'Mandaline' are a good bet. However, if you have a lot of squirrels around you may not get to see many of the actual nuts!

There are many interesting nut varieties suitable for the UK available from the Agroforestry Research Trust <https://www.agroforestry.co.uk/>. Martin Crawford is an authority on nuts in the UK and may be able to recommend suitable varieties.

