

# How to get the local community involved in your orchard and create long lasting beneficial links

Providing a welcoming space where people can learn, develop, create, share and celebrate, can bring local community together.

By making your orchard accessible and welcoming to others, you will help to ensure its long term sustainability. The more people invested in the space, the more chance the orchard will be cared for and valued for the long term.

Organising a community event is a great way to introduce your orchard and recruit new orchard volunteers.

Bringing people together to harvest the fruit, share recipes and customs, and of course eat and drink together, is often a great way to get people to events and provides the opportunities for bonds to be made.

## Types of community events

### Wassailing

This is an ancient tradition aimed at 'blessing' the trees as they sleep in the winter, encouraging an abundant harvest later in the year. The word Wassail means 'to be healthy' and it was cheered loudly while the people shared hot cider from a wassail bowl, making as much noise as possible to 'wake the trees' from their winter dormancy.

Traditionally it was held on the '12th night' in January, but today orchard groups tend to wassail anytime during the winter months. Hot juice and/or cider and a bonfire help to make this a popular winter warmer!

### Apple Day and harvest events

Apple Day is a national event that is held on October 21st. It was started by the charity Common Ground and aims to celebrate 'local distinctiveness', encouraging people to learn about fruit varieties and customs local to their area.

At this time of the year apples and pears are plentiful, providing fruit for all manner of fun activities and tasty treats! Often groups tie the wassail in with seasonal orchard activities such as planting and pruning.



### Blossom Events

Spring is one of the most beautiful and exciting times of year in the orchard. Take advantage of the sights, sounds and smells of this time by putting on blossom celebrations.

Tie this in with seasonal orchard tasks such as mulching and feeding, or creating pollinator-friendly habitats such as bug hotels.

### Summer Picnics

Invite people into the orchard at the height of summer to share food together in the sun, or under the cool shade of the trees! Plan your picnic around the harvest of any plums, gages, cherries, mulberries and early apples. Make fruit kebabs with summer fruits. This could be tied in with watering and summer pruning tasks.

## Getting people to your event

Provide fun family activities as well as useful 'services' such as apple identification or some sort of training that can help to lure people in. Many of the traditional orchard events are seasonal and offer opportunities for engagement year after year. Often groups enjoy their first event, such as an Apple Day, so much that it becomes an annual event that evolves year on year, becoming more interesting and diverse as the group gains confidence and experience.



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## Ideas to get people through the door

- » Offer the chance for other local environmental, community and food organisations and groups to hold stalls to showcase their work.
- » Apple ID – have an apple ID expert on a stall and invite the public to bring their apples in to identify. Contact The Orchard Network for ID experts.
- » Music – invite local singers or bands to come and perform at the event. Depending on the location, acoustic may be the best bet as you won't need to worry about power supply.
- » Food and drink - BBQs, baked food, apple juice...there are many options. Free food is good, but obviously this depends on your budget. It's always worth contacting local supermarkets and wholesale retailers to ask for food donations. There are a number of organisations like 'The real junk food company' who take food that would otherwise go to waste and cook it up into delicious vegetarian feasts on a donation basis.

## Promoting your event

Here are some suggestions on who to promote your event to:

- » Local gardening, allotment, horticultural and permaculture groups
- » Local plant or tree nursery, especially if it's a good one from where you'll be buying stock. This may result in strengthened relationship - freebies, discounts, free training etc.
- » Local beekeepers and local veg box schemes
- » Community gardens, allotments, local volunteer groups (TCV/Green Gym)

### Fruit-full tip

If you are concerned about too many people showing up at your event you can use Eventbrite or similar free ticket booking sites to limit the number of people attending. Whether a wassail, training, or volunteer event, sometimes it can be useful to limit the number of participants due to resource or budget limitations or optimal 'teaching' numbers.



- » Regional Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and other local organisations
- » Mayor and local dignitaries, local press
- » Schools, colleges, university environmental and conservation student groups
- » Local harvest groups (research the 'Abundance') and ask them to come and run apple juicing or other related activities. They may know where to borrow an apple press.
- » Neighbours and friends – why not invite your neighbours and friends to the event? They may appreciate the effort and be more inclined to attend if they already know a familiar face. All sorts of benefits can come out of such interactions; offers of help, volunteering, free fruit from the trees in local gardens etc.

## How to successfully promote the event

- » Design posters and leaflets and put them up in shops, libraries, community centres and letter boxes.
- » Do a press release to advertise your local event in the local papers.
- » Use social media – especially Facebook – to promote your event. Set up a Facebook event that people can share.
- » Invite people with an interest in orchards, allotments, community food etc.
- » Ask partner organisations to spread the word through their networks, especially those with a good local reach. Get in touch with local volunteer centres and council departments working in the area.
- » Attend local events and speak with people face-to-face or perhaps hold a little stall.



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## Activity ideas for community events in your orchard

Here are some tried and tested ideas for activities to run at your orchard event. These could either be free or for a nominal fee to help cover costs (or a combination).

### Face painting

A great one for kids. It's worth looking up a local artist who does face painting.

### Apple juicing

This is a really popular activity that is often the highlight of orchard events. It does require some specialised (yet easy to use) equipment and a large number of apples.

The principle equipment consists of an apple press and a 'scratter'(mill) to crush the apples up into a pulp before the juice is squeezed out by the press. When choosing where to buy these look for good quality, reasonably priced suppliers that offer ongoing customer service. If you plan to use your orchard produce to make juice or cider, this equipment would be money well spent; an investment that can last a lifetime.

You may be able to rent the apple press kit from a local fruit group such as Abundance Network or invite a local group to come and do apple pressing for you on the day.

It takes lots of apples to keep making juice all day. Try contacting local fruit wholesalers, markets and supermarkets for donations.

You can ask people to bring in apples from their trees to juice, giving them a bottle to take away.



Take a look here for useful advice on how to juice safely:

» [www.vigopresses.co.uk](http://www.vigopresses.co.uk)

» [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

### Apple bobbing

Fun for all ages, it's amazing to see just how competitive people can get!

For reasons of hygiene, it is advisable to change the water frequently and of course not to let anyone with a cold/illness participate.

### Apple 'nogging'

A slightly different take on bobbing, nogging involves hanging apples on strings in a line from a horizontal line, such as a washing line tied between two trees. Participants must try to eat the apple without using their hands. Hanging the apples at different heights allows people of different heights to participate.

### Apple juice tasting sessions

This is a popular activity that can be done with any age group. Different apple varieties produce juices of differing sweetness and sharpness. By allowing people to try a sweet, medium and sharp juice from single varieties you can raise appreciation of the range of apple varieties and their qualities.

For example James White [www.jameswhite.co.uk](http://www.jameswhite.co.uk) or Duskin juices [www.duskin.co.uk](http://www.duskin.co.uk) are two readily available juices that can be bought in one litre bottles from a range of independent shops, including health food shops.

### Longest peel competition

This is a popular game that is enjoyed by all ages. The aim is for a contender to produce the longest, intact apple peel possible from a single fruit.



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Traditionally this would be done using a peeling knife but a safer option is using an apple peeler and corer, which you can easily get online. This efficient little machine is easy to use, results in extremely long peel 'ribbons' and children love it! Each contender gets one shot with one apple. They then take their longest intact peel, measure it, and attach their name and length (on a small piece of paper and a paper clip) which is then attached to a horizontally hung length of string.

### Apple art

Apples can be sliced in half and dipped in paint to make attractive prints. They can also be carved into all sorts of interesting faces. Of course, bark and leaf rubbing is also an easy and popular activity to run.

### Apple bird feeders

By sticking the pointed edge of sunflower seeds into the skin of an apple, a simple bird feeder can be made. The apple can then be taken away and hung on a string. The seeds can be positioned in attractive patterns.

### Cooking, baking or preserving workshop with a local chef

Organise a cooking or baking competition - your own version of the Great British Bake off? For example, organise an apple pie baking



competition at your next wassail event. People are keen to show off their skills. Nominate a panel of users and staff to judge the entries etc.

### Volunteering opportunities

We suggest that you develop an orchard management plan for your centre which lays out the long term maintenance and development of the orchard, listing who will do what and when.

This is an invaluable tool to guide orchard development and maintenance and it also highlights where there is scope to include volunteers.

Volunteering opportunities (also at events) can be split into roles that involve many people doing 'bulky' work, or fewer doing more specialised tasks. Think about how many people are required for each task and when they are needed.

»Why not approach local organisations and see if they would be interested in taking joint responsibility for some of the orcharding tasks e.g. a local school to come and do watering; the local green gym to help deliver mulch or the ecotherapy group to do weeding etc.

»Could you offer the orchard as an outdoor event space that local organisations can book, for example for picnics, yoga, meditation, story-telling, music, etc. It is important to be clear about responsibilities. Make sure that groups attend with relevant supervision, in particular when working with young and/or vulnerable people.

»It may be worth attending local community events where you can talk about your orchard and collect details of people who may be interested in volunteering opportunities there.

»Outreach projects are also a good way to get help with looking after your orchard. Some community orchards work with groups of adults with learning difficulties or schools, for example, to undertake regular tasks throughout the orchard year.

There are many organisations who match volunteers with work. Organisations such as Project Dirt have been doing this effectively.

It is worth contacting your local authority to see if they can link you to relevant groups. For days where lots of people are required, contact local universities, the local 'Green Gym' or look into local corporate volunteer schemes.



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# How to host a community event at your centre

Hosting a celebration event for your orchard can be very exciting. With good planning and a good team to share out tasks with, it will be very rewarding.

First you need to decide what the aims of the event are:

- »Are you aiming to train people who will then help with the orchard in the future?
- »Are you aiming to raise money to fund orchard development?
- »Are you simply trying to introduce your orchard to the public and aim to build new community connections?

## Here are a few ideas on where to start

### Get yourself a team

The size of the team will depend on the size of the event. If there is little events experience within the group, it may be sensible to start with small events, growing as the years go.

Many skills can be developed along the way and this experience can lead to plenty of useful additions to young people's CVs.

### Budget

Have a think about what you will need for the event and where you can get it from. Is there any funding available? What can you get for free - food from a local supermarket? Perhaps you can charge a nominal fee on some activities and food sales to help cover costs? Can you involve some 'partner' groups to put on the event together and share costs?

### Promotion

Who do you want to invite to the event and how will you reach them most effectively? Get your young people to create posters and flyers and give them out locally. Ask your centre staff to send email invitations to their local contacts.

### Event safety and insurance

Risk assessing and ensuring you have the correct insurance for the event are both vital and key to minimising the chance of anything going wrong, while ensuring you'll be covered in the event that it does!



Please always check with your centre manager that your public liability insurance covers the event and activities you are planning to run.

## Key considerations

- »It is key to think about the size of the event you wish to put on and the potential risks involved. How many people can the site safely host? How many people from your group are available to assist and run activities?
- »What needs to be prepared in the weeks running up to the event? This will all come into the planning and regular meetings that will help you to track progress.
- »How can you make it attractive for your centre users to ensure maximum participation and assistance? Benefits such as free food and experience for CVs should be mentioned!
- »Decide which day of the week works best, both in terms of your staff, residents and users and potential visitors.
- »Ensure volunteers take on activities in shifts, so no one is over-worked.
- »Set clear deadlines for tasks to be achieved by and clear timings for the day, including for individual activities. Allocate roles and responsibility to your team, including users, staff and volunteers.
- »Are children allowed on your site? If so, check the organisation's child safeguarding policy. Ensure that attending parents are aware that they must supervise at all times.



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## Working in the orchard - health and safety

You will need to consider health and safety issues as you develop an orchard management plan to minimize the risk of injury at any point in any orchard activity.

What are the risks in your particular orchard? Could they be eliminated? If not, how could they be mitigated?

It's your responsibility to ensure your orchard remains a safe place for your own group and for any visiting public or volunteers.

## Legal issues

You may already have insurance for activities on your site, but it is worth checking if your insurance is appropriate for certain events. For example, if you are planning an Apple Day event, check with your site manager that public liability insurance allows for all planned activities. If planning an event on a different site, you must contact the local authority or landowner to outline your plans and seek permission before any further steps are taken.

Learning through Landscapes have many years experience of Risk Benefit Assessment and has created a suite of downloadable forms for different situations and contexts: [www.ltl.org.uk](http://www.ltl.org.uk)

Please also take a look at [www.fruitfullcommunities.org](http://www.fruitfullcommunities.org) for examples of Risk Benefit Assessments for orchard based activities and events.

## Checklist for event health and safety

- » Risk Benefit Assessments
- » Adequate first aid kit
- » Public liability insurance
- » Child/young person policy for the organisation
- » Sufficient toilet and sanitary facilities
- » Visit on morning of event to check for dog waste, litter, glass etc
- » Juicing hygiene, inc equipment cleaning
- » Risk Benefit Analysis of individual activities, i.e. apple bobbing
- » Ensure all participants, helpers and volunteers are clear on timings, directions, parking arrangements etc
- » Tasks allocated to individuals
- » Adult:young people ratios
- » Special needs or dietary allergies taken into account
- » Fire permission and safety policy
- » Wet weather provision
- » Supervision when using tools, if applicable
- » Adequate waste disposal
- » Power - safe equipment and power cables etc.



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# Turning your orchard into a profitable enterprise

There are many ways in which an orchard can be turned into an enterprise project. This resource aims to show that despite the popular saying, money does in fact grow from trees!

An orchard enterprise could be based on your orchard produce. For example, you can sell fruit by the bag or make and sell jams, chutney, juice and cider.

Using your trees to graft and produce new young trees for sale can be profitable too. You can also use your orchard for paid training courses for example about pruning and grafting.



## Grafting

### Case study: The Orchard Project and Cultivate London

In 2016, The Orchard Project (TOP) decided to graft several hundred new apple trees to plant in their new community orchards and to sell at events.

The staff at TOP are very skilled at grafting but they did not have the capacity or space to look after the trees during the one year of growth needed before they can be sold. Neglected trees can die if they are not watered on a regular basis during the summer.

So TOP teamed up with Cultivate London - an innovative urban farm and social enterprise based in West London who train unemployed young people in landscaping and horticulture.

The idea was simple: TOP would teach apprentices how to graft apple trees so they could assist them in grafting. Cultivate London

would then keep the trees at their nursery site until the following winter, where they would be cared for along with their other plants. They were then able to keep some of the trees to sell with the profits going to their own business.

With a bit of practice, a small group of people can easily graft 50 trees in a day. Each tree costs less than £1 to create and can be sold for up to £20.

It is crucial to consider the programme of tree aftercare, especially in the first growing season. Consideration should also be given to which fruit varieties to propagate and on which rootstocks. It is therefore advisable to find out:

- »What grows well locally and what is popular
- »The potential market as, for example, people buying for their own gardens may prefer a smaller tree

## What you'll need

- »The skill of grafting! Get onto a workshop or have someone come to your orchard to teach this 'ancient art'. Find out if your local community orchard runs any workshops on this? Or become a volunteer at your local tree nursery where you can learn a lot about trees, grafting etc.
- »Sharp grafting knives and grafting tape which can all be sourced online.
- »Rootstocks - these can be bought from specialist tree nurseries and usually cost approximately 80p each.
- »Scions - these can be collected for free from your own fruit trees or any others locally (with permission), during winter pruning. They can be stored in a fridge or shed, wrapped in cling film or a plastic bag for a few months until grafting in March.
- »Plant pots, compost and canes for potting up your new trees.
- »A safe, sunny location for your mini tree nursery. Ideally, somewhere in your centre grounds, close to a water source and where the trees can stay until the next winter.



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## Chutneys and Jams

Chutneys and jams can be made easily and a jar of homemade jam or chutney can be sold for even £3. It is worth considering that it can take a lot of energy to create, especially gas and electricity.

In 2015 The Orchard Project ran a series of produce-making workshops at a community kitchen. People attended the sessions in order to learn how best to preserve their orchard produce. The community kitchen was booked for a small fee and was well equipped and set up for multiple users. Apple chutney and medlar jam were two of the products and enough jars were produced so that The Orchard Project could sell them at a variety of events.

### Considerations

- » Work out how much it will cost to create each jar, factoring in energy, the cost of jars and labels. Your main ingredient (fruit) will be free, but you may need to bulk up your harvest with fruit collected from other orchards while your own orchard is still young.
- » If your centre has good kitchen facilities, make your produce there. If not, research local community kitchens that you can hire.
- » Why not invite an experienced local chutney and jam maker to lead your first session to learn some good tips from an expert?
- » There are lots of interesting recipes out there but get creative and come up with something unique to your centre and locality.

For some ideas and recipes check out:

- » [www.bbcgoodfood.com](http://www.bbcgoodfood.com)
- » [www.deliaonline.com](http://www.deliaonline.com)



## Cider and Juice

Cider and juice production is another way to use and earn money from your surplus apples.

Equipment can be expensive, so increasing the amount of apples that you press would mean you can get a better return on your investment, save more apples and hopefully make more money. Unless you can share equipment with another project, then you will probably need to investigate fundraising to buy your juicing equipment.

### Case Study: My Apple Juice, Wiltshire

Model: apple juicing service for people with surplus apples

My Apple Juice is a community apple juicing service set up in 2010 that helps people make the most of their garden or orchard crop. People harvest their own apples and bring them to the project to be juiced, bottled, pasteurised and labelled with their own design. The delicious own-labelled apple juice is ready to be picked up around 10 days after the apples are dropped off. There is no minimum or maximum weight of apples; a standard bucket of approx. 7 kg will give back at least 5 bottles. The charge is £2.50 for each personally labelled 75cl bottle. The enterprise has been a success and they are now looking to grow the business into new areas of the country.

### Case Study: Local Fox by The Orchard Project, London

Model: cider and juice seller using donated apples

Local Fox is a community powered harvesting, juice and cider enterprise set up by The Orchard Project. It makes use of apples that are often left to rot on the ground.

Local Fox sources apples by taking donations



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from community orchards and gardens. In its first two years of operating, the project saved an incredible 9 tonnes of apples; 7.5 tonnes were harvested from community orchards by volunteers, and the remaining 1.5 tonnes came from gardens.

With the help of volunteers, the apples are pressed at the cider house using the traditional rack and cloth process. The only mechanised equipment is a food grade pump and a an electric apple mill.

Nothing more is added and nothing is taken away, leaving just 100% apples and the wild yeast living on their skins. The freshly pressed apple juice is left to slowly ferment over winter in airtight containers, ready to be racked off and bottled in the New Year.

The Orchard Project has focused sales on small independent retailers and bars.

### Where can I learn about cider, perry or juice production?

- » Craft Cider Making by Andrew Lea is a great guide
- » Contact The Orchard Project cider house [orchard@theorchardproject.org.uk](mailto:orchard@theorchardproject.org.uk).
- » Sign up for Cider and Perry Production Principles and Practice by the Cider and Perry Academy [www.cider-academy.co.uk](http://www.cider-academy.co.uk)



### Other things to consider when starting up a small enterprise

#### Your skills and your team

Below are some of the essential skills you will need to run a business. You might already have some of these, others you can develop along your journey, but you may also need to find someone else to support you:

- » Planning skills
- » Customer service skills
- » Sales



» Problem solving and resilience - bouncing back from disappointments

» Health and safety knowledge

Another great way of building your skills is to look at enterprise support programmes and online resources.

» [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

» The School for Social Entrepreneurs give links to funding, support programmes and advice [www.the-sse.org](http://www.the-sse.org)

### How will you make your product:

- » Do you need any insurance? For instance, will you need public liability insurance when dealing with the public in any way?
- » What health and safety considerations are there? For instance, if you are making a food or drink product then you will need to attend a food hygiene course and register with your local authority as a food business. For more information please check here: [www.thepropermarmaladecompany.co.uk](http://www.thepropermarmaladecompany.co.uk)
- » How are you going to buy and store your products? Will you need to rent premises? Will you need some initial funding to support you before you start selling your product?

To help you answer all these questions please go to: [www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance](http://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance).

This website will talk you through what you need to do and will provide you with useful tips and resources for starting up your business.

### Funding and finance

Some businesses can be started with very little money and equipment, while others will need more funding up front.

It is really important to think about what you will need apart from fruit and make sure you can source all that within your means. With time you may be able to buy additional equipment but it is a good idea to start small and simple. Be realistic about all of your costs. Here are some useful places to look for advice on funding your enterprise:

- » [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)
- » [www.unltd.org.uk](http://www.unltd.org.uk)
- » [www.crowdfunder.co.uk](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk)



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# Centres that planted orchards through the Fruit-full Communities project:

Brecon Close & Coops Foyer  
Bridge Foyer  
Coventry Foyer  
Exeter Foyer (Stonewater)  
Humber YMCA Foyer Project  
One YMCA (Crest Road)  
Plymouth Foyer  
Ravenhead Foyer  
Salford Foyer (HAT)  
Sheffield Foyer  
Swindon Foyer (Stonewater)  
Warrington Foyer (Verve Place)  
YMCA Barnsley (allotment)  
YMCA Barnsley (Dearne Valley Country Park)  
YMCA Barnsley (the Fleets)  
YMCA Basingstoke  
YMCA Black Country Group  
YMCA Brighton & Hove  
YMCA Crawley  
YMCA Derbyshire  
YMCA Derbyshire (allotment)

YMCA Fairthorne Manor  
YMCA Hirwaun  
YMCA Horsham  
YMCA Humber Peaks Lane Project  
YMCA Liverpool  
YMCA Norfolk  
YMCA North Staffordshire  
YMCA North Tyneside  
YMCA Plymouth (2 orchards)  
YMCA Port Talbot  
YMCA Ryedale  
YMCA Somerset Coast  
YMCA Southampton  
YMCA Sutton Coldfield  
YMCA Swansea  
YMCA Taunton  
YMCA Taunton & Puriton Parish  
YMCA Teesdale  
YMCA White Rose  
YMCA Worthing



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# Fruit-full Communities

## Summer

(June, July, August)

- Have a summer party or picnic
- Have a BBQ (if allowed) once a week. *Look online for some simple recipes*
- Celebrate in your orchard – the arrival of summer, centre anniversary, birthday parties etc
- Decorate flower pots and put plants in them to create gifts

## Autumn

(September, October, November)

- Enjoy free food
- Celebrate Apple Day in October. *Invite service users, staff and local community*
- Make juice, jams and preserves
- Make and bake cakes, pies and crumbles. *Raise money for your centre with a cake sale*

## Spring

(March, April, May)

- Organise an Easter Egg hunt in your orchard or celebrate Blossom Day
- Paint pebbles to create a memorial area

## Winter

(December, January, February)

- Organise a Wassail to 'bless' the trees as they sleep in the winter to encourage an abundant harvest. *Look online for some great ideas*
- Take a daily walk in the fresh air to clear your head



Fruit-full Communities was part of the Our Bright Future programme. Thousands of young people planted fruit trees and created beautiful outdoor spaces on their doorstep. You can join in by looking after your orchard, using it for relaxation, socialising and by making the most of fruit grown!

- ✓ Spending time outdoors and being active in nature has a positive impact on your health and wellbeing
- ✓ Trees play a vital role in every aspect of our lives. By caring for your orchard you will be helping our planet
- ✓ Gaining horticultural skills will increase your opportunities for work in the future