



BRIGHTON PERMACULTURE TRUST

Community Orchards FAQs

What is a community orchard?

Not so long ago, orchards of all kinds of fruit trees were a common sight in the fields and gardens of England. Many have been lost, but now people are once again planting their own orchards. Sussex is at the forefront of planting orchards for the future and Brighton Permaculture Trust has over ten years' experience of helping people to plant and maintain orchards. [Watch this film about Community Orchards](#)

Orchards can be any size; there are no lower or upper limits. They are usually made up of orchard trees such as apples, pears, plums, damsons, cherries. There are thirty Sussex apple varieties to choose from, and lots from elsewhere. You won't find most of them in the shops, but you can grow them yourself.

Why plant an orchard?

Orchards can provide:

- A source of locally produced food with zero carbon miles
- A place of beauty to enjoy, unwind and relax or come together with others
- A home for all kinds of wildlife, improving biodiversity and creating new habitats.
- An opportunity to grow unusual apple varieties with wonderful flavours
- A natural way to regulate temperatures, reduce air pollution and curb run off of water

I want to plant some trees; how do I do that?

When Brighton Permaculture Trust help support groups setting up orchards in their communities; three key things we ask people to consider are:

1. Do you have a group of people who can commit to looking after the trees, especially for the first 3 years as they establish?
2. Do you have permissions from the landowner?
3. Do you have a budget to cover the work?

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Registered Address: The Fruit Factory · Stanmer Village · Stanmer · Brighton · BN1 9PZ

How can Brighton Permaculture Trust help?

Once those things are in place, we can provide a standard package which includes:

- Site visit assessment and orchard design to identify suitable planting sites and tree varieties
- Provision of 8 trees and related planting items (supports, guards, etc)
- One guided planting day by Brighton Permaculture Trust with local volunteers (all ages and abilities catered for)
- Four aftercare visits by Brighton Permaculture Trust to advise on tree care
- One day Brighton Permaculture Trust training in looking after young fruit trees for 2 volunteers

And if you don't want the whole package; we can tailor to meet your needs (although we are unable to just supply trees).

How much does it cost?

For a community orchard: £1,620; For a school orchard: £1,820

Sometimes we have funding to help with the cost, or you can raise your own funds. Try the following sites for possible funds; you may find your Local Authority has a small grant fund for community projects too. [Tree Council](#); [Awards for All](#); [Tesco Community Grants](#); [Waitrose Community Matters](#)

Optional Add-ons

- Training in orchard skills: such as Care of Fruit Trees, Fruit Tree Planting, Planning & Planting as Small Orchard, Pruning Young Fruit Trees, Pruning Old Fruit Trees, Fruit Tree Grafting,
- Training in broader orchard related skills: Fruit Cookery & Juicing, Scything, Creating a Forest Garden, Practical Permaculture Gardening, and lots more.

For add-on costs contact us directly to discuss. [Visit our website for more info on courses.](#)

What sorts of trees will Brighton Permaculture Trust plant?

We prefer to plant trees which provide fruit or nuts so local people can grow their own local produce. The type, or variety, of tree chosen for planting will depend on a wide range of factors such as: soil, exposure, aspect and knowledge of those looking after the trees. In good sites trees might include orchard fruit varieties (fruit can be eaten directly from the tree): apples, pears, damsons, greengages, mulberries, figs, medlars and sweet cherries. In less good sites they could include nut bearing walnuts, and trees bearing fruit more readily made into jams, jellies and juices such as cherry plums and crab apples.

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How big will the trees get, and how long will it take them to mature? When will I get my first harvest?

This is a difficult question to answer as it depends on lots of factors, such as: where they are planted, what root stock is used, what variety is used and how much care the tree gets, as well as environmental factors such as drought, animal attacks and vandalism. However, orchard trees could reach 4-6m and other trees 6-8m in height and spread. Harvests could be within the first 4 years or could take much longer if sites are challenging or trees face setbacks.

What work is involved with aftercare for trees?

In the first 2-3 years trees need watering when they are in leaf and weather conditions are dry. In some cases, watering may be necessary for longer than this (perhaps if a tree is struggling, or the site is very exposed, or if spring and early summer is very dry).

Mulching (applying a layer of organic matter) is a key part of helping retain moisture in the soil immediately around trees, giving trees some slow-release nutrients, and suppressing competing grass and weeds. We recommend a thick mulch extending out for 1-3m diameter of wood chip, well-rotted compost, or manure applied at least annually.

Other jobs to ensure your trees thrive:

- Annual pruning of trees (stone fruit in summer, pip fruit in winter) helping keep trees healthy and productive.
- Feeding trees according to their needs (important on many chalky sites where nutrients are easily washed out of the soil),
- Looking out for common pests and diseases.
- Checking and replacing stakes, ties, and protection as necessary.

Timescales

We order trees in late summer and plant them during their dormant season approximately October-March. Therefore, the time of year is an additional consideration. We can carry out a site visit at any time of the year.

I want to go ahead what next?

Agree a date for a site visit – this way we can make sure we plant the types and varieties of trees which will do well on your site and ensure your orchard thrives for decades to come. You might want to include people who will be responsible for looking after the trees at this meeting and the landowners. Contact orchards@brightonpermaculture.org.uk

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