

New Mills Community Orchard

New Mills Community Orchard in Derbyshire is a community resource providing individuals, schools and volunteers with access to locally grown organic fruit and a useful learning resource.

The project sits on the site of a former 16th century orchard, which for many years was used for grazing. When it became available, a group of people, supported by the parks manager of the local town council, requested the land for a community orchard.

The 10 apple tree varieties grown on the site include Bramley, Cox's Orange Pippin, Discover, Ergemont Russett, James Grieve, Jonagold, Newton, Red Devil, Spartan and Worcester Pearmain. Buerre Hardy, Conference and Williams Bon Chretien pear varieties are also harvested.

Other fruit trees grown in the orchard include Morello Cherries, Pearson's Prolific Cobnuts, Shropshire Prune Damsons, Opal and Oullin's Golden Gage pear

varieties, Vranja Quice, walnuts and figs.

The fruit is harvested during scheduled picking days and, although it cannot not be harvested for commercial purposes, it can be used to make products to support the orchard's work.

From the beginning, the focus of the project has been community involvement, including involving local school children in planting, logo design and ongoing educational activities, and encouraging other community groups to make use of the resource.

Community events are an important part of the project. These have included three successful Apple Days and participation in a graffiti knitting project – a concept which involves decorating the local area with knitting objects, from apples and pears to lollipops and a car.

Local resources made use of by the orchard have included promotion through regular newsletters, leaflets, a website, events and the local press; a section of the local library dedicated to orchards and fruit



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growing; and links made with other community orchards in Derbyshire, including Hayfield, Buxton and Bradwell.

The success of the orchard has led to the group providing advice and support to other fledgling community orchards; the exploring of setting up another orchard site on the other side of New Mills; and increased use of the site by locals and visitors for picnics and by local schools and art and photography groups.

The original 100 trees on the site were funded in 2005 by the Living Network and Greenwatch. Then in 2007, approximately £9,000 was secured through a Breathing Places Big Lottery Fund award for improvements to access and habitat, planting, tools, artwork, signing and interpretation, publicity and training.

“The orchard is a place of quiet calm in today’s busy world, where you can go and sit and look across at the varied landscape of the Peak District” Mark Gadd

The orchard also receives funding through donations, individual and corporate adopt-a-tree schemes, and living memorials.

For further information on New Mills Community Orchard visit www.nmco.org.uk.