

Keeping orchards healthy

Whether an orchard is being managed for commercial or amenity purposes, trees and fruit will need the following:

Further information

Royal Horticultural Society

Advice on growing fruit.
Tel: 020 7834 4333
Email: info@rhs.org.uk
Web: www.rhs.org.uk

Brogdale Horticultural Trust

Offers training courses on fruit cultivation, fruit identification and tours/events.
Tel: 01795 535286
Email: info@brogdale.org.uk
Web: www.brogdale.org.uk

Henry Doubleday Organic

Advice on organic fruit growing.
Tel: 024 7630 3517
Email: enquiries@hrda.org.uk
Web: www.hrda.org.uk

DEFRA

Through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, provides financial aid to landowners to either restore old orchards or plant new ones, using traditional varieties.
Tel: 0118 9392061 (Kent & West Sussex);
0118 9392302 (East Sussex)
Email: stewardship@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Web: www.defra.gov.uk

Pruning – the first step towards rejuvenating old trees. Done in winter, it lets in light and air to stimulate healthy growth. It reduces the weight of overcrowded ‘heads’, thick with branches. Pruning also reduces the number of flower buds, so helping to produce less but ‘cleaner’ fruit.

Feeding – with lime and fertiliser if the orchard is severely deficient in nutrients or too acid and producing a poor crop. However, most traditional orchards with permanent grassland are adequately fertilised by the manure of grazing sheep.

Watering – during the dry summer months; about nine gallons per square yard (34 litres per square metre) on the rooting area every seven to 10 days. Watering the ground rather than the foliage lessens the risk of fungal disease.

Thinning – in the event of a heavy fruit set, helps to avoid too many small fruits. After the natural shedding of fruitlets in early summer (the June drop), thin out malformed and diseased fruits. Any remaining thinning obviously involves removing the worst and leaving the best.

Picking – best done when the fruit separates easily from the spur (connection to twig) when lifted. Not all the fruit should be picked at once: the brightest and ripest first, the rest will ripen on the tree over several weeks.

Storing – apples requires cool, dark, humid and ventilated conditions, like a garden shed, larder or attic. Early July-August apples do not keep and should be eaten from the tree.

Controlling – a great range of pests and diseases can infect fruit trees. However, if you can tolerate imperfect fruit, organically grown fruit is better for wildlife and for you! Generally, by keeping trees well manured and pruned and by burning infected branches, you will reduce the risk of pests and diseases. Birds encouraged to the orchard will repay you by eating insect pests.



Orchards in the Weald of Kent and Sussex



Including
poster

A guide to an
outstanding feature
and its unique
culture and wildlife