

The Planting of the Community Orchard, 28th November 2015

Bishops Waltham now has a Community Orchard at Priory Park Meadow! It's worth reminding everyone that this was an idea that Ann Magrath (Programme Organiser) had put to the trustees of the Gardening Club early last spring. It has taken her and Sue Curtis (Secretary) a lot of time, effort and patience to find a suitable site, to choose and source suitable varieties, and think through the project in a logical way so that the planting and protecting of the fruit trees was all achievable in the time available.

So, on Saturday 28th November, it may have been very wet under-foot, but it was a calm and sunny morning when a large team of volunteers armed with spades and forks arrived at 8.30am, ready to start planting the 25 fruit trees that now make up the Community Orchard. The previous weekend, a smaller group ably led by Ray Simpson-Davis had measured, marked out and removed the turves in the freezing wind, so that the digger could move in the following weekend and dig out the holes.

As the volunteers made their way down to the Meadow on 'planting day', the trailer arrived with all the tools and equipment, as did Chris Curran with his mini-digger, and Trevor Veck, the Parish Council groundsman, with his two assistants in their truck loaded with wire and posts. Meanwhile the trees also arrived with Peter Barwick who had sourced and collected them for the Club.

Ann and Sue had very carefully thought through the process of getting the bare-root trees safely planted and protected! Each tree was to be provided with its very own 'tree planting and protecting' kit because each needed to be planted in a similar way. So beside each hole there was to be a tree, the stake and tie to support it, rabbit-proof netting (pre-cut to size), protective deer fencing (also cut to size) and four posts and struts to hold the fencing in (screw holes pre-drilled), so that the tree guards could be put together quickly and efficiently when the moment came.

Inevitably there was a delay while everything was assembled and everyone got their heads round the series of steps required, but it was worth it because once the planting got under way it all seemed to go smoothly and cheerfully. In the calm weather, Priory Meadow rang out with the sounds of the digger working, the sucking and squelching of feet and spades in very wet clay, voices chatting and laughing, post banging and drilling.

There was a very welcome and satisfying break when Janice Romer and David Williamson (both doubling up as First-Aiders if required) made tea and coffee, and some volunteers very kindly produced doughnuts, cakes and biscuits! And after more work, more mud and more sunshine, the trees were safely in the ground, protected from wind, rabbits and deer – 13 apple trees, 2 crab apples, 4 pear trees, 2 damsons and 2 gages, a quince and a mulberry! Please spread the word: Bishops Waltham now has a Community Orchard at Priory Park Meadow, planted for the entire community to enjoy for many years to come!

The Gardening Club would like to thank all the lovely people who came to help on both Saturdays. Their names are listed below along with details of the fruit trees. Meanwhile, the Club would like to extend a very particular thank you to Ann Magrath, without whose extraordinary vision none of this would have happened, and to Sue and Chris Curtis for their project management skills and practical support!

The following people have made a huge contribution to the Bishops Waltham Community Orchard. As Ann says, "They worked their socks off, doing something which will be a special part of Bishops Waltham for years to come, giving life and pleasure and sustenance to all of its inhabitants – human, animal, bird and insect alike."

For measuring, marking and turf removal on Saturday 21st November:

Ray and Trish Simpson-Davis
Ann and Paul Magrath
Sue and Chris Curtis
David Williamson
Keith Fry
Simon Dorey
Tim Gover
Colin Carter
Derek Cole
Amanda and William Heaps

For planting trees and providing protection for them on Saturday 28th November:

Ann and Paul Magrath
Sue and Chris Curtis
David Williamson
Keith Fry
Simon Dorey
Wally Blythe
Derek Cole
Amanda and William Heaps
Anthea Lofts
Larry Mabey
Lorraine Hansford
Chris Williams
Jane and John Carpenter
Sue Stainton
Jane Miller
Robert and Ruth Sheilds
Nicole Jones
Simon LeBesque
Den Marriner
Janice Romer
Judy Marsh
David and Jane Griffiths
Tony Kippenberger (for taking photographs)
Emma McKenzie (Parish Council Administration Officer)
Trevor Veck, Jim Rushton and Kevin Wyatt (Parish Council Groundsmen)

And last but not least, the list of Fruit Trees:

Apples x 13 in total

Old Hampshire Varieties

Howgate Wonder (cooker)
Steyne Seedling (eater)
Hambleton Deus Ans (dual purpose, ie eater and cooker)
Isle of Wight Pippin (eater)
Sir John Thornycroft (eater)

Modern Hampshire Varieties

Deacon's Blushing Beauty (dual purpose)
Ernie's Russet (eater)

Regular Varieties

Bramley (cooker)
James Grieve (dual purpose)
Discovery (eater)
Pinova (eater)
Saturn (eater)
Scrumptious (eater)

Crab Apples x 2

John Downie
Red Sentinel

Pears x 4

Buerre Hardy (eater)
Conference (eater)
Concord (eater)
Beth (eater)

Damsons x 2

Merryweather
Shropshire Prune

Gages x 2

Dennisons Superb
Jefferson

Quince x 1

Vranja

Mulberry x 1

St James