

Community Orchards Challenge Fund

Community orchards are excellent places for people to come together to plant and cultivate local and unusual varieties of fruit trees and to use as the focal point for community activities such as Apple Day or as a green haven in which to relax and wind-down. The People's Trust for endangered species has identified that 90% of traditional orchards have been lost since the 1950s, with 48% of the orchards surveyed in England found to be in declining condition. Devon has lost most of its traditional orchards of large 'standard' trees - valuable because of their beauty, history, wildlife and rich variety of local apples.

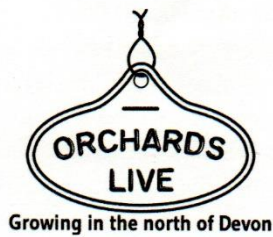
The orchards may be established in locations across the North Devon Biosphere in community spaces such as allotments, parks, around a village hall or churchyard and schools as well as private land if there is an agreement for community use. Applicants to the Challenge Fund will need to provide information on location of the orchard, who the orchards will be used by, the number and variety of trees and planned future management (see application form on our website www.biosphere.org.uk/seasonal-activities/community-orchard). Orchards should be 'traditional' using suitable vigorous rootstocks with a proportion of the trees being Devon varieties. The application will be reviewed by the Pledge for Nature Coordinator with advice from Orchards Live and the North Devon Biosphere team. Special consideration will be taken for applications that will be cultivating local varieties such as mazzards, a type of cherry tree local to Devon. The Fund will also be open to applicants wishing to undertake corrective pruning of existing orchards, as many orchards are currently being lost through neglect.

Simeon Day, the chair of Orchards Live put forward the following statement in support of the Challenge Fund, "Traditional orchards are a valuable component of the Devon landscape and play an important role in providing both a habitat for its wildlife as well as an income for its residents. Another aspect that has been highlighted as a result of the recent isolation and lockdown restrictions is the importance of orchards to our wellbeing and mental health, where they act as a sanctuary from the pressures of life and a place to relieve anxiety. Orchards Live believe that the joy of orchards should also be made available to those who may love or benefit from them, but do not have access to one of their own. As a charity we are focusing our efforts to help connect people and orchards; increase the availability of access to orchards; and provide training, advice and support to community orchards.

Working as a partnership, the Biosphere's Pledge For Nature project and Orchards Live will help to create new community orchards and support the community groups into the future, providing a valuable resource that will benefit the landscape, wildlife and people of North Devon for many years to come."

Submissions will be received from now until end of December 2020 and will be reviewed on a rolling basis, please enter your application as soon as possible. Please note if for any reason we run out of funds to support your project, we will use your application as evidence to obtain more funds therefore a response from you will be most appreciated.

If you need advice or guidance in completing the application form or in planning your community orchards please contact the Biosphere team biosphere-mailbox@devon.gov.uk.



2020 Mazzard produce, Mike Moser



Community Orchard on the Tarka Trail