

Rodney Stoke & Draycott Community Orchard

Expanded Tree Selection and Orchard Diversity Paper

Prepared for Rodney Stoke & Draycott Parish Council and the Community Orchard committee.

This paper supports the proposed addition of cherry, pear and plum trees to the Community Orchard. The recommendations have been developed to complement the existing collection of traditional apple trees and to maximise biodiversity, educational value, fruit production and community engagement.

Current Orchard Context

The orchard currently centres on a ring of ten MM106 apple trees surrounding a 12-metre gravel seating island linked to the car park by an accessible path. Additional species are proposed to broaden flowering periods, increase pollinator resources and extend the harvest season.

Recommended Cherry Varieties

Stella – Self-fertile, reliable, dark red dessert cherry with attractive blossom.

Sunburst – Large sweet fruits, good disease resistance and heavy blossom display.

Recommended Pear Varieties

Conference – Britain's most reliable pear with excellent cropping and storage qualities.

Concorde – Sweet dessert pear combining excellent flavour with dependable yields.

Recommended Plum Varieties

Victoria – Traditional English plum suitable for eating and cooking.

Marjorie's Seedling – Late-season variety extending the harvest period into autumn.

Rootstocks and Tree Form

All additional fruit trees should be supplied as two-year-old half-standard trees on semi-vigorous rootstocks compatible with the scale and management of the existing orchard. This ensures a consistent appearance and manageable long-term maintenance requirements.

Blossom and Harvest Calendar

March–April: Pear blossom.

April–May: Cherry blossom.

April–May: Apple blossom.

July–August: Cherries harvested.

September–October: Pears harvested.

August–October: Plums harvested.

September–November: Apples harvested.

Biodiversity Benefits

The proposed trees will provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinators, support birds and invertebrates, improve habitat diversity and increase resilience within the orchard ecosystem.

Educational Benefits

The wider variety of fruit trees will provide opportunities for local schools and community groups to learn about pollination, fruit production, biodiversity and traditional orchard management.

Community Benefits

The orchard will provide additional produce for residents, support volunteering opportunities, encourage social interaction and strengthen community wellbeing through outdoor activity and shared stewardship.

Recommendation

The Community Orchard Working Group is recommended to proceed with planting:

- 2 Cherry Trees (Stella and Sunburst)
- 2 Pear Trees (Conference and Concorde)
- 2 Plum Trees (Victoria and Marjorie's Seedling)

These additions will strengthen biodiversity, improve educational opportunities, extend the harvest season and enhance the long-term value of the orchard for residents of Rodney Stoke and Draycott.