



Colwall Orchard Group

Restoring, promoting and celebrating traditional orchards

Newsletter – Summer 2022



Dear COG Member

As I write to you with COG news, mid-summer has been and gone, trees have blossomed, meadows have flowered, and the fruit is beginning to ripen on the orchard trees.

We are beginning to plan the harvest of plums, apples and pears, but for now our efforts are decidedly focused, during this hot dry weather, on giving some of the fruit trees we have planted water and care to help them thrive. We ask ourselves whether this is the way our summers will be, and we know that sadly the answer is yes – it is extremely likely. So we continue to do our bit to help the trees flourish in our orchards. You'll find tips on looking after your orchard trees later in this Newsletter.

You can also read about allotments, sheep grazing, our events coming up and the learning sessions on botany and pollinators for Colwall C of E Primary school children and for our volunteers. We were encouraged to find so many minibeasts caught in swooshing nets in the orchard meadow and you'll see many pollinators buzzing on our allotment plots too.

Inspired by the hope that we are making a difference in our local patch we continue to be spurred on to do our bit for nature.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this Summer Newsletter.

Editor

Wendy Thompson

Colwall Orchard Trust Annual General Meeting

Thank you to all who came along to our AGM on 22nd June which was well attended. The meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on what we had done in the previous year as well as to sign off the accounts, say a big thank-you to retiring Trustees, Andy Ball, Lianne Llewellyn and Andrew Spray and to welcome to a new Trustee, Jenny Papettas ([Click here](#) to learn more about the COG Trustees). If you missed the meeting, take a look at the [COG Annual Report](#) which includes a link to a video montage of photos '[A decade of special moments](#)' that we brought together to celebrate the first 10 years at Colwall Village Garden.

Important information is that we now have a **vacancy for a Treasurer** and would be delighted to hear from you if you are interested in taking on this role, or if you can recommend someone. Details of what this would involve can be provided. Email the secretary@colwallorchardgroup.org.

Summer Volunteering

by Lindsay Williams

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose”

So much has changed since the Spring newsletter. It seems only weeks ago that our orchard trees were growing vigorously and full of blossom. Now many are laden with fruit which we look forward to harvesting in the coming months. It has been very dry however, and while we wait for the rains to return, volunteer efforts in providing water for some of the recently planted trees has been very much appreciated. Until their roots have recovered from the shock of transplantation and can access the soil moisture efficiently they need some extra TLC.



Indeed, volunteers are showing their willingness and skill at a multitude of jobs. Which is fortunate as there have been many varied tasks as we moved from Spring to Summer. We have been carrying out formative pruning on the stone fruit trees at our orchards as well as other beautiful orchards in Colwall Parish. The combined expertise of COG volunteers continues to develop and grow and the increasing depth of group knowledge is highly valued.

Thanks to a [Farming in Protected Landscapes grant from the Malvern Hills AONB](#) we have set up our orchards at Colwall Village Garden (CVG) and Lugg's Mill Orchard (LMO) for [mob grazing](#) with Kath and Clive's flock of rare breed sheep (more about this later in the Newsletter). Whilst it was a lot of work to set up, in the long term we should see benefits from healthier soils with increased carbon sequestration as well as more biodiverse meadows. We also discovered that some of our volunteers are very enthusiastic budding shepherds.

We are keen to expand our orchard meadows and continue increasing their biodiversity. So in July we ran a project to collect local seed from the meadows at Brookmead using the [brand new brush seed harvester from the Malvern Hills AONB](#) as well as hand collected Common Knapweed seed. Volunteers sorted and sieved the collected seed, which will be spread at CVG and LMO in September.

As the Summer progresses and we move into Autumn our tasks will change again. Collecting fruit from our own and other orchards and making apple juice, jams and chutneys means another range of skills to employ. If you are interested in helping us restore traditional orchards to improve our landscape for people and nature do contact us on volunteers@colwallorchardgroup.org. It is rewarding, fun and there's cake!

Colwall C of E pupils visit our orchard meadows

by Lindsay Williams

We were very happy to welcome pupils from Colwall's primary school to our orchard meadows at CVG and LMO again this year. We had four groups visit, (some unfortunately had to cancel due to the hot weather). We also had a first visit from a group of pupils from The Elms school.



We are lucky that both schools are so close so that the pupils could walk to our orchards. We then had the opportunity to introduce them to the flora and fauna in our meadows. It is a wonderful experience helping the children to learn about the natural world. This year we gave many of the pupils nets and set them loose to see what they could find. The explosion of children rushing off with nets, which in many cases were bigger than their handlers, was a sight to behold. Soon we were helping them identify butterflies, showing them the difference between grasshoppers and crickets as well as learning about the spiders, beetles and other creatures we share our orchards with.



Seeing their enthusiasm and energy is truly invigorating. It also gives us enormous respect for the teachers and their assistants who guide them day in day out.

We would like to thank everyone at the schools, as well as COG volunteers, who helped arrange the visits and hope this can be a long term collaborative project. It is great to see the knowledge of the children increase after each visit and hopefully they will soon be the ones teaching us.

Orchard botany and pollinator workshops

by Jenny Papettas

We were fortunate to host a visit by Tim Kaye for a day of training as part of the [Hidden Herefordshire project](#).

Hidden Herefordshire is a lottery funded project which "aims to connect Herefordshire people of all ages and from all backgrounds to recording wildlife wherever they are". Tim led sessions on botany in the morning and pollinating insects in the afternoon. He is a veritable mine of information and everyone in attendance, even our most knowledgeable attendees, learned something new.

The pollinators session saw us swooshing about the orchard at CVG with nets and pots, discovering the huge



amount of, largely unseen, life within. Reminding us that bees are only a small part of the pollinating story, Tim helped with the identification of the range of butterflies, moths, beetles, hoverflies and ladybirds that were found. In particular abundance were red soldier beetles, colloquially known as blood suckers or bonking beetles (evidence of the reason for this was observed!!).

Grasshoppers, crickets and true bugs were also found. Whilst not strictly speaking pollinators, it is great to see the increasing biodiversity present as the meadow beneath the orchard trees develops. As invertebrate populations crash nationally it is heartening to know that they can recover, given the right conditions.

The session was informative, but also a lot of fun and we thank Tim for leading a great day of learning.

Summer pruning of fruit trees

by Jilly Rosser

Perhaps you think pruning fruit trees is a winter activity? Often it is, of course. But there are 3 situations in which summer pruning is called for.

Cherries and plums

There are a group of fruit trees known as 'stone fruit', in reference to the single, large stone in the centre (as opposed to the pips of apples and pears). The most common stone fruits in our area are cherries, plums and damsons, though some gardens also have apricots, peaches and nectarines.



Stone fruits should only be pruned in the summer. Any cuts made to the branches of these trees in the winter expose the tree to the very real risk of getting a fungus called 'Silver Leaf', which would kill the tree. So when you come to prune your stone fruit trees, choose a summer day that is bright and breezy - a good day for drying laundry - and the silver leaf spores won't be about. Many of us like to wait until we have picked the fruit before we undertake the pruning, as it's hard to chop off a branch that's got growing fruit on it. So now is the time for cherries, and most plums will have cropped by the end of August.

Trained fruit trees

The term 'trained fruit' refers to any fruit tree that has been trained against a wall or fence. Espalier, cordon, fan are familiar examples of trained fruit tree shapes.



All trained fruit should be pruned in the summer. This is because pruning a fruit tree in the summer acts as a brake on the growth of the tree - it restricts growth - and persuades the tree to

produce more fruit and fewer leaves and branches. The pruning that is done on the trees in the summer serves to keep the tree compact; the small branches which come off the main, permanent framework of the tree are snipped short, so that the tree keeps its shape and produces all its fruit near to the framework branches.

Apples and pears usually need some pruning in the winter too. Winter pruning is to the main framework of the tree - eg the radiating ribs of a fan or the long side branches of an espalier - to form, or maintain, the overall shape of the tree.

Restricting the growth of apple and pear trees

Sometimes we prune in order to reduce the size and vigour of a tree; pruning for this reason should be done in summer. The principle to remember is that summer pruning restricts growth, winter pruning promotes growth. Examples of when you might want to restrict growth are: a tree that is overcrowded and needs 'thinning'; a tree that is outgrowing the available space; a tree that is diseased (pruning will let in light and air).



Some varieties of apple grow particularly vigorously - Bramleys, Newton Wonder and Peasgood's Nonsuch are well known examples - and it is always best to prune these varieties in the summer; winter pruning just encourages them into rampant growth!

Two more advantages of summer pruning are that it allows more light to reach the ripening fruit, and reduces the amount of water the tree needs. The latter is particularly relevant in this very dry summer.

Practical tips – Watering fruit and nut trees during hot weather and drought by Andy Ball

We've just had the hottest recorded days in all parts of the UK and the news is full of talk of drought and the prospect of hosepipe bans. [The Orchard Project](#) suggest that 30-70% of newly planted trees in urban areas fail within the first year after planting primarily due to lack of water and poor soil. Such a high loss rate can be reduced by some appropriate tree care including regular watering over the first few years of a new tree's life. After that, except in exceptional conditions like we are experiencing now, most trees should be well enough established to survive independently.

The [Tree Council](#) offers the following top tips for watering trees in a drought.

“During very hot weather, your trees may need a little extra help, especially newly planted trees or those which are showing signs of stress.”

1. Trees should be watered three times a month from April until the end of September. When possible avoid evaporation by watering early or late, not in the middle of the day.
2. Water slowly, to ensure that the water does not run off. The ground will probably be hard and it will take time for the water to permeate through the surface, so especially to begin with, water slowly and thoroughly.
3. Estimating the amount of water that a tree needs is difficult. A useful rule of thumb is a full watering can (2 gallons or 9 litres) or five minutes with a hose with a rose fitted, per 2.5cm/1in of trunk diameter at knee height.

4. Inadequate watering, which only wets the surface of the ground, can cause surface roots to grow and this could lead to more drought problems if the watering stops.
5. Concentrate efforts under the canopy of the tree and especially around the drip line (the perimeter area of the extent of the canopy), as this is where most of the roots are likely to be. Ensure that you water evenly so that no matter where the roots are, they get some water. Don't concentrate all your watering around the base of the trunk, as most of the roots are likely to be further out.
6. To ensure the soil retains water, use mulch extensively around trees in a circle of at least 1m/3ft radius and to a depth of 10cm/4in. Use wood chips, shredded bark, leaves or evergreen needles as mulch. Make sure that the mulch is not touching the trunk.
7. Re-use "grey" water (such as bath water, but not dishwasher water because of the salt) whenever possible or collect any rainwater from gutters in water butts.

Fruit tree orders

We are getting ready to do our annual tree order. If you are thinking of planting fruit trees, native trees, ornamental trees or soft fruit bushes **please get in touch as soon as possible and by the end of September at the latest**. The earlier we order the better the chance of getting the variety of trees you want for your orchard, woodland, garden or allotment.

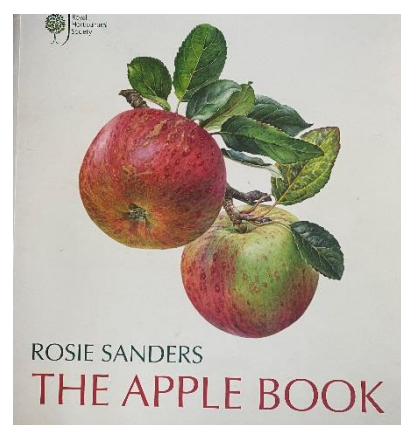
The benefit to you of making a tree order via Colwall Orchard Group is that you'll get a good price, along with some advice from us if you need it. By combining lots of tree orders we ensure that we get trade discount and we share that with you. The benefits to us are that we support the purchase and planting of more traditional fruit trees which benefits nature and the environment, and we raise funds to contribute to restoring traditional orchards in the Colwall area.



If you'd like advice please contact secretary@colwallorchardgroup.org. To get you started take a look at the details of [local fruit varieties](#) on our website or you can look through the online catalogues of our main nursery suppliers: [Frank Matthews](#), [Walcot Nursery](#), [R V Roger](#) and [Lodge Farm](#).

The Apple Book by Rosie Sanders

First published in 1988 this book is reportedly the most trusted and sought-after book for apple identification in the UK. The description of this book is a work of art in its own right: "*Rosie Sanders, often described as the best painter of the world's most famous fruit... In 144 sensuously detailed watercolours she depicts the unrivalled range of form, colour and texture which characterize such varieties as Beauty of Bath, Peasgood Nonsuch...*"



Unfortunately, this book is Out of Print and copies on eBay are advertised for up to £288.35 but with free postage! However, Bob Levy our resident eBay expert has managed to buy 7 second-hand hardback copies of this book so that we can offer them to COG members for the bargain basement price of £16 each. If you are interested in buying a copy contact us at members@colwallorchardgroup.org.

Colwall Allotments

by Wendy Thompson

The allotments at Colwall Village Garden are looking wonderful and very productive. As a plot holder myself, I have been pleased with the crops of currants, rhubarb, beans, peas, potatoes, courgettes and onions so far this



year. Watering is an issue, and as allotment tenants we are all pleased to have access to taps close to our plots. But watering alone is not enough and other methods of retaining water in the soil such as mulching help considerably. I can report that all of the rainwater that was harvested from the roof of the Apple Packing Shed earlier in the year has been used and we are now 100% dependent on mains supply. We are monitoring this to see how much we use to help us to plan any further expansion of our own rain water collection. More about this once we have the figures to inform us.



The fruit, flowers and vegetables grown on the plots are a fabulous draw to pollinators and if you should wander through on a warm afternoon you will find the plots buzzing with life. Our human visitors also enjoy a stroll around the site, familiarizing and being inspired by the eclectic range of allotment gardening styles. We were delighted that Welly Tots (NCT Malvern Hills) recently decided to visit and enjoy the site, including the play 'tractor' and willow tunnel!

The not so welcome visits by rabbits (the first year they've been spotted on the site) as well as the regular pheasants and rodents are a challenge we currently tolerate but it is a concern and an issue regularly raised by allotmentees. We are considering ways to deal with their impact on the crops we grow.

Allotment social events this year have included pizza from the cob oven after Sunday morning volunteering and a Summer Party organised by Mary, Laura and friends, catering by Nick and music and magic provided by Geoff. A super day and big thanks to everyone involved.

A Potato Party is being planned for 14th August which happens to be at the end of [National Allotment Week](#) (8th to 14th August) – so a great way to celebrate our humble potato along with the national celebration of Bugs, Bees and Broccoli!



🏡 The sheep are coming home, they're coming home, they're coming home, they're coming home, they're coming! 🏡

by Kath Killick

If you feel that the view out over the orchard has been missing an important element over the last few months, then it might just be the absence of sheep. Be concerned no more however, as they will be returning in August as part of the summer grazing plan.



Management of both the CVG Orchard and Lugg's Mill

Orchard is helped by sheep grazing our orchards periodically over the year. Since 2018 the flock has belonged to myself and Clive Killick. We are long-standing COG members, who run a local smallholding which promotes traditional British longwool sheep. The Killick flock are mainly pedigree rarebreeds - black and white Leicester Longwools as well as a few Cotswolds and Teeswaters. The longwool breeds, which originally built the British sheep industry, have been displaced over time by faster growing 'commercial' breeds and changes in the wool industry.



Our aim is to gradually replace the entire flock with the Leicester Longwool breed. This breed, which was once dominant until the 1950s, has been reduced to only about 500 breeding pedigree ewes in the UK. Their long curly fleeces grow in a range of colours, from pure white to variegated browns, greys and black. These fleeces are felted by me into rugs and cushions for sale in craft stalls around the local area.

You may have seen the flock here last April and watched the regular movement of them around the orchard. With the use of an electric fence, they are contained in one small area at a time and moved continuously every 3-4 days. This movement is referred to as 'mob grazing' and is one of many regenerative farming practices to enhance soil productivity, improve carbon sequestration in the soil and keep down the parasite load in the sheep themselves. The sheep and owners would like to say a big thank you to the wonderful Friday volunteers of COG and particularly Jenny Papettas, Chiara Tironi and Lindsay Williams who help with all the hard work - sheep movement, watering and counting!

The sheep love wildflower meadows and have played an important role in re-establishing this critical habitat and their ongoing management. The Killick flock are often referred to as a 'flying flock', as they are constantly being moved around Colwall and the neighbouring Parishes to help prepare fields for sowing meadow plants or in keeping grass down so to allow the growth of wildflowers.

Events

Art in the Orchard (h-Art)

3rd to 11th September

11am – 4pm daily

Location: Colwall Village Garden

Admission free

We're delighted to host Art in the Orchard for a second year, as part of Herefordshire Art Week (h-Art). A wonderful opportunity for local artists to display and sell their work along with providing us all with a beautiful place to visit, relax with friends and family and be inspired.

Nine artists will be exhibiting this year using a diverse range of media including acrylics, fine art, printmaking, mixed media, textiles, pottery and ceramics.

Taster workshops by Issi, Gabriella and Les.

Refreshments will be served daily from the Orchard Café!

More details on Facebook [@artintheorcharduk](#) or email artintheorchard@icloud.com.



Colwall Apple Day
Saturday 15th October
12 noon to 4pm



Location: Colwall Village Garden
Admission free

We always look forward to Apple Day when we gather to celebrate our favourite fruit!



As usual you'll get a chance to taste and have a go at making apple juice. You could also bring your own apples to juice, bottle, and pasteurise. To book your apples for juicing email events@colwallorchardgroup.org.

There will be the usual apple displays and identification, refreshments from the Orchard Café, games and music.



Also, look out for our stall selling our juice and preserves at other events in Colwall including

Wyche and Colwall Horticultural Society Summer Show

Saturday 13th August, 2-5pm

Location Colwall Village Hall

Colwall Arts and Crafts Festival

Saturday/Sunday 20th-21st August, 11am to 5pm

Location: St James the Great Church

More information on our events on the Events page on the [COG website](#).

Relaxing at Lugg's Mill Orchard

This stunning photo by James MacDonald was taken while he was having a rest on one of our bespoke timber recliner seats by the bridge at Lugg's Mill Orchard. A wonderful spot to soak up the early evening sunshine. If you have any special photos of the orchards or the allotments and meadows in Colwall please send them to secretary@colwallorchardgroup.org



as we would love to see them. We're always looking for fresh photos for our website and Facebook account as well as to post on Twitter and Instagram.

More about COG

You will find lots of information about COG on our website including a [News page](#) and an [Events page](#). Check this out to keep in touch or follow us on our other social media channels, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

As ever a BIG thank you for your continued support to restore, promote and celebrate traditional orchards in Colwall. If you would like more information about getting involved, or have any suggestions or comments, we are always pleased to hear from you.

From the [COG Board](#)

Contact information:

For general matters contact: secretary@colwallorchardgroup.org

For information about volunteering contact: volunteers@colwallorchardgroup.org

For information about our events contact: events@colwallorchardgroup.org

Web: www.colwallorchardgroup.org