

Lickey Hills Country Park Heritage Orchard

Welcome to our orchard.
We invite you to help yourselves to the fruit when ripe.
Please pick respectfully, taking fruit for your own use and leaving plenty for everyone else – refer to the key for more details.

Apples

Originating from Central Asia they are one of the most cultivated fruit trees. The National Fruit Collection lists over 2,000 varieties, far more than any other fruit. Many traditional varieties were used to make cider. Today, apples remain one of the most popular fruits for eating and cooking. The saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" recognises the link to healthy eating.

Type	Ripe
45 Adam's Pearmain, Herefordshire, (introduced) 1826	eating Oct
12 27 Catshead, West Midlands, 1629	cooking Oct
25 38 Gladstone, Blakedown, Worcestershire, 1780	eating Jul/Aug
8 Hope Cottage Seedling, Rochford, Worcestershire, 1900	eating Sept
22 King Charles Pearmain, Rushock, Worcestershire, 1821	eating Oct
10 11 15 26 Lord Hindlip, Worcestershire, 1896	eating Jul/Aug
21 May Queen, Worcestershire, 1888	eating Oct
14 Pitmaston Pine Apple, Herefordshire, 1785	eating Oct
41 Red Windsor, Herefordshire, 1985	eating Sept
2 6 Sandlin Duchess, Malvern, Worcestershire, 1880	eating Oct
5 7 10 18 Worcester Pearmain, Worcestershire, 1874	eating Sept
42 Yellow Ingestrie, Shropshire, 1800	eating Sept

Plums

Worcestershire is famous for plum growing – especially in the Vale of Evesham where there is a blossom trail in spring followed by the Pershore Plum Festival in August.

Plum jerkum is a local type of fruit wine – "...a very heady liquor. In the country they often mix it with cider, and thus moderate its effect" (Berrows Journal, 1891).

1 24 Heron, Vale of Evesham, Worcestershire, 1875	eating Aug
29 32 Warwickshire Drooper, West Midlands, pre-1920	dual Aug/Sept
20 34 Yellow Pershore, Tiddesley Woods, Worcestershire, 1827	cooking Aug

Medlar Trees

Probably introduced by the Romans, Shakespeare refers to medlars in four of his plays including 'Romeo & Juliet' and 'As You Like It'.

It was commonly known as the 'Dog's A*** Fruit' from their appearance, and can be used for cooking and wine-making. To be eaten raw the fruit is 'bletted' (softening after ripening) by dipping the stalks in a salt solution to prevent rotting, then stored in a cool, dark, frost-free place. The flesh softens and turns brown in about 2-3 weeks.

28 31 Nottingham, 18th century	dual Nov
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Damson

The damson was introduced by the Romans. The Shropshire Prune variety was common in Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Montgomeryshire in orchards, and as a hedgerow tree from the 17th century. Shropshire Prune trees were planted for dye in the 19th century. The variety of colours produced provided the khaki for the uniforms of WWI soldiers and for the RAF blue. Commercial dye usage declined leading to neglect of the trees.

30 35 39 44 Shropshire Prune, Shropshire, 17th century	cooking Sept
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Cherry Trees

Native to the Himalayas, Cherry Trees enjoy a temperate climate. By the 17th century 16 varieties were known in England.

The area around Bewdley, Wyre Forest and the Teme Valley in north Worcestershire has a long tradition of cherry growing including a Cherry Fair in Bewdley in July. The trade flourished when the railway was built in the 1860s as the perishable fruit could quickly reach the Midland conurbations, but has since declined.

3 4 13 Black Oliver, Herefordshire, early 20th century	eating Aug
9 16 Summer Sun, Norfolk, 1970	eating July

Mulberry Trees

These were introduced by the Romans. In 1608, James the First had a Mulberry Garden planted in what is now the Chelsea Physic Garden in a mistaken attempt to develop a silk industry to rival that of France. Unfortunately, silk worms prefer the white mulberry to the black mulberry planted, though this has better fruit.

In 2005, a Royal Collection of mulberry trees was established, mainly at Buckingham Palace and is now the National Collection.

38 Chelsea King James, London, early 17th century	dual Aug
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Pears

Pears were introduced by the Romans. The Black Worcester pear is the oldest surviving type of warden pear. From the 13th century the warden was famous as a hard, long-lasting cooking pear. Warden pears in syrup were served with meat and fish. Perry, an alcoholic beverage made from pears, is a traditional Worcestershire drink.

Pears were important in Worcestershire history:

- Pear blossom was the badge of the Worcestershire Yeomanry Cavalry until 1856
- Worcestershire Bowmen had a pear tree on their banners at the Battle of Agincourt, 1425
- Queen Elizabeth I commanded the city to add three pears to its coat of arms on seeing a tree laden with black pears near the City Gate when she visited in 1575

19 23 Black Worcester, Worcestershire, 16th century	cooking Oct
40 48 49 Pitmaston Duchess, Worcestershire, 1841	dual Oct
36 37 Williams Bon Chretien, Berkshire, 1770	dual Sept

Adam's Pool

Rose Hill Orchard and Old Rose & Crown

DROVERS WAY

Visitor Centre

CAN YOU SPOT...

Shhh! The orchard is a great place to see rabbits, especially at dawn & dusk. If you are very quiet, those living here are descended from rabbits the Normans brought to England for their warrens, and...
Bullfinches are colourful birds that love to eat the buds and seeds of fruit trees. King Henry VII gave a bounty of a penny for every one killed because of their 'criminal attacks' in orchards!
One of each are hiding in the blossom...

and... can you see any evidence of rabbits visiting the orchard?

A Taste of History Our Heritage Orchard

Established in 2012, this orchard is a collaboration between the Lickey Hills Society, the Ranger Team and the Birmingham Civic Society. It serves as a reminder of the 19th century, when Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire formed the heart of England's apple, pear, plum, damson and cherry growing area.

In 2023, to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III, we planted two historic Worcestershire apple varieties – the 'King Charles Pearmain' and the 'May Queen'.

Why Orchards Matter

- **Reviving Tradition:** We are helping to counter the decline of British orchards by bringing heritage fruit back to our public spaces.
- **Adding Diversity:** Most trees here are local heritage varieties, offering flavours you won't find in any supermarket.
- **A Wildlife Haven:** Spring blossom feeds bees & other insects who in turn pollinate the trees. In winter, birds & other wildlife feed on the fruit showing how vital it is for local biodiversity in our orchard.

Community Orchards

If you enjoyed our Heritage Orchard – which is part of a city-wide scheme – why not visit the Rose Hill Orchard (near the Old Rose and Crown), established in 2023.

From Past to Present

The West Midlands was once a centre of cider and perry production. Sadly, traditional orchards have faced decades of decline due to changing farming methods and cheaper imported fruits. By planting here in the Lickey Hills, we are reviving horticultural skills and helping everyone understand exactly where their food comes from.

Heritage You Can Taste

The fruit grown here belongs to the community. These are rare varieties cultivated for centuries. They are healthy, free, and full of local character.

Wassail - from the Anglo-Saxon 'waes hael' meaning 'good health'.

For centuries, villagers met in their orchards mid-January to perform the wassail ceremony. Chanting, banging pots and pans and singing loudly, they would process around the orchard. The wassail helps to awaken the apple trees and scare away evil spirits thus ensuring a good harvest for the coming year.

Pieces of cider-soaked toast were hung in the trees and the villagers drank cider or apple juice.

This orchard has hosted a wassail for many years.