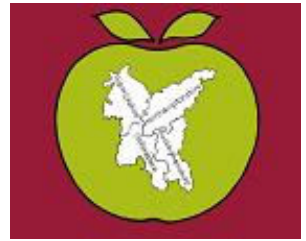


# Mid Shires Orchard Group

## Who we are, what we do and how you can help



### **Who we are:**

The Mid Shires Orchard Group is a community orchard group. Our aim is to conserve and promote enjoyment and use of the local orchards and rich 'top fruit' traditions of the four 'mid-shires' counties of Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire.

The Mid Shires Orchard Group was formed in 2007, as a 'not for profit' organisation and is run by volunteers. It is led and managed by a small committee of elected Officers.

### **What we do:**

To support our aims, we set and endeavour to meet a number of goals within the four Mid-Shires counties each year, through the activities of our volunteers. Our goals for 2016/17 are:

#### **Heritage top fruit promotion & protection**

1. Discover, research, identify and raise awareness of local and heritage varieties of top fruit
2. Improve public access to local heritage top fruit varieties by sourcing & grafting new trees
3. Increase populations of rare fruit trees by sourcing, obtaining & distributing their graftwood
4. Promote greater use of local varieties of fruit tree in public, private & community plantings

#### **Orchard & fruit tree conservation**

5. Discover, research, survey & record the presence of historic orchards and their varieties of fruit
6. Raise awareness of orchards, their historical, ecological and social significance and heritage value
7. Lead and promote initiatives to restore neglected orchards and maintain them in good condition
8. Give advice on establishing new orchards, conserving senior trees & succession planting
9. Engage local authorities to help protect orchards and rare fruit trees during the planning process

#### **Education & skills development**

10. Arrange training courses in traditional orchard skills such as grafting, pruning, fruit tree care, orchard management and cider-making
11. Give opportunities for people of all backgrounds & abilities to learn about, undertake and enjoy practical 'hands-on' work to restore and maintain orchards and fruit trees
12. Provide on-line resources for sharing knowledge, information, experience and events, to encourage learning about orchard and top-fruit related topics via friendly collaboration
13. Give access to technical expertise and practical help to support individuals, groups and communities with their orchard and fruit-related endeavours
14. Offer advice on and demonstrate methods for storing, pressing and preserving fruit harvests

#### **Culture & community engagement**

15. Promote learning about fruit heritage via inclusive social events featuring heritage fruit displays, fruit identification, apple pressing and traditional fruit-themed games
16. Run community events and revive local traditions to celebrate orchards & fruit, such as Wassail, Apple Days, St Clement's Day, Plum Perambulations & Cherry Pie Sunday
17. Help communities start up, plan, plant and learn to maintain new community orchards
18. Operate a scheme to lend out MSOG-owned fruit processing equipment to its members, for use at community events and for private, domestic fruit processing
19. Assist and support other organisations from time to time, in developing and delivering initiatives related to orchards and heritage fruit trees, where activities and outcomes are mutually compatible

### Events and Training Courses:

To support the achievement of our goals and for the benefit of our members and local communities, we hold a regular set of seasonal events and training courses each year, at locations across our four counties. These include a Winter Wassail, a Springtime Scionwood Swap, a Summer Field Trip and a range of Autumn Apple Days. Our AGM, held in May, is usually accompanied by a Blossom Picnic in a local orchard. Training courses are seasonal and generally feature summer and winter pruning, grafting, bud grafting, orchard management and cider-making.

### Afternoon at the Orchard:

To give 'hands-on' experience in orchard management and fruit tree care and to help conserve and protect a unique set of 20<sup>th</sup> century orchards, we help to look after the Woughton Orchards at Woughton on the Green in Milton Keynes. The orchards, which are owned by the Parks Trust, were planted over the last four decades. They comprise:

- ❖ The Cider Orchard, featuring seven different varieties of West Country heritage cider apples
- ❖ The Perry Orchard, with 200 trees of three historic types of perry pear
- ❖ The New Orchard, featuring 110 varieties of dessert, culinary and cider/perry apples and pears
- ❖ The Plum Hedge, with 12 trees of traditional varieties that may include the local 'Aylesbury Prune'

We help to look after them by arranging and leading a monthly 'Afternoon at the Orchard' there for our Members and Friends, on Saturdays from 2pm to 6pm. We undertake orchard and tree maintenance and restoration activities, as well as learn and practice new skills in these areas. It's great fun, in a lovely place, with great company! Children and well-behaved dogs are welcomed, so it's a nice family afternoon out as well.

### How you can help:

An ideal way to start supporting us is to become a member. Practical help, to arrange and organise, run and volunteer at our Apple Days and other events, is valued greatly. Assistance with the other activities we do is also needed, such as scionwood collection and distribution, fruit and orchard research and liaison with communities, groups and individuals across the four counties. Having more volunteers at Woughton Orchard would be welcomed and your help, with this or any of the activities that we do, will always be appreciated!

### Membership:

Membership of the Mid Shires Orchard Group runs from April 1<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup> each year. For 2016/17 we offer individual (£12), family (£25) and non-profit group (£25) annual membership, as well as Individual Life Membership (£100). Please email [MSOGMembership@yahoo.com](mailto:MSOGMembership@yahoo.com) for further details and a membership form.

### For more information:

For more details about us and what we do, our schedule of events, discussions on and photographs of orchard and top-fruit related themes, or to offer help, please see our website, Facebook page or email our Chairman.

Website: <http://midshiresorchardgroup.freeforums.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/midshiresorchardgroup>

Email our Chairman at: [MSOGChairman@yahoo.com](mailto:MSOGChairman@yahoo.com)



The Mid Shires Orchard Group is for all enthusiasts of orchards, apples and heritage top fruit in Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. For more information on who we are, what we do and how to join in, contact us at: [MSOGChairman@yahoo.com](mailto:MSOGChairman@yahoo.com) or call Claire on 01280 814928 / 07973 667221

