

BRIGSTEER COMMUNITY ORCHARD

Introduction

The orchard, which is opposite Park End Farm is part of the National Trust's Sizergh Estate.

It is planted with damson trees round the perimeter with mostly apple trees in the central area, with a few plum trees. The land is grazed by sheep under agreement with a local farmer. One corner of the orchard has been fenced off to protect rare flora beside the beck- all other barbed wire has been removed.

The National Trust sought a group to manage the orchard and utilise the fruit rather than allow it to go to waste, so the Community Orchard Group was created.

Brigsteer Community Orchard Group

The Group is an informal gathering of volunteers from Brigsteer charged with actively managing the orchard under the direction of the local NT ranger.

The Group's Objectives are:

- To actively manage the orchard (with support from the ranger), which involves a range of tasks including pruning, weeding, minor maintenance and harvesting the fruit.
- Arranging for distribution or sale of the fruit (apples, damsons and plums) so that it is not wasted
- Raising money, when possible for the acquisition of essential equipment and supporting the Sizergh Estate.

The Group is open to all members of the community: there is a group of named volunteers, but this is not exclusive, and notices will be sent via the village e-mail system when group activities are planned.

Support

The orchard is supported by the Parish Council who have awarded a grant for the purchase of two long-armed fruit pickers. The Lake District National Park have also contributed half the cost of a special ladder which is kept at the orchard.

A Year in the Orchard

January/February – winter pruning of the apple trees. This maintains the shape and spread of the trees, so they are fruit-bearing and accessible.

July/August – summer pruning of the apple trees. This is to reduce the growth during the early summer which will not be fruit-bearing and reduces the size of the fruit.

August/September – depending on the weather over the season, plums are ready for picking, followed by the damsons.

September/October - Apples will be ready. The fenced-off area will need to be scythed and the grass raked up.

All Year Occasional tasks related to the maintenance of the orchard.

Safety

A full risk assessment has been completed and is available on request. The primary rules to be followed by all visitors to the Orchard are:

- If going alone, please advise someone that you are going and advise them when you return.
- Wash your hands after your visit.

Contact

Co-ordinator: Wendy Prescott, Over Mill Beck

T: 015395 68989

E: wendyeprescott@btinternet.com

NT Ranger: Sam Sharples, Sizergh Estate

M: 079207 84411

E: sam.sharples@nationaltrust.org.uk