

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT



An ever-growing information resource featuring allotments and community orchards in Gloucestershire's communities



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Gloucestershire has a rich heritage of orchard and allotment sites. Although these declined in the late 20th century there has been a revival in the last five years, demand for allotments is increasing and community orchards are being set up across the county.

This publication on allotments and community orchards has been put together by GRCC’s Accelerator Project to highlight the diversity of groups in the county and to provide inspiration for those of you who would like to begin or develop a project.

All the featured projects share the desire to provide community spaces that all ages can enjoy and take part in. They are at various stages of development, from community orchards less than a year old to allotments established for more than 100 years.

We hope that the case studies and information in this booklet will provide you with ideas to develop your own project or inspiration to start a new one. Either way the Accelerator Project could help you. It is all good ‘Food for Thought’ and if you have any queries, please contact: **Helen Richards, Accelerator Project Assistant, [helenr@gcc.org.uk](mailto:helenr@gcc.org.uk)** or call: **01452 528491**.

# IN ITS INFANCY – The Eastington Allotment Society (TEAS)

Established in 2009

## Finding the perfect place

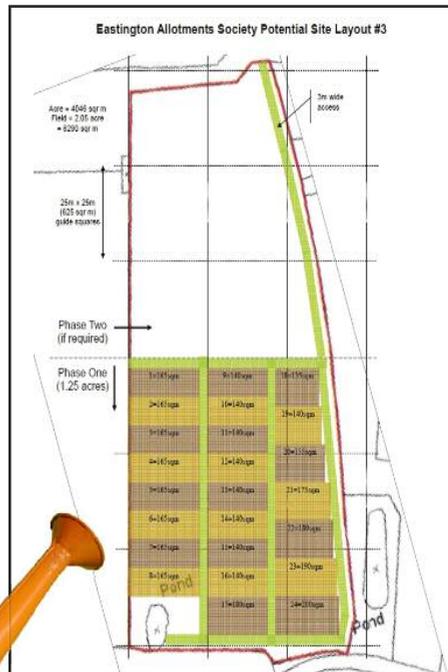
Historically there has been an appetite in Eastington for allotments and a group of villagers has worked with the Parish Council to secure an allotment site. In Autumn 2009 a two acre field adjacent to the Owen Harris Memorial Ground was acquired from a private land owner by the parish council and it now leases the land to TEAS.

## Best laid plans

Throughout the Spring of 2009 the allotment society drafted potential layouts for the site, discussed works that needed completing and formed their rules and constitution.

In April 2009 the management committee was formalised, with a chair, treasurer and secretary plus two additional members of the society, and potential plot holders were consulted about the sizes of plots they would like.

The parish council decided that 1.25 acres of the 2 acre site would be given over to allotments. Several layouts for the site were drawn up and the layout shown on the right was chosen. The 24 registered plot holders had stated their preference for a small, medium or large plot and these were allocated via a draw. The remainder of the 2 acre site could be used at a later date with the proviso that it must be used as a community space.



## Taking the first steps

Before allotments could be marked out, land drainage was installed to prevent water logging. The parish council contracted the work which was completed in the autumn of 2009. The plot holders then turned their empty plots into allotments and within less than a year they were rewarded by their first harvest.

## A helping hand

The Allotment Committee works to help its plot holders and has divided one large plot into three smaller ones to make them more

manageable. In addition, there is a water supply at the site in the form of two water troughs and plot holders have been asked to identify their allotment with a sign showing their plot number.

The majority of plot holders have sheds with water butts attached to collect rainwater, so even with water on tap the members are trying to conserve water and make use of the natural supply. The society has a regular slot in the parish newsletter in which it feeds back information to the community on what has been happening at the allotments.



## Moving forward

There is a new allotment committee in place for 2012 with plans to install a poly tunnel on part of the empty field so that plot holders can raise seedlings on site. The committee will continue to monitor the allotments to make sure plot holders are keeping on top of their plots. The group does not hold formal social events but advice and tips are shared as people work on their allotment. Experienced gardeners have many words of wisdom to help those new to 'growing their own'. As the photos above show, even on a cold February morning there are cabbages and sprouts growing and preparatory work for the new season has begun.

# BLOSSOMING – Highnam Allotment Association

## Established in 2007

### From wheelies to wheelbarrows

For a long time there had been demand for an allotment site in Highnam but no suitable land could be found. In 2007 a small field, once used as a skate and BMX park, became available. Knowing there was interest in the parish the parish council placed an article in the village newsletter about the proposed site. From this the Highnam Allotment Association was officially formed and began work on its constitution. The wheels were set in motion to transfer ownership of the site from Tewkesbury Borough Council to Highnam Parish Council in 2007. There was a delay as the community cleared up after the summer's floods but the parish council and allotment association drew up their peppercorn lease agreement and work began.



- 1 acre site
- 27 plots
- 1 starter plot
- Pond
- Mains water troughs
- Manure supply
- £20-25 per annum



By charging a £25 refundable joining fee in the first year the association was able to install a water supply to the site in the form of two water troughs. Money is saved by turning off the water in the winter months

### Getting stuck in

A local farmer deep-ploughed the site and the 24 allotments were marked out. There is a regular delivery of cow manure from the local farmer, initially run as a honesty scheme of £1 per wheelbarrow but now water and manure are included in the annual rent.

*“Tewkesbury Borough Council has been very helpful, installing the gate and fencing at the top of the site to separate it from the footpath and planting a Hawthorne hedgerow. This*

*means we still have access for the manure delivery and for the mower to maintain the paths,”* says Bob

Stembridge, Chair of the Association.



### Pride of the parish

The parish council has used the success of the allotment association, featuring it as a case study in the parish entry to the GRCC Gloucestershire Village of the Year Award. In 2008 the parish council used some of the £600 prize money to install a new footbridge and gate to the bottom of the site so that plot holders could easily access it with their wheelbarrows.



### Getting bogged down

The main problem faced by the group was a water logging issue at the bottom of the site. In June 2009 the allotment association was awarded a Gloucestershire Community Foundation Grass Roots Grant of £3,000 which was used to install drainage, which in return feeds a pond. This measure has been successful and the group has been able to add two plots to the site, one of which is a starter plot.

As Bob explains: *“The starter plot is offered to people when they move off the waiting list if they are new to allotment gardening. It is a smaller area and they can use it to test out whether they are able and willing to commit to maintaining a plot.”*

Once a main plot becomes available the starter plot holder is the first to be approached. A 27<sup>th</sup> plot has also been created as two plot holders have split a plot to make it more manageable.

### Water and wildlife

The pond at the bottom of the site was overgrown and dried up, most likely due to a thirsty willow tree. By working with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) and raising funds, the group hired a digger to clear and deepen the pond and removed the vast majority of the willow in March 2011. A year later the pond contained several feet of water, a new batch of frogspawn and the area was populated by numerous birds.



This is a nature friendly site. The pond was developed for the wildlife and a felled willow is stacked to one side to provide a micro habitat. The allotment association is also experimenting to find out how different management methods of the north and south hedgerows affect the wildlife they support.

*“We continue to work with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to develop the pond, creating a gravel bank at one end for marginal plants and to provide access for smaller animals,”* says committee member Liz.

### What next?

The association plans to contact the Barn Owl Trust for advice on installing owl boxes on the site. There are also plans to have a small orchard by grafting fruit trees onto the existing Blackthorn and Hawthorne. They hope to have plums, greengages, crab apples and pears. This allotment association focuses on supporting the local wildlife as well as putting food on the table.



# TRADITIONAL ALLOTMENTS – Siddington Gardeners and Allotment Association

Established for over 100 years

## A rich history

In Siddington large swathes of land are still owned by estates. The allotment land is owned by The Bathurst Estate which employs a warden to manage and maintain the site. Liz Gardener is a third generation plot holder and the current warden of the Siddington allotments. She monitors plots and manages the allotment waiting list for the estate office, keeping a record of any changes or issues. As the ground has been worked for so many years it is a fruitful site and the large plots can produce considerable volumes of food. There are 24 plots on the site with full and half sized plots (full are 5 metres by 50 metres). Plot holders are encouraged to collect and store rainwater from their sheds but there is also a brook at the rear of the site that has traditionally been used.



The allotments as they were in 2002...



...and as they are today, 10 years on

## Back from the brink

Liz took over as warden of the site in 2001 when there were only five plots in use and the rest were overgrown and unused. A group of allotment holders got together to clear the site and new plot holders were given the first year rent free as an incentive to take on one of the overgrown plots.

Allotment holders meet twice a year, at the start and end of the growing season. There are often visiting speakers and the group

meets in the local pub, village hall or community room but does not have a formal committee. "The wealth of information you can gain from talking to fellow plot holders is incredible," says Liz.

The association does a lot more than garden. It is an active group, holding events such as jazz and scones afternoons in the summer, flower arranging, Halloween parties and tidy days.

## Grow and Show

Siddington Gardeners and Allotment Association has benefitted the whole community and membership is open to all in the village. Funds have been raised by the association to refurbish the village hall and for the group to have its own notice board.

Plant sales at the village fete or other events are the main method of fundraising. They typically raise £100 and if the money is not needed for any other projects it goes towards running the annual Grow and Show event which was revitalised in 2008.



The Grow and Show Committee uses income from plant and ticket sales to buy practical prizes for winners such as seeds and small gardening tools

This show has grown so much that it now includes a dog show and local beekeepers' honey show.

## A green makeover

Tidy up days are used when the common areas of the site need work; hedges often need clearing along with pathways and marginal land on the site. The workers are rewarded with tea and cakes and the day often ends with

a large bonfire to dispose of wood or green matter. The ash from the bonfire is a useful by-product which is added to compost heaps or raked into the soil to help decrease soil acidity.

## Preparing for new shoots

This hard work has resulted in all plots being occupied and they are so popular that there is a growing waiting list which has had to be limited to residents. Liz aims to continue to develop and improve the site and ensure plots are maintained.

"I want to improve communication and interaction with the local primary school to encourage the younger generation to grow their own and be future plot holders. The village is very supportive of the group's activities and I hope it will continue," says Liz.



# THE EVER GROWING PROJECT – Bisley Chestergate

In 2003 Lesley Greene was appointed the Parish Council Allotment Warden for the Chestergate site and since then, the site has developed through three stages.

## STAGE 1: Allotments, established for over 50 years

The four acre site at Chestergate is owned by the Charity of the Ancient Parish of Bisley and has been leased to the parish council for over 50 years. In the 1960s the whole four acre field was divided into traditional sized allotments measured out in rods. By the 1980s there were only six plot holders, occupying one third of the site, and the remainder had been taken over by the wilds.

### Turning over a new leaf

A working party was formed in 2003 and its first task was to clear disused plots and divide some into smaller areas, creating a total of 24 plots. The group secured a grant from the Rural and Community Investment Scheme, run by Stroud District Council, and this was used to clear the overgrown allotments, hire a skip, make and mow 3 metre paths between plots, plough unused plots and install four water tanks on the site. They now have an agreement whereby Bisley-With-Lypiatt parish council mows the paths approximately four times a year.



There is now an increased demand for plots



- 24 plots
- Families can share plots
- Livestock – 2 chicken coops and 1 plastic pig!
- Annual meeting during National Allotment Week
- £12 per annum

### Onwards and upwards

Lesley and her team have further plans for the site. *“We plan to maintain and increase if possible the interest in and support for allotment holders, including finding a way to support their latest suggestion for a communal allotment hut where they can make tea, keep seeds to swap, and hopefully install a toilet. We also plan to participate again in Stroud Transition Town Edible Open Gardens as that was a success for the Bisley Allotments in 2011.”*

## STAGE 2: Bisley Community Composting Scheme, established 2005



### Zero Waste

The scheme was suggested by a parish councillor following a meeting with the Allotment Group and was launched in November 2005 – the first of its kind in the Stroud District and second in the



### COMMUNITY COMPOST

- Founded in 2005
- Members only scheme
- £20 per household per annum from Spring 2012
- Categorized waste bins
- From green waste to compost in 4-6 months

county. The group wanted to promote the idea of zero waste and community composting does this as well as providing a service for the community. After consulting the residents of Bisley there was sufficient interest in the scheme to go ahead. There were 80 members within the first three months and there are now 120 households in the scheme.

### Getting off the ground

The site is classed as an exempt waste facility which means it qualifies for landfill credits of £48.59 per tonne of compost made. *“We currently have a turnover of approximately £3,000 a year so the core scheme is currently financially self-sufficient. But we rely on the free Stroud District Council shredding service and have to raise extra funds for repairs, additional labour and special projects,”* says Lesley.

## Turning waste into gardeners' gold

The Bisley composting scheme is for members only and residents pay an annual fee per household to bring their green waste to the site and then collect finished compost to use in their gardens or allotments. Waste has to be sorted into one of four labelled bays:



- Grass clippings/leaves.
- Soft (non woody) waste – herbaceous, annual plant material, weeds.
- Small clippings/prunings – hedge/rose clippings, twigs, ivy etc.
- Branches (under 4" diameter).

Waste is shredded as necessary and moved through five composting bins, taking between four to six months to transform into finished compost. A rota of volunteers spend Saturday mornings helping people bring in their waste and maintaining the site. Two labourers are employed to turn and move the compost between the bins and machinery is used to move large amounts.



## Wondering what to do with waste?

A wide range of activities have taken place around the scheme. A highlight in 2009 was being named Gloucestershire Zero Waste Week Flagship Village. Activities included:

- Dig for victory display.
- Seed swap.
- 'Trashion Show' by Thomas Keble students.
- Gloucestershire Orchard Group workshops.
- Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust – compost and arts.
- 'Rubbish artist in Residence' – Gavin McClafferty worked with four families and showed them how they could reuse/recycle more. He made a sculpture from their waste.
- Rubbish cookery – Artist Dominic Thomas cooked a fish in the compost heap to demonstrate how much heat is released.



In 2010 the Bisley Community Composting Scheme was delighted to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service – the Community MBE

The group initially obtained funding to set up the scheme, including £1,700 from Stroud District Council's Rural and Community Investment Scheme and two grants of £500 from Gloucestershire County Council's recycling team to build bays and buy equipment.

## Funding to secure the future

The group has been successful in securing funding to continue to develop the project in 2012.

*"We got our Awards for All Big Lottery application of £4,400 for a new shed/container, with a bit in there for site levelling and pathways," says Lesley Greene.*

*"Our Village SOS application for £18,000 has also been successful so we can commission a special sieve which will turn our somewhat twiggy compost into beautiful fine stuff – then we can bag it up and market it for members."*

## More than mulch

The group continues to offer support to other community groups wishing to set up community composting schemes and it aims to become financially viable by selling excess compost.



## BISLEY ZERO WASTE

Bisley is Gloucestershire's flagship village for Zero Waste Week  
26<sup>th</sup> January – 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2009

**BIG LAUNCH DAY - SATURDAY 24<sup>th</sup> JANUARY**

AT BISLEY SCHOOL 10am – 12noon

### LOCAL PRODUCE

Leave the car at home and enjoy the bounties of Bisley.

By supporting local producers you are making a big step toward ZERO waste.

Stalls include: The Green Shop, Copsegrove Beef, Whitekers Lamb, Stancombe Farm

Shop with fruit, veg, cheese, eggs, honey.

### WASTE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Need advice on how to ZERO your waste?

Representatives from Stroud District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, WRAP and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust available to provide advice and information on waste and recycling.

### COFFEE MORNING

Delicious homemade cakes, tea and coffee.

### JUMBLE SALE

Donate unwanted clothes to Bisley pavilion 19th - 23rd (in pillow cases not plastic bags and no tri-c-brac please) doors open 9am - 3pm.

### The Lazy Cook's Soup Kitchen

Enjoy a ZERO waste lunch with soups made by our very own Mo Smith

Between 12 – 2pm at the Methodist Chapel

### AT THE METHODIST CHAPEL 2 - 6pm

2 – 4pm **HOW TO COMPOST** WRAP Home Composting Advisor on hand to answer queries.

2 – 4pm **SEED SWAP** Bring home-saved seeds and spare packets to exchange and try out new varieties.

3 – 5pm **AFTERNOON TEA** Renowned WI cakes, tea and coffee

4.30 – 6pm **FILM SHOW** WWII Ministry of Information films, a 12 minute medley on recycling including the famous 'Dig For Victory'.

Message in the Waves, Sandblasting 50min film from Rebecca Hosking and the BBC Natural History Unit looking at environmental challenges facing people and wildlife.

### AT THE ALLOTMENTS then back to METHODIST CHAPEL

2 – 2.30pm **BISLEY COMMUNITY COMPOSTING SCHEME**

Liz Howlett and Richard Alcock introduce this unique scheme

2.30 - 4pm **COMMUNITY ORCHARD DESIGN WORKSHOP** Walkabout followed by a workshop at the Methodist Chapel led by Dave Kaspar (Days Apple Juice and the Community Orchard Group) and Graham Blight (Woodland Trust)

### AT THE CRICKET PAVILION all week

Artist in Residence, Gavin McClafferty: Rubbish Comes to A Head in Bisley

Working all week to transform rubbish into art. Drop in anytime 9am – 5pm

stylish reusable shopping bag with every purchase from the Bisley Shop (whilst stocks last)

stylish reusable shopping bag with every purchase from the Bisley Shop (whilst stocks last)

## STAGE 3 – Bisley Community Orchard

Established 2009



### Sowing the seeds

During the Zero Waste Week in January 2009, the seed was sown for a community orchard in Bisley after a presentation by the Gloucestershire Orchard Group. There were still four acres available on the allotment site and a community orchard was considered to be ideal use of the space. The Bisley Community Orchard Group formed and £1,000 was raised (£600 from the O2 Fund and £400 prize money from the GRCC-run Calor Village of the Year Competition 2009). This was used to buy indigenous apple and perry trees, planted in 2010, plus supporting stakes and mesh.



### Digging in

In 2011 they were awarded a Woodland Trust Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award providing 420 edible hedgerow plants including Hawthorne, Rosehip, Elderberry and Hazel. These will form the boundary of the orchard and were planted in February 2012, celebrated by a Wassail of the Bisley Community Orchard Song.

## KEY FACTS

- Founded in 2009
- 17 apple & 2 perry pear indigenous varieties
- Edible hedgerow boundary planted in February 2012
- Open to the community

Led by Bisley's tree warden, Lyn Hemmings, the Orchard Group meets on a 'needs' basis to to prune the trees and to mow.

### The path to maturity

The orchard will need nurturing until full crops can be harvested. In the meantime the orchard group plans to create a natural labyrinth on the approach to the orchard, by mowing paths into the long grass that separates the orchard from the allotments. The labyrinth will incorporate the fruit trees and hedges for children to play in and the group is raising money to install a seat.

### Putting your BEST foot forward

In 2012 it was decided to form a Community Interest Company (CIC) which could become the hub for these and future suitable community projects. The CIC is named Bisley Environment and Sustainability Trust (BEST) and will manage the finances of the allotments, community composting scheme and community orchard. Any profits will be fed back to the community.

*"The idea for BEST slowly emerged as a result of Bisley's Zero Waste Week and because of a number of different environmental and community resilience projects happening in the village. Those involved became aware that an 'umbrella' body could be structured to generate funds on behalf of these initiatives. This would solve some practical issues such as parish councils being ineligible to apply for certain types of grants," says Lesley.*

## Bisley Community Orchard Song

A blessing on our trees  
For our Bisley community.  
May you grow up strong  
And give us fruit all harvest long.  
We'll plant you firm and true  
May it rain and shine on you.  
Here's wishing us good cheer  
And see you back again next year.



*If it is a special occasion the Orchard Group sing the Bisley Community Orchard Song and enjoy all things apple – from cider to juice and cake*

# GRAND PLANS – Eastington Community Orchard (ECO)

## Established in 2011

In Eastington there were once 37 productive orchards. Many gardens in the village still contain mature fruit trees and some households work together in order to gather a productive crop. But in March 2011 the Eastington Community Orchard (ECO) Group started its journey to reinstate as many orchards as possible in the village.

### The light bulb moment

Eastington won the GRCC Vibrant Village of the Year Award in 2010. *"I took inspiration at the awards event, listening to what other communities were doing and this is what led to the birth of Eastington Community Orchard Group."* says Tom Low (Chair).



- 1 acre site
- 86 members
- 19 Trees (in February 2012)
- Grants, donations, loans and fundraising raised £5,000 in the first year
- Volunteer orchard warden

Instant feedback was gained at the first birthday celebration of the Eastington Community Centre in summer 2010 when many people showed an interest in taking part.

### Getting off the ground

A business plan was submitted to the parish council to utilise land at the end of the burial ground, previously used by a local farmer to graze cattle. The parish council granted permission in December 2010 and, after all formalities were completed, the Eastington Community Orchard Group took over and started to develop the land in March 2011. Tom explains how grant money was vital in getting the project off the ground.

*"Work was started with the help of a grant of £1,500 from Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) to purchase apple*



June 2011: Building cages to protect soft fruits

*trees and fencing to animal-proof the site.*

*"A local farmer donated 100 blackcurrant plants and raspberry canes which have been housed in protective cages."*

### A helping hand

The ECO group now has 86 members from the village. Members can do as much or as little as they wish and activity ranges from simply receiving updates on the group to taking part in working parties. These working parties have so far involved securing the site, planting trees and fruit bushes and building soft fruit cages. The whole community can be involved e.g. in the summer of 2011 the youth group carried out 'authorised scrumping' from established trees in the community for the first annual Apple Day events. ECO has set aside a quarter of the orchard site for Eastington Primary School which they will plant with hedges in 2012 and sow wild flower mixes.

### Finding Funding

Funding and donations have been secured from several sources including The Co-op, Stroud Valleys Project, Du Pont and a £1,000 loan from the parish council. Local people, groups and companies have donated equipment or resources including Dairy Crest and The Charlie Bullock Fund. This support has meant that the group has been able to secure the site, plant soft fruit canes (2 varieties of Blackcurrant and 4 of Raspberries) and 19 fruit trees as well as construct cages that should protect the new plants from hungry local wildlife.

The group is very grateful to the nearby William Morris House for allowing the use of their juicing facilities and sharing their knowledge. They have also shared their skills to help members, young and old, learn how to safely and correctly press, crush, sterilise and bottle the pears and apples collected.



August 2011: First trees are planted



Summer 2011: Learning to produce fruit juice



The finished juice



In the first year of operation the 2011 Apple Days processed over a tonne of fruit, producing approximately 800 bottles of juice and raising £1,000

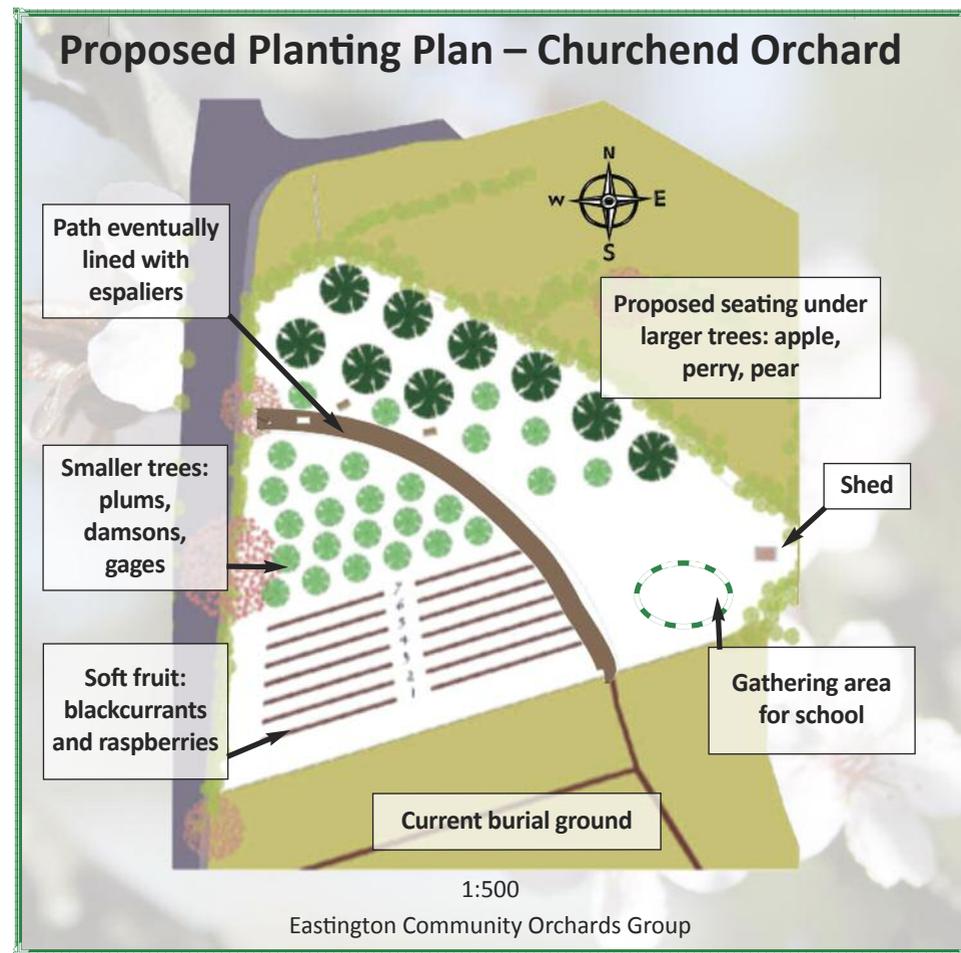
### Out in the community

As a way to repay and thank the community the group plans to hold annual Apple Days where fruit from villagers' gardens (and in time the orchard) is collected by willing volunteers and pressed, pasteurised and bottled by the group. Everyone who donates their crop receives a proportion of the juice or cider produced. The remainder is sold at local markets and at

celebrations such as village fetes, which funds the Eastington Community Orchard Group's work.

The group is working to secure more land to create a number of productive orchards in the village.

Churchend Orchard will remain open to the public for residents and visitors to walk through and enjoy.



Varieties of fruit planted so far include:

- **Apple:** Foxwhelp, Berkeley Pippin, Elmore Pippin, Severn Bank, Lakes Kernal, Transparent Codlin and Ashmead's Kernel
- **Pear:** Winter Nelis, Cannock, Onward, Green Horse and Sensation
- **Cherry:** Stella and Lapins
- **Blackcurrant:** Ben Connan and Ben Alder
- **Raspberry:** Malling Jewel, Tullamine, Glen Ample and Autumn Bliss
- Smaller trees of plums, damsons and greengages.



# REJUVENATING – Cutsdean Community Orchard

## Established in 2008

### Seeing the wood for the trees

Cutsdean is a 'small but perfectly formed' village in the Cotswold District with much of the land owned by the Earl of Wemyss. In a quiet corner lies a small piece of land which had been overgrown with brambles, almost obscuring the old fruit trees within. Jeanette Smith and the newly-formed Cutsdean Community Orchard Group canvassed interest from villagers and sought advice from the Gloucestershire Orchard Group. The group then approached the Earl of Wemyss' estate to lease and revitalise the site and now pays a peppercorn rent for the 20 year lease.



### Pig Support

The first job was to clear the site and uncover the apple, pear and greengage trees. "With a lot of elbow grease the group cut back overgrown trees and brambles and the site was then cleared with a little help from some friends. One of our members recalled hearing about how wonderful pigs were at clearing overgrown land. Nine couples grouped together to buy five Tamworth and Gloucester Old Spot cross weeners and in the summer of 2008 they began to eat their way through the brambles and weeds as well as enjoying a spot of sunbathing!" says Jeanette Smith.



The pigs were slaughtered at the end of 2008 with each couple receiving half a pig and the remaining half pig being sold to the rest of the village.



LEFT: Spring 2008 RIGHT: Spring 2009

### Injecting new life

In the spring of 2009 the cleared site was rotavated, a clover grass seed mix was sown, dead trees removed and the remaining fruit trees pruned. As the site had been so overgrown the apple trees had developed in interesting shapes making them perfect for hanging a swing or hammock.

Funding of £3,000 was gained through a grant from Gloucestershire Community Foundation allowing the group to purchase plants, attend pruning and grafting courses, buy a specialist ladder, apple pickers, mower and hive equipment. Two local varieties of apple tree (Lady Sudeley and Ashmeads Kernal) were planted amongst the resident fruit trees, along with four fan trained cherry trees.



### How it works

The orchard group meets monthly between March and September to weed, prune and mow as necessary. There is a plant sale every May and over 50% of villagers are members of the Cutsdean Community Orchard Group. Meetings often attract 12 members and the whole group is regularly involved. In the summer of 2011 they were able to produce and sell 80 bottles of juice from the mature trees on site to villagers at cost price.

The orchard is the only community space in Cutsdean and so the area is open to all to come and sit or play

### Wonderful Wildlife

In late spring 2011 a starter cohort of bees was moved onto the site. The group has also re-homed hedgehogs at the site for a local wildlife rescue organisation by providing a hedgehog box (left) and lots of warm compost piles for nestling in. The environment attracts wildlife with dead wood piles, compost heaps and boxes for insects, bats and birds. The orchard has matured to the stage of only needing periodic maintenance so settling the new bees is the current main focus. Plans for the future include a new monthly mowing rota for the summer and to use one of the village marquees to hold a barbeque.



# HOW TO... set up an allotment site... Stages to Success

## PLANNING & RESEARCH

**1 Canvas interest** in your parish/town/neighbourhood.

**2 Contact your parish/town council** – if six or more registered electors request allotments then the council should take the request into consideration. Section 23 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 places an obligation on the borough, district or parish council to provide a sufficient number of allotments for residents who want them.

**3 Locate suitable land** – Do you know of suitable land in the parish/town, either council owned or private? Does it have access, parking, a water source, sufficient drainage?

**4 Plan the space** – Consider how much land you will need, in case of increased demand or any future projects e.g. community composting. Consider half and full sized plots as well as the idea of family or community plots. Would your local school be interested?

## GETTING ORGANISED

**5 Form a committee** – it is advisable to have at least a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. You may also want to allocate an allotments warden.

**6 Speak to and/or visit** neighbouring allotment groups to pick up ideas and prevent having to 'reinvent the wheel'.

**7 Write your constitution** – this is where neighbouring groups could be a great help. The key headings to include in a constitution are; Objectives, Membership, Subscription, Rules of the Society, Management Committee, Elections, Meetings and Finance

**8 Promote** the allotment – contact everyone who expressed an interest at the start. You could have an event to introduce yourselves, your constitution and attract more plot holders. Other ways to attract interest include:

- Hold events such as plant sales and competitions
- If you have meetings with visiting speakers, open them up to the community
- Keep the site tidy and make sure plots are looked after in line with your constitution
- Offer smaller plots at reduced rates to beginners
- Have an attractive sign and/or noticeboard on the site.

**9 Start digging!**

**10 Keep people informed and involved** – Have a website which is regularly updated with photos and news on what the group has been doing e.g. meetings, events, stories, photos of odd shaped vegetables!

## PLOT CHAT

“ Be flexible with the size of plots – better to start off small and not be daunted  
*Lesley, Bisley*

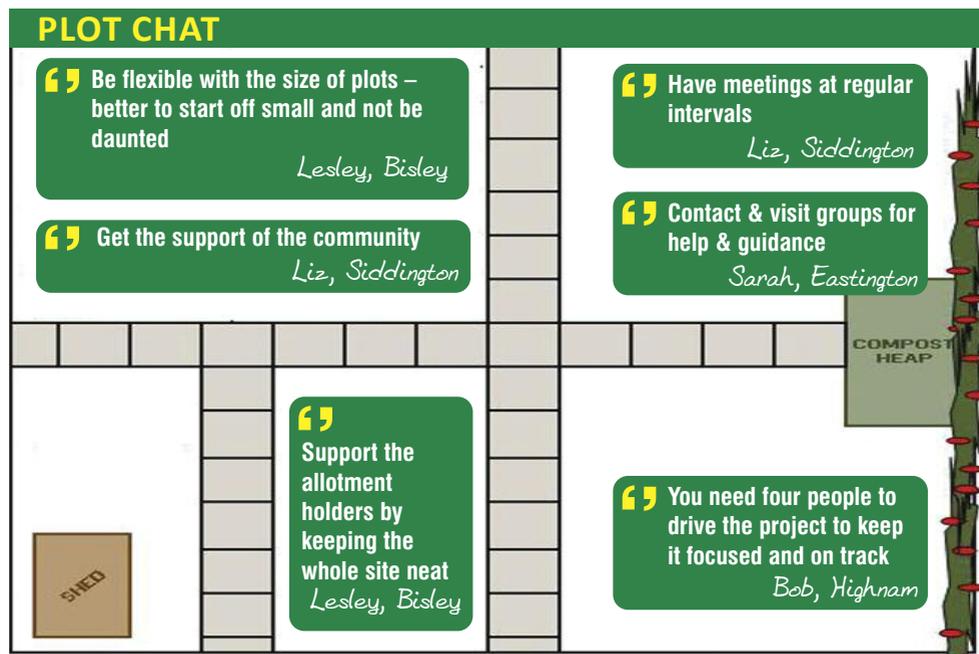
“ Get the support of the community  
*Liz, Siddington*

“ Have meetings at regular intervals  
*Liz, Siddington*

“ Contact & visit groups for help & guidance  
*Sarah, Eastington*

“ Support the allotment holders by keeping the whole site neat  
*Lesley, Bisley*

“ You need four people to drive the project to keep it focused and on track  
*Bob, Highnam*



### If it isn't possible to find a suitable site:

- Do you have local residents with large gardens they cannot manage alone? They may be interested in allowing people to cultivate a section of their garden. They could be offered a proportion of crops in return.
- If there is land or vacant plots in a neighbouring parish, could you work together?

### Allotment seasonal tasks

#### SPRING

Turn compost & sow green manures  
Prepare plots  
Mulching and feeding  
Sow early potatoes & seeds e.g. parsnips & brassicas

#### WINTER

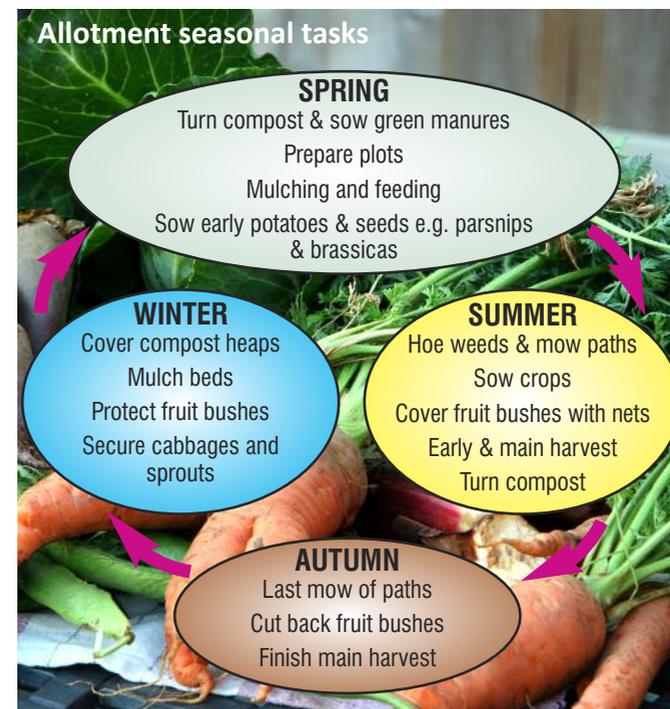
Cover compost heaps  
Mulch beds  
Protect fruit bushes  
Secure cabbages and sprouts

#### SUMMER

Hoe weeds & mow paths  
Sow crops  
Cover fruit bushes with nets  
Early & main harvest  
Turn compost

#### AUTUMN

Last mow of paths  
Cut back fruit bushes  
Finish main harvest



# HOW TO... set up a community orchard... Stages to Success

## PLANNING & RESEARCH

**1 Canvas interest** in your community to see if there is appetite for growing a community orchard. This could be as simple as having informal conversations, but keep note of contacts so you don't miss anyone out at later stages.

**2 Suitable land** – Talk to your parish council or look at old maps to find out if there is an old orchard site that needs revitalising or suitable land (council owned or private). Does the site have access, a water source and sufficient drainage?

**3** Once the idea becomes more of a reality it is advisable to **form a committee**. You only need a small one of 5 or 6 and it is useful to nominate a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

**4 Get support and advice** – Contact the Gloucestershire Orchard Group for lists of indigenous varieties of apples and pears in your area. Contact other community orchard groups as they will have a wealth of knowledge to share such as sources of training or they will provide inspiration for the direction of your project.

**5 Write your constitution** – other community orchard groups could be very helpful as their constitutions could be used to guide you.

**6 Create a planting plan** – include as much detail as you can e.g. water sources, paths, planting and any other features you would like to include such as wild flowers, bees and an area for the school. You don't have to do everything on your plan straight away. You could split it into stages.

**7 Recruit volunteers** – use the information gathered when you canvassed interest to get people to sign up for working parties.

## AND NOW THE PHYSICAL WORK BEGINS...

**8 Set up working parties** with specific tasks such as animal proofing boundaries, access, preparing the ground, building cages and planting. In future these will include maintenance such as mowing, pruning and harvesting.

**9 Promote** the orchard using the parish council, schools and local groups. Put updates and stories in newsletters and on notice boards.

**10 Get planting!** Plant and protect your crops and look forward to your first harvest!

## ORCHARD CHAT

“ Talk to your friends & utilise assets in your community  
*Tom, ECO*

“ ...make personal contact when asking for help with a working party  
*Tom, ECO*

“ Make them special, grow Gloucestershire indigenous varieties  
*Lesley, Bisley*

“ Find a friendly digger to help out with the planting  
*Lesley, Bisley*

## Community Orchard seasonal tasks

### SPRING

Weeding & Mulching  
Checking fruit guards & cages  
Mowing paths

### WINTER

Collect leaves for compost  
Prune top fruit and canes  
Plant young trees  
Process wines & ciders  
Wassail!

### SUMMER

Hoe weeds  
Put straw under soft fruit  
Remove fruit from young trees  
Pick early soft fruit  
Pick pears & first apples  
Mowing paths

### AUTUMN

Harvest main crop & late soft fruit  
Press fruit  
Celebrate the harvest  
Mulch and weed  
Last mow of paths

## HOW TO DEAL WITH SURPLUS PRODUCE: waste not want not

### What can we do with our produce?

One of the issues with orchards and allotments is a glut of produce. Below are some ideas of how to take advantage of your surplus.

**Apple Days** – If your village used to have several orchards you are likely to find that the remnants of these are now in people's gardens. Bring the community together by holding a day or weekend where their fruit is collected, pressed and bottled by volunteers, with an agreed proportion going back to those who donated their fruit. Label and sell the remainder at community events to raise funds.

**Jams, jellies and chutneys** – There is rarely a local market that does not have a stall with jams, pickles and chutneys from a variety of fruit and vegetables.

**Bake off!** If you have a community with keen bakers hold a competition where contestants bake their finest offering using as many local ingredients as possible. It could have a theme. Appoint judges from a range of ages in the community and give prizes or maybe the title of Baker of the Year.



### Still got some left?

- Informal **Swap** between allotment holders/gardeners.
- Set up a '**donation station**' where people can leave their surplus produce. This is often self-monitored so that produce does not spoil.
- **Donation** – Contact your local shelter, care home, hospice, day centre or luncheon club.
- Take part in local **markets** – Surplus produce could be sold to raise money for the allotment association or orchard group.

### Local groups managing surplus produce

■ **Horsley Orchard Project** – started in 2004 with the aim of increasing the availability of locally produced fruit. There are three sites and produce is given to volunteers on a 'work-crop share' basis with surplus given away to locals.

### How do we let people know about our surplus produce?

- Word of mouth
- Attractive signs on the allotment or orchard entrances
- Village and/or church newsletters
- Village websites
- Village noticeboards
- Social Media – Create a Facebook page

■ **Down Ampney** – surplus produce from gardens is given to the village community shop to sell, either solely for the shop's profit or shared between the shop and villager.

■ **Bisley Old Road** – members of the allotment site regularly have a stall at Stroud Farmers Market to raise money for their project.

## HERE TO HELP... useful contacts



The **GRCC Accelerator Project** supports communities to build their skills and knowledge to develop ideas and turn them into effective action. We organise a range of activities and events to inspire communities and can then follow this up with bespoke advice and technical consultancy for groups. The project is funded by the Rural Development Programme for England.

Contact: [helenr@grcc.org.uk](mailto:helenr@grcc.org.uk) tel 01452 528491 or visit [www.grcc.org.uk](http://www.grcc.org.uk)



**Gloucestershire Orchard Group** aims to conserve, promote and celebrate traditional orchards in Gloucestershire. This is a volunteer run charity and provides information on setting up a community orchard as well as training in pruning, grafting, budding and cider and perry making

Contact: [info@gloucestershireorchardgroup.org.uk](mailto:info@gloucestershireorchardgroup.org.uk) or tel 01452 85677



**NSALG** is the national representative body for the allotment movement in the U.K. The Society is owned, managed and funded by its members to protect, promote and preserve allotments for future generations to enjoy. As well as a representative role it provides advice, information, an insurance scheme and discounted seed purchasing.

Contact: [TLCann@btinternet.com](mailto:TLCann@btinternet.com) or tel 01865 202 104



## A BIG THANK YOU...

...to representatives of all the featured communities who contributed to this publication by giving up their time and providing information and photographs. The phrase 'ever growing' has been used to describe this booklet as there are so many examples of innovative and positive ways communities are working together to protect and invest in their vibrant villages.



# About GRCC

## Professional advice and support for Gloucestershire's communities

GRCC has over 80 years' experience of supporting the development of community led initiatives in rural Gloucestershire

### GRCC provides advice and support in the following areas:

- Community and social enterprises delivering local solutions
- Funding advice for projects, communities and groups
- Parish, town and community-led plans
- Organisational and project development and business planning
- Localism and Community Rights
- Neighbourhood Planning

### We have dedicated projects to support:

- Management of community buildings
- Health and Social Care
- Older people, including the nationally recognised Village and Community Agents Scheme
- The provision of affordable rural housing

**GRCC has a representational and influencing role, working in partnership locally and nationally.**

## CONTACT US

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**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/GlosRCC](http://www.facebook.com/GlosRCC)

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