



Orchards for Wales

Social Farms & Gardens Wales
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Orchards for Wales Project

This project, funded by Welsh Government and led by Social Farms & Gardens has seen the development of **57** new community orchards across Wales in 2020.

The aim of the Orchards for Wales project is to provide much more than a fruitful, efficiently used, green space. This is about communities leading and managing growing spaces. It is stimulating; carbon capture, biodiversity, community cohesion and local food growing whilst helping to showcase alternative models of urban agriculture.

The original project aims were simply set out as:

- To create 10 new community orchard sites, in different settings all over Wales.
- To promote and support small and micro-Welsh fruit & nut tree businesses.
- To gather and create a hub of information for all things orchard related.
- To network with and support each site in its aims and ambitions and in doing so strengthen the Welsh Heritage Orchard Cluster Group.

As the fruits grow so will our methods of orchard production, storage, education, and other legacies including skills development and micro enterprise at a community level will be gleaned from the project and its supportive sites. Stimulated by the connection of this project a new network of community led orchards is emerging, with over **119** sites and growing, Wales may well be leading the revival of Orchards, especially those in community ownership and management.

Not only do orchards deliver for people and communities – traditional orchards are a priority habitat which has largely disappeared. These new traditionally managed orchards with unimproved grassland understory will go some way to replacing this lost habitat as they mature. Most of the trees planted are also Welsh Heritage varieties which are now spread across Wales making them less vulnerable to disappearing and protecting our heritage and the resilience of our food production. Over **4,100** apple, plum, pear & medlar trees have been planted which will have a huge benefit to a whole range of pollinators, especially those that are planted in the more urban areas.

This project delivers against many of the aims of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act – a resilient, healthier Wales – with cohesive communities of vibrant culture. It is contributing to the Clean Air Bill, The Pollination Action Plan for Wales, Wales' Community Grown Food Action Plan and other important key priorities for Wales.



Orchards Map & Statistics



We have been mapping all the Community Orchard sites that are known to us in Wales. We currently have **119** sites included on our map. Follow the link on the image of the map for more details on each individual site.



Fruit Tree Suppliers

This project has allowed us to support **17** different small and micro-fruit growers across Wales.

Applewise Fruit Tree Nursery - Carmarthenshire

We were keen to source trees from Welsh Nurseries and were lucky enough to work with Applewise on this project. They are a small Fruit Tree Nursery business dedicated to growing fruit trees, planting trees, orchards and preserving and continuing the Welsh Orchard tradition and heritage. A company that encapsulates the meaning behind this project!



Orchard Case Studies

Below is a selection of some of the sites, projects and enterprises that have been supported through this diverse project.

Llyn Parc Mawr Anglesey



This is a NRW Site managed locally by Llyn Parc Mawr Community Woodland Group. The woodland is an old arboretum for the Forestry Commission in Newborough, Anglesey. LPM manages a community woodland of 24 hectares. Their vision is to develop a better forest for the trees and animals and currently working to remove invasive plants, pick up litter, plant more trees, create new habitats, remove unsafe trees, and feed the birds and red squirrels.



The group are currently funded through a 5-year National Lottery community fund to run a Connecting People and Nature project to create a sustainable woodland. They employ 3 members of staff who run a woodland environment volunteering programme and a well-being programme, that includes community events and social forestry activities. It will provide a new outdoor classroom to deliver forest school activities.

The Orchards funding from SF&G and the Welsh Government is providing support to plant a community orchard on a previously Corsican pine site which has red band needle blight, a tree disease and had blown over due to winter storms. The funding has also contributed towards processing equipment and will allow the group to hold volunteering, training, and community events such as apple and cider pressing.

The group have recently developed this incredible drone footage showing the whole woodland site.



**Number of
trees planted**

20



Eirias Park Colwyn Bay



Eirias Park in Colwyn Bay is a fabulous public green space with a boating lake, playpark, multi sports pitches and bowling green and tennis center – right next to the leisure center and secondary school. The Friends of Eirias Park planted a community orchard and a wildflower area there three years ago. They also restored the lake by planting an award-winning reed bed which is now abundant with wildlife rather than being drained every year as it was previously. Two of their original special trees were sadly stolen. We replaced them and supplied a further 18 Welsh heritage apples, plums, and pears to expand the orchard.

They planted over two afternoons – to limit numbers due to the pandemic – and to allow children to take part.





Nantporth Orchard and Allotments Menai Straights, Gwynedd



Nantporth Farm is a 50-acre site owned by Gwynedd Council in an idyllic location on the banks of the Menai Straits, with the coastal path bordering it. Tyfu is a community group who have been trying to establish an orchard, wildlife garden and allotment plots here for three years on 2 acres of the site. After a successful planning application and negotiating a lease, funding was the missing piece.

They have created a 60-tree orchard, planted 300 fruiting hedge plants, sown a wildflower bank and wetland willow bed, built a wildlife pond, created a small car park (a requirement of the planning), an access track and put up a communal tool shed and compost toilet.



The site will also host 32 allotment plots including 4 community plots and provide an area for community events, environmental education and celebrations. As part of the orchard grant, they share a press, scrapper and digital pasteurizer with the other local groups and hope to host abundance events – juicing apples people bring along – while they wait for their own orchard to start cropping.





Moelyci Greenwood Tregarth, Gwynedd



This group have bought a couple of acres of land which has seen the site divided up between Ymlaen Moelyci & other interest groups. The volunteers meet every Wednesday and Sunday splitting their time between woodland management and green woodworking activities.

The group have cleared a site of bracken and bramble next to the old ruins of the original farmhouse and planted 10 Welsh Heritage apple trees. Next to the site they have also cleared and planted 100 more trees which are a mix of Sweet Chestnut and Hazel.



Apple trees planted -

10

**Sweet Chestnut
and Hazel trees**

100

Ty Pawb – Wrexham



1. Ty Pawb
2. Ysgol Clywedog
3. Gwersyll CP
4. Park in the Past

Coordinated by Glyndwr University the Orchards project enabled Brymbo Heritage Orchard Group to advise their four groups on varieties, clearing and plant sites as well as advising groups on how to manage their trees/orchards going forward.

It has been great to make the link with an existing experienced group who are eager to support a network of local orchard groups and ensure their skills and knowledge are passed onto others. It was hoped volunteers from each group would take part in the planting but sadly due to covid restrictions this hasn't been able to go ahead however Brymbo are committed to working with the groups once restrictions are lifted and its safe for community events to go ahead again.



Across 4 sites = 64 apple & 8 plum have been planted



Cae Felin Llanidloes, Powys



Cae Felin is a 5 acre market garden on the outskirts of Llanidloes in Mid Wales. Emma & Dave manage the wide variety of growing that takes place on this productive space, which includes protected cropping, field scale beds, fruit, flowers, nuts, plug plants and much more. Much of the produce is sold direct from the gate, or through a veg box service and others through local food outlets in the town. Cae Felin was supported with a grant to expand their orchard, plant more fruit bushes and even a variety of nut producing trees.



However as the site is quite remote and has no access to mains water Emma and Dave have also received support through this project to provide an irrigation system using harvested water and that from a bore hole. Emma and Dave are both very skilled horticulturalist and pass on their knowledge to the volunteers that help manage their site, apprentices and students alike.





The Wilderness Trust Llanidloes, Powys



This is another project in the north of Powys. The Wilderness Trust support use of 60 acres of cooperative owned land and a small urban food growing development site in the center of Llanidloes. Elements of their work were recently featured on Channel 5's City Life to Country Life program. Three separate sites are benefiting from support given by 'Orchard for Wales' and include a diverse range of fruiting trees, some sourced from only a matter of a few miles away, from 'Welsh Mountain Cider' who are neighbours.



Some of the trees will be used to complement a space for discussion that is being funded through a land fill tax grant.



(The Fold – an Urban Community Food Space supported by the Wilderness Trust)



Angle Walled Garden Angle, Pembrokeshire



Growing in a medieval walled garden, this project placed emphasis on traditional and maritime vegetable crops. Their main crops include 2 acres of mature asparagus, new potatoes (traditional to the peninsula, no longer grown commercially), broad beans, sweetcorn, espalier cherries, heritage apples and flowers.

The damsons they purchased through the Orchard Project have gone in one area. You can see in the photos below that the adjacent wall has espalier apple trees on it, these were propagated from an original apple tree remaining on the wall - Millers seedling. The rest of the trees, apple trees, have gone into the original orchard – which the group have been working on over the past few years. When they came to the garden the orchard was so overgrown with brambles it was impossible to see it was there. You can see that they have bees in the orchard, who will be delighted with the new fruit trees!



30 = trees
planted



It proved a little difficult finding fruit trees due to the current pandemic and being at the very end of the planting season. However, 24 fruit trees were sourced and planted in the orchard with 6 more on their way which have been grafted for them from a local very old walled garden. They also managed to purchase a 'Charles Ross' apple tree. Charles Ross was a Head Gardener and great-great grandfather of Lara Bean who lives at, and runs Angle Walled Garden - it is a wonderful apple, so a must have for their orchard.



The Fruit Factor project Aberfan, South Wales



A group of young people in Aberfan have come together to plant a community orchard that will give local children access to free fruit for generations to come. The Fruit Factor project aims to plant a new batch of fruit trees every year until every child born in the village between 2004 and 2020 has their own tree.

The first 144 apple trees in the orchard will be planted as a mark of respect to the 144 children and adults who died in the Aberfan Disaster – 116 of the apple trees will represent the children who never came home on October 21, 1966, while 28 slightly larger and more established apple trees will represent the teachers and adults lost that day. Read more [here](#).



The trees and bushes are being nurtured in pots during the lockdown period by 30 local young people and their families. They were received at a temporary nursery created by the young people on a derelict site in the village. Working with Merthyr County Brough Council, the trees will be planted at a site of importance for nature conservation adjacent to the river Taff 500 metres south east of the Aberfan Cemetery. Whilst providing a place for quiet reflection in a natural environment, the orchard will also embrace future generations being born into the village.

The Fruit Factor project is being run by Youth factor, a voluntary organisation for young people over the age of 12. It was set up in 2019 to focus on improving youth provision in Merthyr Vale and Aberfan. It has received £13,500 in funding from Social Farms & Gardens to help source and supply a large amount of fruit trees for the project.



Beechwood Park Newport



This group were offered the opportunity to apply for funding to buy some trees to plant up a community orchard in Beechwood Park in summer 2020. Whilst in the middle of the COVID-19 global pandemic, this project would bring some much-needed positivity to the park and the community was - a welcome bit of news!

The park has suffered from small amounts of anti-social behaviour in the past and the group hoped that a community project involving fruit trees would provide an area of solace that people could enjoy. The hope is that in years to come this could be somewhere that visitors of all ages could use and engage with to develop a positive connection with the park.



They have an active friends group called 'Friends of Newport's Ornamental Parks (FONOP)' who were itching to get help with the park. Having spent parts of the year in lockdown their volunteer activities had unfortunately ground to a halt, the planting of the trees gave them a chance to get some of the group back into the park to help in a socially distanced manner. On the day of the planting, there was a good turnout of volunteers who assisted the park's gardeners in planting up 70 fruit trees of various types and varieties.

The initial benefit of the orchard will be that the group can now arrange some more volunteer events with the friends group, giving them some outdoor activity and education about orchard management. With the knowledge given to us by SF&G the volunteers will learn as well as engage with the park and in the not-too-distant future the trees will hopefully bear fruit and the whole community can benefit from the fruit produced within the park.



Oasis Centre, Redefined Futures & Bryn Gobiath Farm – Cardiff / South Wales



The Restore project is about engaging polar opposite communities, locals of traditional Welsh valleys and communities of asylum seekers and refugees, bridging the differences using food and the production of food, creating a space to belong and to learn. Activities such as foresting/rewilding, permaculture, aquaponics along with counselling and creative therapies will be developed. The project is based in Mountain Ash, part of the Cynon Valley, where much hope was stripped away due to industry disappearing and laid bare for many years. Through this collaborative initiative, we want to be able to share stories of hope from asylum seekers and refugees, build a new worldview and reliance for locals and in turn create an agile, prosperous community that will be a beacon and example to the rest of the area.



This group have access to a field on Bryn Gobiath Farm, that is approximately 5 acres. The land is predominantly grazing land that has been poorly maintained. This field was cited as the best place to start running the activities that will engage both the local community and those accessing it through Oasis Cardiff. The space is designed to be a sustainable and evolving/maturing area, that clients and staff can take ownership of, whilst producing great produce.

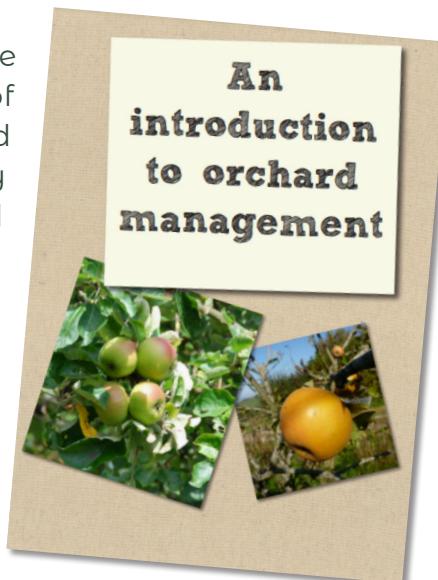
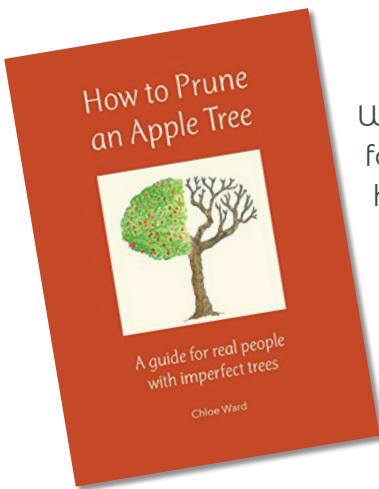
There are spaces for growing seasonal organic produce and they will work with people accessing the site, and will demonstrate how to cook with the produce, using the kitchen at Oasis Cardiff and onsite. There will be an orchard area that will eventually supply Oasis Cardiff and community groups with produce from the trees. The polytunnel will incorporate the aquaponics system, producing food and teaching alternative methods of growing. We will also use solar power to provide electricity for the aquaponics system. We will run forest school for adults and families, including foraging classes. These trips will support the empowering of client's wellbeing and mental health, giving them space and opportunities to learn



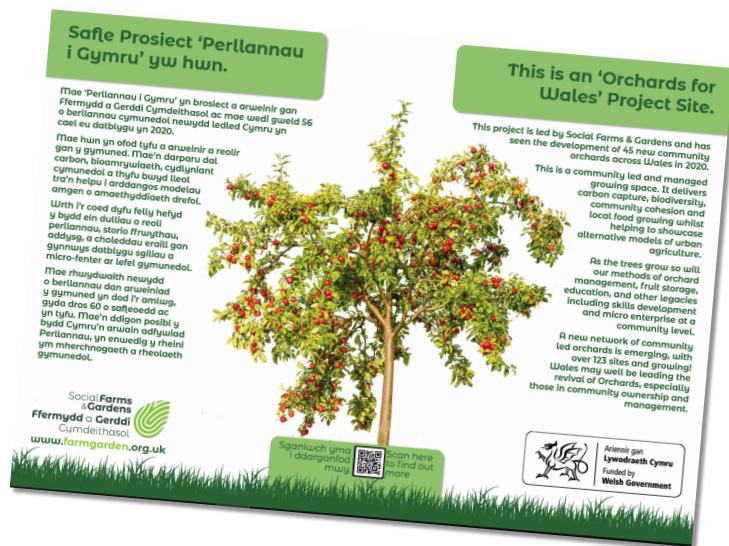
Resources

This lovely booklet was originally produced for the North East Wales orchard project 2012. It was out of print and the few remaining copies were treasured by their owners! We worked with Flintshire County Council Biodiversity staff to update it and add chapters on organic management of pests and diseases and enterprise. We printed 1500 copies so everyone involved in the orchard projects can have one – and be empowered to take an active role in managing their orchards. It's bilingual – English one side Welsh the other.

[Click here to download.](#)



We also sent each group a fantastic book on pruning – which happens to be written in Wales!



Every group received a printed sign which explains that the orchard is part of a wider project funded by Welsh Government, the material used for these signs is a single source, ensuring they are fully recyclable.

We have provided direct support and advice to nearly all the project sites – this varied support includes things like what trees might be suitable for their locations, advice on site preparation, interpretation, design of the orchard spaces and much more.

Over the course of the project our staff have carried out a number of site visits, in all regions all in a COVID-19 safe manner. We also supported groups through video conferencing, emails, and phone conversations.

Specific / bespoke training has been delivered on-line with the support of 'The Orchard Project' – this was on basic maintenance and management of community orchard sites.



Challenges

This project was pulled together very quickly – with candidate sites selected within a few weeks to prepare a project plan for Welsh Government. The twin challenges of working with community groups who are largely volunteers and having secure access to land proved difficult in some cases. Several sites did not go ahead because of issues around land tenure, with some town councils needing a lot of time to debate the merits and issues and give permission to use land – despite them having agreed initially to do so. This is the nature of local democracy.

Some of the delivery was hampered by the Coronavirus pandemic – meaning that some site visits and volunteer work parties were suspended. Despite these challenges we managed to find new sites at short notice due to our existing relationships with community growing groups across Wales and their willingness to step in at short notice. In the end we exceeded our initial goals by a long way – planting nearly **4,100** trees across **57** sites with a broad geographical spread across Wales.

Demand for fruit trees in Wales was enormous this year – with Keep Wales Tidy also running a project where they were giving out packs including fruit trees. Demand for all gardening products was also unusually high due to the pandemic. We wanted to support local producers and suppliers – but the feedback we had from them was that meeting such a high demand with essentially no notice was quite difficult and disruptive to their business model. It takes a year to grow maiden fruit trees ready for sale – and it's worth project leads planning projects like this, further in advance to make sure our micro producers have enough stock available and can plan ahead themselves.

Where project sites were looking for larger, more commercial (agricultural) land to plant on this was hampered by the Single Farm Payment subsidy system. Over 5 agricultural landowners pulled out of deals due to their potential loss of future subsidy payments. One also became hesitant through some of the clauses of a Farm Business Tenancy which could have made them liable for any increases in land value if they were to cancel the agreement. Sadly, we also tried to plant some of the trees on Welsh Government owned land but completely failed to reach any agreement with the department(s) involved.

The Future

Social Farms and Gardens in Wales are embarking on a new RDP funded program through the ENRaW supply chain efficiency strand. This project 'Resilient Green Spaces' is set to start in April 2021 and includes an orchard strand, focusing on production and enterprise development from orchards. This continuity is essential to developing and supporting the burgeoning community growing sector in Wales – which is going from strength to strength! We will continue to develop a community orchard network across Wales where people can share knowledge and equipment and help each other with volunteer events, pruning, picking, processing and grafting. With the growth of knowledge, skills and confidence as the trees come to fruition these new orchards will provide decades of community food, pleasure and purpose to our communities across Wales and valuable habitats for nature.