

Kings Park Orchard

In 2013, a project to plant orchards in the Stirling area was set up by Stirling Council's Biodiversity team. With Stirling Council funding, the Friends of Kings Park (FoKP) planted an orchard of originally, 15 apple trees in an area behind the playing fields, with help from the Council's Land Services staff and its Criminal Justice Team.

As we had no expertise in looking after apple trees, four FoKP committee members attended training workshops organised by Forth Environment Link and led by Andrew Lear (*Appletreeman*). They covered various aspects of growing and caring for apple trees including, pruning, nutrition, diseases, harvesting and understanding how different root stocks controlled the final height of trees.

The trees we selected were all heritage apple varieties (including Bloody Ploughman, Katy, Scotch Bridget and one called Stirling Castle) and were a mixture of eating and cooking apples.

Initially, we did not wish to publicise the location of the young saplings for fear of vandalism but latterly we have sought to inform park users about the orchard and emphasise that the apples, when ripe, can be picked as they are for the use of the community.

Through the years since the first planting, we have benefited from volunteer support and help from Stirling Council and from TCV Stirling (the Conservation Volunteers in Scotland).

There is continual annual maintenance required. It is partly routine: the late winter prune, fertilisation, the June drop and preparing for the harvest. However, there is also occasional emergency work to deal with grass removal round the base of the trees, disease control and damage to tree trunks from squirrels or deer in the park. Occasional vandalism has resulted in one tree having to be removed and replaced by another variety.

We are keen to boost our help in looking after our small orchard. There is no need to know anything about apple trees as we can provide the knowledge and support – though if you do know your way around an apple tree, we'd love to hear from you.