



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about ORCHARDS

In the 19th century, the skilled horticulturalists at the Rivers Nursery at Sawbridgeworth bred and propagated many varieties of fruit trees, including the prolific Czar plum and Conference pear, both of which are still available today.

Part of the Rivers Nursery site still flourishes as a community apple orchard – pictured below. Details can be found at <http://www.rhso.co.uk/>



The Conference pear features in Great Chesterford's 21st-century community orchard – where this photo was taken.



The Great Chesterford orchard, pictured on the left, includes a wide range of fruit trees, all neatly labelled.

The great variety of fruits grown at Chesterford includes, for example, damson and medlar, pictured below, respectively on the left and right.



Damsons can be sweet enough to eat fresh from the tree (but beware of wasps who also like them). On the other hand, the less-common medlars have to be stored until they soften and become brown and sweet.

For commercial reasons, the range of fruit trees available from modern plant nurseries is limited to a few easy-to-grow varieties. However, hidden away in forgotten corners of long-established gardens there will be specimens of heritage varieties of orchard trees. If you have a flavoursome, but unidentified, variety, then the team at the East of England Apples and Orchards Project would be delighted to hear from you. Further information is available on <https://www.applesandorchards.org.uk> (telephone 01328 838403 or email: info@applesandorchards.org.uk)

It can be satisfying to grow a unique or local variety, so if you wish to plant heritage fruit trees specific to your own county, this organisation's catalogue lists a surprising number of varieties for Essex, Hertfordshire or Cambridgeshire apples and pears, as well as local plums, cherries and gages. This wide selection provides an opportunity to continue a long tradition of choosing something rather special to enjoy eating in future years.

The Whats On page at www.hundredparishes.org.uk occasionally displays local apple events, for example at Rivers Orchard in Sawbridgeworth.

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Any comments or suggestions for improvement may be submitted by using the Feedback form on the website. The website has many short articles on various aspects of The Hundred Parishes, as well as introductions to individual parishes and to a number of local celebrities, and an extensive What's On section. More than a hundred walk route descriptions can be freely downloaded, with each of the hundred parishes featuring in at least one walk.