

Planting an Orchard

Talk and demonstration

On Saturday 27th February Moretonhampstead Action Group for Sustainability held an Apple Orchard and Pruning Workshop, which was well attended by local people as well as some from further afield. The day began with apple juice of course (and hot drinks!), before an illustrated talk by Michael Gee, chairman of Orchards Live and one of Devon's greatest experts on orchards and apples. After lunch participants were treated to a practical pruning demonstration by renowned horticulturalist Len Harvey.

Practical skills

Two members of the Steward Woodland Community – a sustainable living and working woodland project based outside Moretonhampstead – attended the course because they are planning their own orchard. Said one of them, Merlin Howse, 'We are about to plant an orchard and forest garden on our site so the course was great for us. Our land is at quite a high altitude and on a hill, so it's important for us to find out which apple varieties would work for us and which wouldn't. So finding out how to choose varieties was really useful for us. Learning about and practising pruning was invaluable too. And just meeting other people with similar interests made the day great fun.'

Len Harvey talks horticulture to the participants



Have-a-go-session

Learners were invited to have a go at pruning themselves under Len Harvey's expert direction. Moretonhampstead resident Jane Willis said she 'learnt how to plant trees, create an orchard and maintain the trees thereafter.' She also said it was 'very helpful to have some hands-on pruning'. Michael Gee's talk was 'brilliant – very informative' according to learner Frankie Fraser and described as 'excellent' by Jane Willis.

Another local resident, Richard Foxwell, said, 'The morning lecturer was very interesting, and the practical demonstration really useful. I've been pruning fruit trees for

a number of years, but never really knew how to do it properly before! I'm now busy putting into practice some of the things I learned at the demonstration on my own trees.'

Learners get to grips with pruning apple trees

