

# Growing Orchard Communities

## COMMUNITY ORCHARD TOOLKIT



### Orchard Folklore

**There are many and varied stories of Apples and folklore – this will just give an introduction. More information can be found in specialist books, or on the internet.**

Orchards have long since been regarded as special places. In the Neolithic and Bronze ages, paradises were called 'Orchards'. Paradise is a Persian word literally meaning 'orchard' or 'stand of trees'.

Fruit trees, and particularly apples, come up time and again in myth and legend, some more obscurely, whilst some we just take for granted in our modern life. References such as 'the apple of my eye' have deep roots in folklore associated with the apple being a symbol of love, friendship and purity, whilst in other situations this has been interpreted into the Apple being a symbol of temptation – Adam and Eve, or wickedness – the Wicked Queen trying to kill Snow White with a poisoned apple.

Most of the folklore originally was related to the Wild Crab Apple (*Malus Pumila*), which is Britain's only indigenous Apple tree. This tree belongs to the Rose family, along with Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Wild Pear, which all have thorns on their branches. In ancient days there were thought to be about 22 varieties of Apple worldwide. In the 18th Century, hybrids were brought over from Europe, these were grafted onto wild trees and eventually gave greater fruit yielding trees with no thorns - the domesticated apple (*Malus Pumila domestica*). There are now thought to be about 2000 species of Apple tree worldwide. Both these species have similar properties and a long history of cures, myths and legend.

In almost every country the apple is regarded as a sacred, magical or holy fruit, a symbol of fruitfulness, a means to immortality, a cure for all ills and a gift of love. An 'Apple for the teacher' may show their worth; 'an Apple a day keeps the doctor away' – the cure-all properties (although with concerns over acid erosion in teeth nowadays – it may also keep the dentist happy!

In the UK legends of King Arthur tell he was taken to the 'Vales of Avalon' – this translates as 'Apple Vale'. It was a paradise where the hills were clothed with trees bearing fruit and flowers together. Norsemen were told that Apples of perpetual youth grew in Asgard, which was the home of their gods. The Greeks believed that in the Fabled Isles, somewhere in the Western Ocean, were to be found Apples of Hesperides, which bestowed immortality. The myths of Hercules tell that he had a sacred Apple tree in his family garden – which was Gaia's (mother earth's) wedding gift to him. Paris also gave Aphrodite an apple to show that she was the most beautiful of the Goddesses. Druids revered the apple as the bearer of one of their scared plants - Mistletoe.

Children were warned that a 'Bogeyman' protected the Orchards and any unripe fruit. In Yorkshire - this character was referred to as 'Awd Goggle', and in Somerset as 'Lazy Lawrence'. Was it true, or was it just a good way to keep the children from 'scrumping' the apples before harvest?!