



Corsham Town Council

Meriton Recreation Ground Community Orchard

<https://www.corsham.gov.uk/meriton-rec-community-orchard/>

February 2024

Project aim
To plant a community orchard in one corner of Meriton Recreation Ground to increase and support biodiversity, offset carbon emissions, provide free locally grown fruit for the community and to improve the general appearance and utility of the park.
Project actions
<p>The first step of this town council led project, was to go door to door contacting local residents to make them aware of what we were planning to do and why. We also posted about the activity online. The response from residents was overwhelmingly positive.</p> <p>To deliver the scheme we were fortunate to have previously been contacted by MOD Corsham, who were looking to help deliver a nature activity for the local community as a team building/volunteering exercise. We arranged a meeting with the MOD team leader to determine a planting date and then ordered the fruit trees from a local supplier. On the arranged date in November, with the support and guidance of the Corsham Town Council Grounds Team, the MOD staff successfully planted a variety of twenty fruit trees (apples, pears, cherries and plums).</p>
Costs and timescale
The project took about a month to organise including the community engagement activity and meetings with the MOD. It took a couple of hours for a team of about a dozen volunteers to transport and plant twenty trees (including a coffee break). The total cost was about £1,500 for the trees, including all the paraphernalia. The activity was funded by Corsham Town Council.
Outcomes
The project so far has been a huge success in my opinion. The planting event went very smoothly, helped on the day by unseasonably dry, warm and sunny November weather. All trees were successfully planted, and everyone seemed to enjoy taking part in the event and were proud of what had been achieved. The full outcomes for the local community and nature will not be known for several years until the trees, hopefully, have had a chance to mature and to start regularly producing fruit.
Key learning
The main key learning is that we didn't need pay for the trees as there are a range of organisations looking to fund this type of work. In future I would definitely look at funding opportunities when looking to carry out similar tree planting schemes. It was handy having people present who had experience of planting trees who could help guide the volunteers. Having a checklist of absolutely everything was also a great help as there were a lot of things: safety, tools, equipment, appropriate clothing, tea and biscuits, etc. to keep track of, even for quite a straightforward activity.
Next steps
The main next step is to monitor and maintain the trees. Young trees can need a lot of support, especially during dry periods. It will be mainly the town council's responsibility to keep an eye on the trees, but we will hopefully be supported in this task by our biodiversity volunteers group as well.