

Taflen Wybodaeth Glasu / Glasu Information Sheet — Rhif 1 / No. 1

MATHAU / VARIETIES

This leaflet is not intended to give definitive lists of varieties suitable for orchard planting. Instead it offers guidelines to help you decide which varieties to choose. If you are in doubt a nursery specialising in fruit propagation can be a good source of advice.

First of all you need to decide what the purpose of the orchard will be. It may be one or a combination of the following:

- a. A collection of fruit trees which will give the best financial return for the money and time invested.
- b. A collection of fruit trees which will enhance the landscape and give a fruit crop most years.
- c. A collection of fruit trees planted primarily for the benefit of wildlife as improved habitat and a source of food.
- d. A collection of fruit trees of local historic or social interest to act as a gene bank for the future.

Each of the above will guide your choice of varieties. As examples:

For (a) Trees need to be regular croppers so avoid choices that will only crop on alternate years. These are known as 'biennial bearers'. Certain vigorous growers, such as the apple Bramley's Seedling, are self-sterile and will need other varieties as pollinators, either within their own orchard or within around half a mile, in order to set fruit. Many modern varieties of plums and some cherries are self-fertile. These are likely to give a more reliable crop than those older varieties that need to be cross pollinated by another variety.

It is better to avoid too many early cropping varieties as these will not keep. A range of early and mid to late cropping varieties will provide an extended harvest. Research your potential markets. What do they want? Will organically grown fruit command a higher premium? If so, you might like to take advice on which varieties tend to be least affected by pests and diseases.

- For (b) This option is very popular with modern amateur orchard growers. It can still bring financial benefits if a market is looking for unusual fruit or traditional varieties. It probably offers the greatest opportunity to plant the widest range of varieties when financial considerations are not the most important factor.
- For (c) With this option the fruit may be left un-harvested. As a food source varieties which mature in late autumn or early winter may prove to be the most beneficial to winter visiting birdlife. Such an orchard could also include other fruiting trees such as Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Crab Apples (*Malus* cultivars). Many of the latter make very good pollinators for apples.
- For (d) There is an increasing awareness of the rich heritage of fruit varieties grown in the Britain over the last three to four hundred years. There are recorded over 6000 varieties of apple, 2000 varieties of pear and 300 varieties of plum. Many of these were grown in limited geographical areas. Planting an orchard of unusual or local fruit will help prevent potentially valuable varieties from becoming lost.

All types of fruit trees have varieties that flower at slightly different times. They are grouped into early, mid-season and late varieties. Broadly speaking, plums will flower in March, pears in April and most apples flower in May. To get the best level of cross-pollination and hence the best set of fruit, all varieties should have at least one other variety from the same pollination group planted near to them. Even self-fertile varieties will benefit from this.

All types of orchard fruit are themselves very frost hardy. However their blossom is easily damaged by the frost. As a general rule, as the year advances so the risk of frost will

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diminish. This means that plums are at a greater risk than apples. If financial considerations are important for an orchard the ratio of types of fruit planted can take account of this.

Orchard fruits will be at their best at different times dependent on the variety. Without specialist storage facilities choose varieties that can be sold and eaten straight off the tree or that only require a short period of storage (see leaflet 4 in this series – “Picking and Storing”).

Taste

In the British Isles apple, pear and plum varieties are classified as eaters, cookers or dual purpose fruit. As a general rule eating varieties are smaller, more colourful and sweeter. Whilst these classifications are a useful guide, do not follow them too strictly. Taste is a very personal and subjective matter, what one person calls a sharp but enjoyable eater another person might regard as unpleasantly sour. All eating varieties can be very pleasant in cooked dishes and may need no additional sweetener to be enjoyed. This is an important factor when dietary issues are a consideration.

Location

If your orchard is in an unusual location or at altitude, you may need to find out what varieties grow best. The experience of other orchard growers from similar sites can be the best guide to choosing varieties that will grow well in your situation. Some nurseries will also be able to advise you on which varieties have already proved to be successful in similar situations. At over 1000 foot, some varieties have proved more successful. These include Tom Putt, Mère de Ménage, Court Pendu Plat and other late flowering varieties which have less chance of being affected by frosts. Some varieties suitable for growing in Powys may be found on the Glasu poster guide (which can be downloaded as a PDF from www.glasu.org.uk) and others are listed in the table below:

Dessert apples	Early	Beauty of Bath Discovery George Cave
	Mid-season	Charles Ross Ellison's Orange Afal Glansevin Afal Pig Aderyn
	Late season	Ashmead's Kernel King's Acre Pippin Leathercoat Claygate Pearmain
Cooking apples	Early	Burr Knot Afal Tynyrwydd
	Mid-season	Lord Derby Tom Putt The Reverend W. Wilks Afal Pig yr Wydd
	Late season	Mère de Ménage Lane's Prince Albert Bramley's Seedling
Cider apples		Breakwell's Seedling Broom Apple Raglan Redstalk
Pears	Early	Jargonelle Beth
	Mid-season	Beurré Hardy Concorde Milton Court
	Late	Winter Nelis Josephine de Malines Catillac (cooker)
Welsh Perry Pears		Burgundy Gwehelog Berllandieri Red
Plums		Victoria Marjorie's Seedling Shropshire Prune Damson