

Management of Traditional Orchards

This guidance has been developed specifically to support Environmental Stewardship agreements. It does not replace your Agreement and you must continue to follow the prescriptions and specifications. The outcomes shown may not be appropriate or suitable for all sites. Please consult scheme handbooks or your RDS adviser for further information.

Traditional orchards of fruit and nut trees may be hundreds of years old and have often escaped agricultural "improvements". Where they are extensively managed they may be important refuges for a wide range of wildlife, including fungi, mosses, lichens, wildflowers, insects and other invertebrates, birds and mammals. This wildlife depends on the mosaic of habitats that make up the orchard, including fruit trees, scrub, hedgerows, ponds and unimproved grassland. They also often contain old fruit varieties, many of which are rare and local to the particular area.



Stag beetle



Woodpecker



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Ideal ...

- Preserve mature fruit trees and prune sensitively where appropriate to prolong their lifespan.
- Retain standing dead trunks and fallen limbs .
- Plant new trees of traditional varieties to reinforce the historic planting pattern and maintain a mixed age structure of fruit trees. Protect from livestock damage and weed in spring to ensure establishment.
- Allow tall, bushy hedges and areas of scrub and tall herb vegetation to develop in field corners and edges, to provide food and shelter for invertebrates and birds.
- Extensively graze the grassland to maintain this habitat.



Avoid ...

- Intensive grazing and poaching, particularly beneath the trees, as this will damage their roots.
- Allowing scrub and climbing plants to smother fruit trees, as this can kill trees and reduce their value for dead wood - invertebrates and lichen
- Allowing newly planted and mature trees to be damaged by livestock through browsing, bark stripping or rubbing.
- Removing dead and decaying branches without good reason such as safety or disease