# Orchards for Health Seasonal Calendar

NHS Forest
Green space for health

A project run by

CENTRE for SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE
inspire • empower • transform

# INTRODUCTION

Orchards provide a space for events in all seasons, bringing people together and fostering a sense of community. These events can be open to staff and patients or can provide a way to reach out to the wider community.

Traditional orchards connect people with heritage, promote healthy eating and offer unique events. In addition, they are a way to encourage biodiversity and keep rare fruit varieteties alive.

This seasonal calendar for orchards includes cultural events and ideas to engage both staff, patients and the wider community.

We aim to revive orchards for health in a hospital setting. Register on nhsforest.org to receive fully funded fruit trees for your healthcare site. We are also offering fully funded training in collaboration with The Orchard Project around how to plant and care for an orchard on a healthcare site. Email info@nhsforest.org for more information.

**Planting Day**
Make an event of it! Tree planting is an especially social and positive day out. Make sure to make a map of where all the different varieties get planted! You can be very creative with how you map your orchard and label your trees.

**Quarterly Tree Checks**
Take time to woodchip mulch and weed, check the stakes, ties and guards. Do this as part of a planting day or make it a special event - the more the merrier!

**Pruning Workshops**
Your apple, pear and quince trees are pruned in the winter. In fact this applies to all trees which fall into the 'malus' family. You could offer classes on winter pruning techniques to prepare the trees for the next growing season.

**Wassail**
This annual event takes place sometime after Christmas and before late January. This is an ancient tradition in which people visit orchards and sing around the trees to ask for a good harvest. It's a great opportunity to have a community event in January, an otherwise quiet month. You could make this event part of your planting day.

**Indoor Gardening Workshops**
Start seedlings indoors in late winter, focusing on plants that can be transferred to the orchard in late spring.

**Winter Wildlife Watching**
Set up feeding stations and provide binoculars for patients to observe winter wildlife from indoors or during short outings.

**Wildlife Habitat Building**
Engage participants in building birdhouses, bat boxes and other habitats to support orchard wildlife before spring arrives!

# SPRING

**Quarterly Tree Checks**
Top up woodchip mulch and weed trees. The trees may need watering between March and October, especially if it's been dry. Bear in mind that young trees need 10-20 litres per week.

**Blossom Day**
Organise a Blossom Day event in April-May. Have tea and cake and observe the flowers. Blossom day is based on the Japanese festival of celebrating cherry blossoms.

**Blossom Art Therapy**
Facilitate painting and drawing sessions in the orchard to capture the beauty of the blossoms.

**Mindfulness Walks**
Conduct guided mindfulness walks focusing on the sights, sounds, and scents of the blooming orchard.

**Pollinator Workshops**
Host workshops on the importance of pollinators and how to attract them, including building bee hotels and planting wildflowers.

**Set Up Wildlife Cameras**
Bring the outside in for patients who struggle to get outside. Give patients the opportunity to watch the birds fledge their nests or other wildlife!

**Plan Your Tree Planting**
Think about any planting you would like to do over the winter and put your orders in with NHS Forest early to ensure you receive the varieties you want.

**Quarterly Tree Checks**
Top up woodchip mulch and weed trees. The trees may need watering between March and October, especially if it's been dry. Bear in mind young trees need 10-20 litres per week.

**Summer Solstice Picnic**
Celebrate the longest day of the year.

**Bioblitz**
A bioblitz is a community effort to record as many species as possible in a particular location and over a set period of time. Try surveying which species are present in your orchard. You could survey the meadow flowers, especially if you rewild under the fruit trees - this is an ideal habitat for much-needed pollinators.

**Gardening Workshops**
Offer classes on orchard maintenance, pruning and organic pest control.

**Mindfulness**
Examples include forest bathing, gentle yoga or tai chi classes under the shade of the fruit trees.

**Nature Walks and Educational Tours**
Conduct guided tours focusing on the wildlife and plant species in the orchard.

**Nature Journaling**
Encourage patients to keep nature journals, documenting their observations and reflections in the orchard.

**Pruning Workshops**
Your fruit trees with stones like cherries and plums, known as 'prunus' varieties, should be pruned in the summer months.

**Order Trees**
If you're planning any more fruit tree planting, make sure to get your orders with us in as soon as possible. Nurseries often run out of fruit trees before the season's over.

**Tree Checks**
Top up woodchip mulch and weed trees, check the stakes, ties, guards.

**Make Compost Bays**
At this time of year, leaves are falling. Talk to your Estates team about collecting this leaf litter in a secluded area to make leaf mulch! This organic matter is incredibly beneficial as mulch to add to your trees in the winter.

**Annual Meadow Cut**
Leaving the grass and meadow flowers uncut until the autumn means the plants, and the insects that depend on them, have completed their full life cycle. However, come late September it's time for the annual cut.

**Bulb Planting**
September-November is the ideal time to plant out bulbs for the following spring.

**Apple Day**
This celebration of apples is on 21st October. This is an opportunity to run community events such as harvesting, preserving and storing fruit, apple bobbing, apple identification workshops and juice pressing!

**Storytelling Events**
Host storytelling sessions in the orchard, where patients can share personal stories or listen to folktales.

**Harvest Crafts**
Provide materials for making crafts with harvested items such as dried fruit garlands or leaf collages.

**Orchard Open Day**
Invite the community to visit the orchard, learn about its history and participate in activities.

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