



10 February 2021

Dear BCOG Volunteer,

I don't know about you but I have found this current lockdown more difficult to cope with. The combination of limited hours of daylight, endless wet days and now very cold days, on top of having to endure extremely limited social contact and movement has been a challenge, to say the least.

As we enter February, the hours of daylight noticeably increase and I always find my spirits lifting. The sight of the first snowdrops and emerging daffodils herald the start of a new growing season which will very quickly become a surge of life in all its forms. Before we know it our gardens, allotments and of course the Community Orchard will fully awaken from winter dormancy and will demand our care and attention.

Despite everything over the past few weeks, there has been quite a lot happening in the Community Orchard:

- The southern boundary hedge has been tamed. Large sycamore trees that were growing into the overhead power lines have been removed along with some invasive cotoneaster. We will replace the tree and non native shrubs that have been removed with native hedgerow plants in due course.
- Two new seats and a benches have been installed in the orchard and a bench installed in the wildlife area adjacent to the pond. These replace the ones that had rotted over time.
- A new noticeboard has been installed adjacent to the entrance adjacent to St Mary's churchyard.
- The large carved noticeboard has been put back on the new fence around the substation adjacent to the entrance adjacent to St Mary's churchyard.
- A new information board has been installed opposite the cycle rack.

All of the above have been carried out in collaboration with the Town Council and we are extremely grateful for their continued support, particularly to the outdoor works team who carried out the tasks.

In addition, our own volunteers have been popping into the orchard on an ad hoc basis to:

- Continue with the winter pruning of the apple trees.
- Complete the trimming of the hedges.

- Tidy up the pond.
- Complete the construction of the new polytunnel - the staging and raised beds are all ready for seed sowing and planting.

A big thank you to all those who have been involved in the above tasks. You are the orchard's guardian angels.

Tasks for this month include:

- Complete the pruning of the apple trees.
- Once the centre compost bin has been emptied turn all of the other bins into the centre bin in preparation for the installation of new pallets to replace some of the decaying ones.
- Repair the roof on the apple store shed.
- Repair the platform adjacent to the pond.
- Trim back the shrubs around the bug hotel.
- Trim back the grass around the pond in order to clearly define where the edge is.

Unfortunately, we are still unable to meet as groups, so once again I am inviting you to use your daily exercise time as an opportunity to get some fresh air and top up your vitamin D naturally whilst tackling something in the orchard. Remember to bring along the tools you think you will need.

All the best and stay safe.

Ian