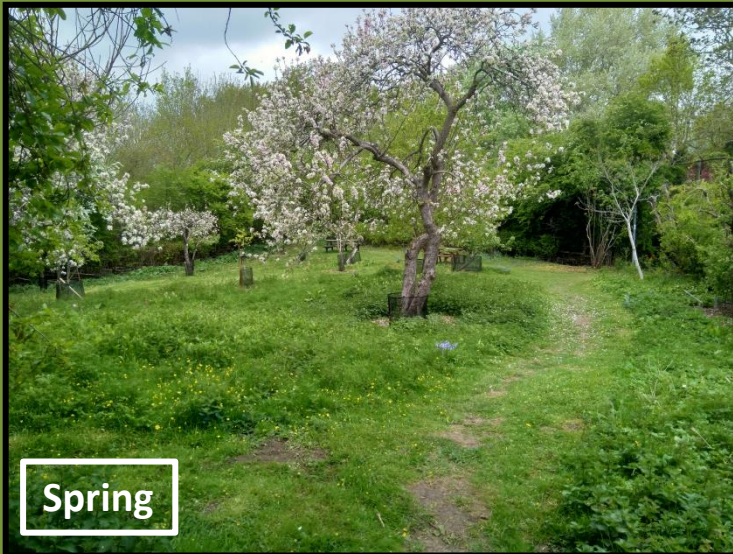


The Orchard - Season by Season

Traditional orchards are a haven for wildlife throughout the year, being used as breeding and foraging grounds during the summer, and as a source of food for birds, mammals and invertebrates in winter.



Please don't pick the flowers – they support the wildlife that live in the orchard, and their seeds ensure that they will return each year for us all to enjoy!



If you would like to receive updates about the orchard, or can contribute a little of your time by becoming involved, please get in touch via warmingtonorchard@gmail.com

SPRING (March - May)

Spring is a lovely time of the year in the orchard, bringing with it a splash of colour. If the weather is good, the trees will wake from their dormant period and their buds will swell and open.

Cherry plum, also known as Mirabelle plum, is one of the first trees to blossom - starting in February and usually continuing until April.



The white flowers are attractive to bees and other insect, as well as providing a glorious display for us to enjoy. After pollination by insects, the flowers develop into cherry-like fruits.

Going back to the 1700's, these trees were traditionally grown as a shelter belt for orchards.



During March the daffodils start coming into full bloom and in the hedgerows early flowering Blackthorn will provide a valuable source of nectar and pollen for bees in spring. Ground ivy, which flowers early, similarly offers a fantastic source of nectar early in the year. Bumblebees start to emerge looking for holes to build nests, aphids hatch and ladybirds come out of hibernation.

By April the blossom on early fruit trees will start to open. Birds start nesting and continue to do so through to July, and the first broods of birds such as blue tits and blackbirds will already be hatching. Insects such as bees and butterflies can be seen flying between flowers or basking in the sun.



SPRING (March - May)



Ground Ivy



Celandine



Black Medick



Germander
Speedwell



Ribwort Plantain



Meadow Foxtail

Early flowering wildflowers and grasses start to become visible within the grassland areas, providing nectar for insects and attracting pollinators. Greater Celandine, Black Medick, Germander Speedwell, Ribwort Plantain, Yorkshire fog and Meadow foxtail all start to appear in the orchard in April.

May starts to welcome in summer. Fruit tree blossom is in full bloom as are some of the hedgerow species such as Hawthorn and Buckthorn, providing nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects.

More wildflower species are starting to flower, providing a source of nectar for many different insect species. Long-tongued bumble bees are able to reach the nectar at the base of the long spur above each petal of Columbine flowers, while Meadow Clary is popular with bees. Cow Parsley and Cowslip are attractive to many butterflies, hoverflies, beetles and other insects.

As insect numbers increase bats, swooping on insects from May and throughout summer, might be seen at dusk.



Yorkshire Fog



Columbine



Meadow Clary



Cow Parsley



Cowslip

Summer (June - August)

Wildflowers in the orchard grassland will be at peak bloom from June and throughout the summer months. Aside from supplying colour and interest in the orchard for us to admire, they support a wide range of insects by providing food, pollen and nectar as well as providing shelter.

The flowers of some plant species found within the orchard attract a wide range of insects, while others are specifically attractive to bees, butterflies and moths.



Stinging Nettle is the food plant for caterpillars of the small tortoiseshell butterfly.

Ladybirds also feed on aphids that shelter on stinging nettles



It is not just insects that benefit from the food provided by the wildflowers growing in the orchard. The seeds of some plant species are also a good food source for birds such as goldfinches.

The fruit on the cherry plum trees are ripe in July. The small yellow or red plums are about an inch wide and edible; also providing birds with an important source of food. Later, in August, the plums within the orchard will be ripe enough to harvest and hedgerow fruits such as elderberry, blackberry, hawthorn, rosehips, and sloes are starting to ripen.

Wasps start to feed on windfalls instead of insects



SUMMER (June - August)

The flowers of some plant species found within the orchard attract a wide range of insects, and are a good source of nectar and pollen.



**Birdsfoot
Trefoil**



**Meadow
Cranesbill**



**Creeping
Cinquefoil**



**Common
Mallow**



**Field
Scabious**



**Ground
Elder**



**Lesser
Burdock**



**Common
Vetch**



**Lady's
Bedstraw**

Some species that can be seen in the orchard are specifically attractive to many species of bees



White Bryony



**Common
Toadflax**



Foxglove



Agrimony

SUMMER (June - August)

Some plants are particularly important to specific species of butterflies as the leaves provide food for the caterpillars.



Stinging Nettle (Small Tortoiseshell & Peacock butterflies)



Broad-leaved Dock (Small Copper butterfly)



Greater Knapweed
Common blue, Marbled white & Meadow brown butterfly)

Similarly, some plant species are important to specific species of moths.



Field Bindweed (for the larvae of Convolvulus Hawk moths)



Common Cleavers
(for the Hummingbird Hawk, Red Twin-spot Carpet and Barred Straw Moths)

Thistle seeds are attractive to birds like goldfinches, and the flowers are a source of nectar for butterflies.



Creeping Thistle



Spear Thistle

Autumn (September - November)



By September the early fruiting apples can be harvested as well as the pears. Other apple varieties ripen later in October. Butterflies and other insects feed on windfall fruit and they in turn provide food for birds and bats, which will be fattening up before winter. The windfalls are important for wildlife to eat over the winter months, and are particularly attractive to winter visiting birds such as redwings and fieldfares.

Flowering ivy provides a vital nectar source for bees, hoverflies and moths during September and October.



Snowberry



Blackthorn



Elder



Hawthorn



Ivy



Hazel Nuts



Beech Nuts



Walnut

The trees and hedgerows provide an important source of food and shelter for insects, birds and small mammals. Birds and small mammals feed on the berries provided by the Snowberry, Blackthorn, Elder, Hawthorn and Ivy, as well as the nuts from the Hazel, Beech and Walnut trees.

WINTER (December - February)

Winter may appear to be a quiet month for wildlife in the orchard, but creatures continue to feast on the windfall fruits and many are taking shelter from the elements in all the natural nesting and overwintering sites that traditional orchards provide.



Ivy provides berries for both insects and birds during winter as well as shelter for insects, birds, bats and other small mammals.

By February, as winter draws to a close, the Hazel catkins start opening out and provides important early pollen on which bees feed. Early signs of spring, such as the appearance of primroses, snowdrops and winter aconites, start to appear.



Aconites



Primrose



Hazel Catkins



Snowdrops