

ORCHARD REPORT NO 2. JULY 2020 Peta Hillier

1. Crime Report: After consultations with three outside experts and careful observation of the site it was decided to report to the police signs of malicious poisoning and to post this on Facebook. The Orchard group wanted to explain to the community why many trees had died and to deter further interference. The discovery of a weighted sock in the water butt was significant and echoed the previous sock in the other water butt. In addition, weeds around the affected trees were showing signs of yellowing, burning or not growing at all.

The orchard group have therefore removed the water-butts and are currently installing a camera with a warning sign and all due legal permissions followed.

The overall result of sharing this news was very helpful in so far as at least five people wish to pay for new trees.

2. Care of the Orchard: The trees have always been very well watered in view of dry conditions early in the year. Soil analysis shows that the site has a PH neutral but the area to the western edge retains moisture for longer. An appendix to this report shows the amount and frequency required using a hose pipe. In view of the generous supply of water from a member of the group the group feels that there should be some recompense from the Parish Council based upon calculations made with the next water bill and usage. This will be made available to the Parish Clerk at a later date for consideration.

The trees that remain will also be treated with fertiliser mix in liquid form once a week.

3. Future development: At least four trees never showed signs of growth from the start despite application of Growmore (which experts considered insufficient)and these may have been waterlogged from the original supplier so we hope to have these trees freely replaced. A new tree list will be sent to us in August and we hope to plant again in the Autumn from late September.

In the meantime, we will remove the existing brambles with a localised herbicide because they have proved very resistant to constant mowing. We will then seed the ground with grass and wild flower seeds in the autumn keeping the site thereafter organic. A lot of work has gone on to remove bits of rubble from the site to enable mowing.

New trees will be planted away from the previous ones and the cages re-used. Each tree will be given plenty of fertiliser and time to settle in before winter.

Conclusion: The Community Orchard Group continue to plan for a flourishing orchard and hope to be able to pay for most replacement trees. However, at the time of writing costs are unknown and we request that the parish council may be able to match fund or sponsor a few more trees, grass and flower seed, when we order in August.

Peta Hillier July 10th 2020

Community Orchard Heritage Park Shotley Gate

Fruit Tree Watering Policy and Procedure

Young trees need extra water to grow, while all fruit trees need additional water during periods of hot dry weather. Shallow soakings on a regular basis tend to stimulate the development of shallow root systems not sturdy or healthy enough to support fruit trees once they reach maturity. Thoroughly soaking the soil around the fruit trees every other week is to be supplemented by daily and weekly watering in accordance with the independent expert chart below.

Using a 15 mm diameter hose, fed from a supply of potable water of normal domestic pressure delivering at a rate of 10 Litres in 20 seconds and 30 litres one minute in a moderate spray pattern is preferred to ensure a minimum area of one metre diameter surrounding each tree is covered evenly.

Refer to the chart below for actual recommended water amounts dependent on prevailing weather conditions and time of year. Watering in the morning is best before outside temperatures begin to rise. This provides the trees with a reservoir of water they can draw on throughout the warmest and often windiest part of the day. If this is not always possible, the best time to perform an evening watering is two to three hours before dusk. This ensures that the tree leaves have time to dry off reducing the risk of fungal leaf infections.

How much water do your trees need?

