

Creating community orchards



What did we do?

We started two community orchards; in Mill Road recreation grounds, Ely and Sanatorium Park, Canton. These will be added to over the coming seasons.

Who did we involve?

For Mill Road we worked with residents living behind the site, Cardiff Rivers Group, and Saint Vincent De Paul Society.

For Sanatorium Park we worked with pupils from Fitzalan High School and Ysgol Pwll Coch, local residents, and members of Sanatorium Park Supporters.

How and why did we do it?

In both cases we were approached by residents interested in improving their local greenspaces, particularly with fruit trees, for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Mill Road residents were concerned about the increase in anti-social behaviour during lockdown and wanted the site to receive some care so that local people felt more connected and have an area to look after. We surveyed the site with residents and local community groups to determine the suitable location for fruit and other trees. The site is popular with dogwalkers and changes to the mowing regime has allowed a wildflower meadow to establish during the summer months in the lower field, but there were not many interesting features on the site which the community could take ownership of.

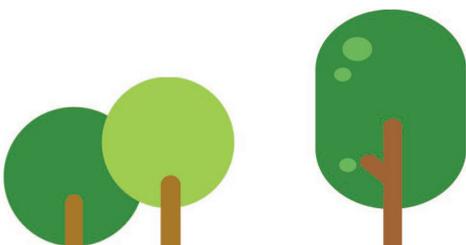
We identified an opportunity to utilise a square on the top field for an orchard which was previously shaded by laurel hedging that has been cut back. With help from residents and community groups we expanded the wet woodland on the lower field which is prone to waterlogging and started off the orchard on the top field with some nut and soft fruit trees including Hazel and Elder. In autumn we will return to plant more fruit trees and create a willow tunnel near the wet woodland for young children to play in. Longer term the site will also benefit from removing the Japanese Knotweed along the riverbank and eventually replanting with native species.

For Sanatorium Park we received interest from Sanatorium Park Supporters in planting fruit trees on site. At the same time, we also had interest from Fitzalan High School to participate in tree activities with their eco-committee.

We surveyed the site with pupils and identified opportunities to expand the mature wet woodland and suitable locations for the fruit trees. During the survey we found many birds and plants which indicated the high biodiversity value of the existing woodland and so species were carefully selected to further support this important habitat.



Sanatorium Park Supporters member with fruit tree
(Sanatorium Park, Canton tree planting event 14.03.22)



With support from Fitzalan High School and Ysgol Pwll Coch pupils, Sanatorium Park Supporters and other community groups, we expanded the wet woodland and planted 30 fruit trees; including Cherry, Apple, Pear and Plum. We will return in autumn to continue woodland expansion on this large site and look to introduce living willow sculptures for play and interest.

What do we hope to achieve?

By responding to community requests and co-designing these spaces with local people we hope residents and groups take ownership of these sites and enjoy looking after fruit and other trees for years to come.

In both cases residents have been back in touch multiple times to let us know how the trees are establishing, reporting any losses, and sharing positive feedback. This is an encouraging start to making communities feel more empowered to look after their local greenspaces.

*“Well organised and inclusive. Thank you for reaching out to a wide range of communities.”
– Mill Road recreation grounds, Ely tree planting participant and resident (19.02.22)*

“The children had a wonderful morning learning about the trees and woodland, and then planting the trees. They have since extended their learning about our natural environment with a project about the different plants growing in the park.” – Sanatorium Park Supporters, Facebook quote



Residents of Mill Road and other volunteers with start of the orchard at Mill Road recreation grounds (planting event 19.02.22)



Volunteers with newly planted fruit tree (Sanatorium Park, Canton tree planting event 14.03.22)

