

# Potton Community Orchard

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**As part of the planning conditions around building the Tall Trees housing estate Kier, the developer, will give 1.42 hectares of land to Potton Town Council.**

The land is to the east of the new houses, between them and the brook. It will be kept as open green space for informal public access and recreation.

Much of the space will be sown with mixed grasses and wildflowers, managed in a way to encourage wildlife and also be welcoming to picnickers, walkers, small children or anyone wanting to just sit and watch the world go by. There will be a variety of grass lengths, with some close-mown paths winding between occasional clusters of trees and shrubs.

The Town Council decided early on that part of the site should be planted as a mixed fruit orchard. Volunteers planted the first 21 trees in the winter of 2018 and added to that in 2019. The plan is to plant a further 20 trees this winter, taking the total to 60. We have a good mixture of varieties including pears, cherries, plums, cooking, eating and cider apples, hazel, quince and mulberry. Many are local varieties, but others are the 'best in class' for instance, for making apple sauce, or whose flavour develops with keeping, until they are perfect with cheese on Boxing Day!



**Volunteers planting the first cider apple tree**



**Volunteers sowing wildflower seeds**

While the trees take some looking after (weeding and watering in the summer), most of the volunteers' time has been involved in restoring the meadow beneath the trees. Growing an abundance of wildflowers in the orchard helps attract wild pollinators such as bumblebees, solitary bees, butterflies, moths and hoverflies, vital in helping pollinate the trees and without whom there would be no fruit. A really healthy orchard has a good variety and balance of wildlife. So it's important to provide all with the right conditions for them to find food, shelter and somewhere safe to breed and complete their lifecycles.

Potton Consolidated Charity have generously granted £2,250 to enable the volunteers to buy wildflower seeds and equipment. That means a great variety of wildflowers and grasses will establish in our orchard right from the start. It also means we can use the right equipment to cut and manage the meadow grass. With the Charity's help, and many hours of volunteer labour, we have also hired a scarifier to improve the germination of the seeds.

The Orchard is still in private ownership so there is no public access just yet. We hope to be able to open the 'gates' sometime in 2020. By then some of the trees will be half-way established, giving some idea of how it will look when mature. Eventually it will be possible to access from Sheepwalk Close, the cricket ground, the Tall Trees houses and, in the fullness of time, the Hall For All.

If you would like to find out more, contact **Potton Community Orchard Group on 01767 262258.**



**Mowing the meadow grass**



**Raking hay in the summer**