

GENERAL

Let's be honest, it rains a lot in west Wales, too much for apples, pears and plums to be considered a commercial crop by modern standards, in most areas. Yet a century ago, when transportation of produce was more difficult, almost every farm had a small orchard growing many varieties of fruit for domestic use and for marketing locally. As the trees aged and production became uneconomic, these orchards fell into decay. Most are long gone and those remnants that have survived are now only distant echoes of a more self-sufficient age.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT VARIETIES

Warm, wet weather favours the development of fungal diseases and reduces insect pollination. We cannot change the weather but we can choose varieties that are resistant to scab and canker and that have a good track record in this climate. By visiting local orchards, inspecting trees and talking to their owners we have been able to draw up a short-list of successful varieties, both old and new, which you will find on the accompanying leaflet.

We work closely with the Marcher Apple Network and the Welsh Perry and Cider Society. These groups frequently come across old local varieties. Some of these have Welsh names that appear to have no English equivalent. Many are disease-free and heavy regular croppers such as Welsh Pitcher, Marged Nicolas and Afal Pig yr wydd from the Dinefwr area and Afal Pig aderyn from Cardigan.

POLLINATION

Most fruit trees are open-pollinated and require a partner of a different variety that is flowering at the same time for successful pollination. Apples are divided into pollination groups. Ideally, choose two varieties from the same or consecutive pollination groups.

Spring frosts can kill the flowers and damage the developing fruits while low temperatures can reduce pollination and fruit set. These frosts are not always predictable so we recommend that you spread the risk by choosing pairs of varieties from different groups, eg. 2 each of groups 2, 3, 4 and 5.

If your land is a natural frost pocket, choose varieties from groups 4 or later. If you live at over 750', choose varieties that ripen early and have a good track record like Lord Lambourne, which also has frost-resistant flowers and fruitlets. The old varieties Lord Derby and Mere de Ménéage appear to crop satisfactorily even at 1000'. Avoid pears above 500'.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT ROOTSTOCK

Apples and pears vary considerably in their ability to root naturally, so they are grafted onto rootstocks of known vigour.

For traditional orchards choose apples grafted onto M25 and MM111. These are usually the only rootstocks that grant-aided schemes will accept. In a large garden choose MM106. For small bushes

and trained trees, such as cordons and small espaliers, buy varieties grafted onto M26 or M9. In general, choose Quince A for pears and St. Julien A for plums – both are semi-dwarf.

rootstock	tree ht	trunk ht	planting distance	staking	management
<i>apples:</i>					
M25	25'	6-8'	25-30'	no	grazing
MM111	20'	4-6'	20'	no	grazing
MM106	15'	3-4'	15'	no	mowing
M116	12'	3'	12.5'	yes	mowing
M26	10'		10'	yes	bare soil
M9	8'			yes	bare soil
<i>pears:</i>					
Pyrus communis	30'	6-8'	30-40'	no	grazing
pyrodwarf	20'	4-6'	20'	no	grazing
quince A	15'	3-4'	15'	no	mowing
<i>plums:</i>					
St.Julien A	15'	4-6'	15'	no	mowing
VVA-1	10'	3'	10'	Yes	bare soil
<i>cherries:</i>					
colt	18'	4-6'	15'	no	mowing
gisela 5	10'	3-4'	12'	yes	bare soil

GRAFTING SERVICE

Do you have an old apple or pear tree you would like to rejuvenate? Send us graftwood and we will graft it for you onto whatever rootstock you choose. Please ask for details

HOW TO FIND US

We are a small, family-run, private nursery – most of the time we are outside planting, grafting or tending trees, so the easiest way to contact us is by email to info@applewise.co.uk or to leave a message on our answerphone at 01269 850018.

We are not open to the public like a garden centre, but we will work with you to find the trees that will suit you for you to collect at our business address. Please ensure you have an appointment or you may find that we're out tending the trees!

When you need to pick up trees from us, contact us for more detailed instructions on finding us.