

Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group Grafting and Pruning Courses

proposed for early 2025

Grafting Courses

We will run several STOG Grafting Courses, concentrating on **whip and tongue grafting**, **next February to early March 2025**. Their dates and locations have not been defined yet, but will be on Saturdays in different Suffolk locations. The courses comprise an initial presentation on the science and practice of the technique for all tree fruit species, followed by several hours of practical experience resulting in grafts to take home. There is an emphasis on orchard tree production, rather than dwarf/commercial tree production, but the techniques are identical.

Would those of you **interested in attending please email me, Paul**. After Christmas, I will reply by email with details regarding locations, dates and times, parking, tools to bring etc. Places will be limited and allocated on the basis of first received. Courses are free (although donations to Suffolk Traditional Orchards Group would be much appreciated) but we will charge you on the day with the cost of the rootstocks used for the grafts you make and wish to take away with you, usually about £2.50-3.00 each. We realise that this not our usual way to arrange these courses up but we are still agreeing dates and locations, and so arrangement will be made as soon as possible.

And new to STOG:

Tree Pruning in a Traditional Orchard

This is an entirely new STOG course that we plan to run **in January 2025**. The emphasis will be on creating a balance between crop production, landscape value and enhancing biodiversity in recently planted Traditional Orchards.

There are already many pruning courses available, mostly following conventions and techniques that originate from commercial crop production using trees on dwarf or semi-dwarf rootstocks. These “require” frequent and regular intervention to maximise crop yield. This leads to concerns by tree owners that they **must** prune annually to a rigid format that ignores landscape and biodiversity, but often reduces longevity and the eventual creation of a veteran or ancient tree.

This course will consist of a presentation that reviews the rationale of tree growth, pruning and the effects of pruning. Demonstrating that certain useful pruning interventions can help the tree crop and eventually become a cropping veteran, valuable to landscape and biodiversity.

Unlike most pruning courses there won't be any tree work carried out by those who attend; we assume they know how to use saws, secateurs, knife or pole cutter. The cost of supplying the equipment, and particularly insurance, carried by course instructors is the main reason why course fees are so high). After the presentation and discussion, we will walk round an orchard with trees that are relevant, explaining the interventions.

As this course is in January 2025 would those of you interested in attending, please email me, Paul, as soon as possible. After Christmas, I will reply by email with details. Places will be limited and allocated on the basis of first received.

Courses are free (donations to Suffolk Traditional Orchards Group would always be much appreciated).



A heavy cropping veteran apple tree in a Suffolk orchard, 60 -80 years old. Probably no formative pruning, later only for convenience of cropping and mowing.

For MORE pictures see over.....



A Hertfordshire parish council's traditional orchard, quincunx layout, funded by a Heritage Lottery funded Orchards East project. In the 2nd spring after planting. Apples, plums, cherries and pears on M25, StJA, F12.1 & Kirchensaller. No grazing intended.



A Suffolk traditional orchard, Apples on 1.2m, "½ standard", trunks, on MM111 & M25, 2-12 yrs after planting. Not generally pruned an after initial formative prune. Not mown, sheep grazed in winter and spring.

Further courses, directly targeting veteran trees, are planned for later this year.

And finally....

Please forgive us for not sending this information out earlier.

Also, the weather is upsetting the usual lifting policy of nurseries, pushing-back dormancy, and reducing the window for grafting and pruning courses, and therefore also the window for us to run courses. In our case the receipt of rootstocks determines when we can utilise them on our whip and tongue grafting courses. This is the ideal method to learn initially, and which we find has higher success rate than budding by student grafters. Most commercial propagation nurseries today use in-field summer budding as their main propagation method, budding onto rootstocks received the previous winter and grown on. For the late summer budding courses, we, like most nurseries, buy rootstocks the previous winter and grow them until late summer.

Our apple day events this year generated so many fruits of all sorts to identify that we have some still in the system (in the frig). In addition to the many small samples brought to us at Apple Days we had samples from several large orchard sites.

Merry Christmas!

Paul Read, Chair, Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group, 20th Dec 2024