THE APPLE STORE GUIDEBOOK



The Apple Store - Guidebook

Part of the Pomology Project

A mobile store displaying 60+ heritage apples from Worcestershire orchards including a selection that are likely to have been grown on the Highbury Estate.

Apple tastings? All apple-icants will be considered.

Thanks to Wade Muggleton for generously donating the apples.

www.generalpublic.org.uk

The Pomology Project is a contemporary art project that explores ideas of diversity through reimagining British orchard traditions and customs in an urban context. (Pomology is a branch of botany that studies and cultivates fruit). What might be termed 'traditional' English fruits are actually descended from central Asian ancestors and the project uses this botanical history to explore narratives relating to diversity/difference. These include thinking about racial heritage and the repercussions on citizenship, protecting territories and crops, celebrating difference in relation to mental health, biodiversity in the natural world and broadening the range of foods we eat (including our expectations about what apples should look and taste like).

A live programme of activity is taking place throughout 2019 and 2020, followed by exhibitions and a final performance in 2021.

Eating Apples

Adam's Pearmain

Adams's Pearmain is an old-fashioned late dessert apple, one of the most popular varieties in Victorian England, probably originating from Norfolk. It has an attractive 'pearmain' shape.

This is a fairly dry apple - which is perhaps not regarded as a desirable attribute today. In spite of this it is actually a very enjoyable apple, with a rich aromatic flavour which in apple terms is usually described as 'nutty' - a quality it shares with another popular Victorian apple, the Egremont Russet.

There is some evidence that Adam's Pearmain is a triploid variety, with 3 sets of chromosomes instead of the usual 2 - or perhaps a partial triploid. However it does not possess many of the typical features seen in triploid varieties (such as large size and vigour).

Although it had 'shelf appeal' for the Victorian housewife, its autumnal colouring is probably too subdued to compete with the bright young things of the modern supermarket shelves. Perhaps this is part of its appeal; it recalls a bygone era where subtlety of flavour was appreciated - a lovely apple to savour in front of an open fire on a cold winter's day.

Ashmead's Kernel

An old nondescript green russeted apple, originating in the 1700s. The appearance is, let's be honest, not especially attractive. Ashmeads Kernel is lumpy, mis-shapen, and rather small. The underlying bright green skin is entirely covered in russet. Russet can be very appealing- think of the dull golden glow of Egremont Russet for example - but somehow on Ashmead's Kernel it just looks plain dull.

Yet appearances can be deceiving. Ashmeads Kernel has remained popular for well over 2 centuries, and with good reason: it has a distinctive flavour which is quite different from most other varieties. Tasters rarely agree on exactly what the elusive flavour reminds them of, but pear drops is probably close.

It is perhaps no surprise that Ashmeads Kernel does not seem to be related to any of the mainstream apple varieties, although one of its probable cousins - Duke of Devonshire - is also quite well known. The name "kernel" suggests that this variety was discovered as a chance seedling.

Ashmead's Kernel is a versatile apple, not just for eating fresh, it can also be used for salads and cooking, and it is a highly-valued apple for juicing and hard cider.

For gardeners Ashmead's Kernel's quirky character can make it less than straightforward to grow. Unlike modern apple varieties which tend to be quite precocious,

Ashmead's Kernel takes its time (3-4 years) to come into bearing. Once it does, cropping can be still be light to average because Ashmead's Kernel flowers erratically. Pollination is also difficult. Although Ashmead's Kernel is considered a conventional diploid variety (2 sets of chromosomes), its unreliable pollination characteristics have led some researchers to suggest it might be a triploid variety (3 sets of chromosomes). In any case, Ashmead's Kernel greatly benefits from having other good pollinating varieties nearby - Golden Delicious is a good choice.

Ashmead's Kernel is also one of a very small band of apple varieties from the Old World that succeeded in the New World. When the first settlers arrived in North America they brought with them tried and tested varieties from Europe, yet few adapted to the very different climates of North America and most of the early successful American apple varieties were chance seedlings which evolved in America. However Ashmead's Kernel did thrive, and today holds a position of respect on both sides of the Atlantic - it will never be a mainstream variety and placed alongside almost any modern variety, Ashmeads Kernel looks completely outclassed. But in the flavour stakes this old-timer holds its own.

Bardsey

Discovered growing on an island off the coast of North Wales, and considered very disease-resistant.

Belle de Boskoop

Belle de Boskoop was introduced in the 1850s in the Netherlands, and is still popular on the Continent. It is a large, lumpy, dull red apple, often with extensive russeting. There is also a modern "sport" with a darker red colouring but otherwise quite similar.

Belle de Boskoop is essentially a dual-purpose apple, suitable for both dessert and culinary uses. It works equally well in a savoury salad, or can be used sliced in continental-style apple pies and flans. Unlike the English Bramley cooking apple, Belle de Boskoop keeps its shape when cooked.

Eaten fresh, Belle de Boskoop is quite a sharp apple. This and its large size makes it unsuitable as a snack apple, but it can be nice cut into slices to share after a meal. The white-green flesh is dense with a very firm texture.

In summary, a versatile and unusual apple variety.

Bloody Ploughman

An old Scottish variety introduced in 1883. The story behind this variety was that a ploughman on Megginch Estate was caught stealing apples for his family and was shot by the gamekeeper. His body was returned to his widow who found some of the stolen apples in his pocket. She threw these on the rubbish heap and a seedling arose from the heap and this was named after the unfortunate ploughman. It's season of use is from September to November, ripening to a remarkable dark maroon red with a pink tinged flesh. It is a very distinctive red and ribbed apple. Eaten straight from the tree it has a mild, fresh sweet flavour and is juicy. It makes excellent pink juicy and a good cider. Excellent for growing in Scotland as well as the rest of the UK.

Brookes

A small apple which has yellow skin on the shaded side, but has an orange flush which is thinly mottled with red on the exposed side with a thin brown russet. The firm yellowish flesh is not very juicy but it is sweet, rich, and aromatic. Its season of use is from September to February. (Shropshire 1820)

Chatley's Pippin

A red version (or Sport) of Chatley's Kernel, this apple could possibly be a result of a variation developing within the original variety or possibly a variety all of its own.

This seems open to speculation but there is anecdotal evidence of there being two supposedly different Chatley Apples: a Green and a Red. For that reason we have included it here.

Colwall Quoining

A dessert apple, received by the National Fruit Trials in 1949 from Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire.

The village of Colwall is just in Herefordshire on the western side of the Malvern Hills. The fruit has very distinct angular ridges: 'quoining' is said to mean corners indicating this angular nature and there are several other quoining varieties in this group of apples. The fruit has crisp, coarse flesh with a sweet sub-acid, slightly nutty flavour. Keeps until November.

Court Pendu Plat

Court Pendu Plat is old apple variety from France, with a history dating back to the early 1600s and many earlier references. It was popular in Victorian times and still has a small following.

With such an ancient lineage it is perhaps no surprise that Court Pendu Plat is quite different from many other varieties. The most distinctive feature is the strange flattened appearance. The base is highly inverted and you can clearly see the flower stalk from which the apple formed. The colouring is light green flushed with orange and red.

The flesh is very dense, not soft but not crisp either. Cutting into it with a knife feels a bit like cutting into a hard cheddar cheese. There seems to be very little juice, and it is not really apple-flavoured at all. The flavour is fruity and strong when picked, and sweetens by Christmas. It is not actually very appealing when you first bite into it, yet is strangely "moreish", with a flavour which is hard to define. It can also be used for cooking.

Although we have no proof, we think Court Pendu Plat could be somewhere in the ancestry of Cox's Orange Pippin. The size, flattened shape, colouration, and complex flavours of Cox are all there in Court Pendu Plat, albeit in a more primitive form. Cox's probable parent - Ribston Pippin - was apparently grown from a seedling brought to England from France in the early 1700s, a time when Court Pendu Plat was well-established on the Continent.

Doctor Harvey

Originates from East Anglia in the 1600s. Named after Dr Gabriel Harvey of Cambridge.

Egremont Russett

Egremont Russet is a classic English russet apple from the Victorian era. Whilst russet apples have generally fallen out of favour, Egremont Russet remains popular with discerning apple lovers who appreciate its unique flavour and appearance.

Part of its enduring success is down to niche marketing. This is an apple that dares to be different! It is a russet-skinned variety with a dry flesh - a style of apple that has not attracted the attentions of mainstream apple breeders, but nevertheless seems to have a dedicated following. Also, in spite of its unique appearance, Egremont Russet has many of the characteristics which mark out a good apple: a harmony of flavour and texture, and a good balance between sweetness and sharpness.

The difference is evident as soon as you pick it up. The skin is entirely covered with "russet", which feels like very fine sandpaper. Some other varieties have streaks of russet, notably Cox's Orange Pippin, but in Egremont Russet it completely dominates the appearance. The colour is an attractive dull gold flecked with yellow.

Egremont Russet is a medium-sized apple. The flesh seems quite dry and gets drier with keeping - it is moist rather than juicy. Traditionally described as "nutty", the flavour is more delicate than most varieties, and quite sweet. Both the flavour and the soft flesh are reminiscent of a firm pear. Yet Egremont Russet is surprisingly versatile, working well in savoury salads for example, and a popular partner for cheese.

If you are used to a modern, smooth-skinned, crisp apple then the sandpaper finish of a russet apple like Egremont Russet may sound distinctly un-appealing, but this is a case of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. It may be very different, but it undoubtedly works - definitely worth a try!

Emporer Alexander

Thought to be Ukranian. Known in the 1700s. Introduced to the UK in 1805. Fruits have firm, rather coarse flesh with mild flavour.

Falstaff

In apple terms Falstaff is brand-new - it was developed in Kent in the 1980s. For modern growers appearance is of great importance, and there is no doubt that Falstaff is a very attractive apple, reasonably large in size and with a lovely red flush over a golden yellow background.

Falstaff is another variation on a familiar modern theme - growers attempting to improve on Golden Delicious. Whilst Falstaff probably owes its size and yellow background colour to Golden Delicious, when it comes to flavour it really takes after its other parent - James Grieve, a juicy and pleasantly acidic apple which arose in Scotland in the 1890s.

There is also a red sport - Red Falstaff - which has identical characteristics apart from the colour which is a more attractive and pronounced shade of red.

Falstaff is crunchy and juicy straight from the tree, with light cream coloured flesh. It mellows and softens somewhat as it ages, but remains juicy. The flavour lacks the complexity of the Victorian apples, but is nevertheless a very well-balanced combination of sweetness - from Golden Delicious - and acidity - from James Grieve. We tend to find that the James Grieve parentage probably has the greater impact on Falstaff's flavour, and it is pleasingly sharp when picked from the tree (which is actually the best way to enjoy it). There is something in the flavour for fans of the older classic English style as well - it is quite likely that one of its grandparents is Cox's Orange Pippin.

Like many James Grieve offspring, this is also a good apple for making your own apple juice.

As a variety for the garden Falstaff and Red Falstaff are amongst the best. The quantity and quality of apples produced is matched only by the lack of effort required - even the most hopeless gardener should be successful with this variety. It does have a slight susceptibility to scab, but this is rarely a problem. In our experience this is also an apple which almost everyone really enjoys, from the connoisseur to those who profess not to like apples - it does everything you expect an apple to do.

Gascoyne's Scarlet

Raised by Mr Gascoyne at Bapchild Court, Sittingbourne, Kent. It was introduced in 1971 G. Bunyard & Co, Maidstone, Kent. Received a First Class Certificate from the Rpyal Horticultural Society in 1887. Fruits have firm, fine-textured, slightly juicy, sweet flesh.

Glansevin

A delicious South Wales late russet apple, found especially in the Dinefwr area, thought to date back to the 16th Century. Pick in October, use in December – March.

Green Purnell

Supposedly an old variety yet one about which little is known or recorded. It was introduced to the National Fruit Trials in 1945, being said to be from the County of Worcestershire.

It can still be found in a few old orchards in the region and is sometimes referred to simply as Purnells. The fruit viewed in August seem a bright green, medium-sized dessert, yet by late October develop rich red and orange streaks resembling almost a completely different apple. Fully ripe by November it will keep until January. The flesh is firm, creamy and fine, juicy and sweet.

Greensleeves

This apple can be picked in mid-September but will happily stay on the tree into October so you can eat it fresh from the tree for at least a month. This, along with its good cropping, make it a really excellent variety to grow in the garden.

In theory Greensleeves marries the sweet flavour of its Golden Delicious parent balanced by the acidity of its other parent, James Grieve. It can be hard and sharp early in the season but mellows later, but it never quite achieves what the parentage suggests it should.

As the photo shows, Greensleeves is actually a lovely golden yellow colour if you leave it on the tree into October.

Gwendoline

A medium sized, round-conical dessert apple. Of very appealing flavour, said by some to have a hint of wine.

Skin bright green turning yellow as it ripens. First came to attention in 1998 in Pershore as a tree that had developed unnoticed from a pip. Named after the then owner of the property.

Herefordshire Russett

A modern dessert russet, raised in 1975 by Mr Hugh Ermen, Faversham, Kent. Introduced in 2003 by Frank P. Matthews Ltd., Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire.

As a tree they are strong, upright and seem well suited to heavier and wetter soils, thus making it a good all rounder. They are ripe from late September onwards and will store from October to January. The flesh is hard, crisp and juicy, creamy white with a slight greenish tinge. It has the nuttiness of other russets, yet with an added juiciness, a good example of the best of modern apple breeding with some good traditional characteristics. Obviously not by name or origin a truly Worcestershire variety.

James Grieve

Raised by James Grieve in Edinburgh, Scotland and introduced by his employers, Dickson's nurserymen. It was first recorded in 1893. Received Award of Merit in 1897 and First Class Certificate in 1906 form RHS. Fruits have rather soft but very juicy flesh with a good refreshing flavour. RHS Award of Garden Merit 1993.

King Charles Pearmain

A dessert apple said to have been raised by Charles Taylor, a blacksmith of the village of Rushock in Worcestershire in 1821, claimed by Hogg in 1876 to have been introduced commercially by nurseryman John Smith of Worcester. It is also known as Rushock Pearmain.

The fruits have a golden base colour covered by a thin brown russet. The flesh is firm and crisp with a sweet and rich flavour. Will keep through Christmas and well into the New Year and was at one time claimed to have been widely grown for the markets of Birmingham.

Whether the King Charles naming or association comes from Charles Taylor or a Royal reference seems unclear. The Herefordshire Pomona claims it was known for a time as Charles Pearmain, suggesting the former.

King of the Pippins

A popular 19th century apple, very widely grown in Europe at the time, and versatile for culinary and dessert uses. King of the Pippins is a sharp, firm, juicy apple which sweetens in storage.

If this variety were discovered today it would hardly merit the title "King" of the pippins, or even "Reine" de Reinettes" (queen of the reinettes) as it is called in France. However back in the late 18th century when it first became known the name was probably more appropriate.

The main attraction of King of the Pippins today is its versatility. It can be used as a dessert apple but also has many culinary uses. It keeps its shape when cooked and brings an authentic old-fashioned flavour. The sweet-sharp juice is also useful for making fresh apple juice and in cider-making.

Laxtons Superb

Laxton's Superb is a classic and popular English-style variety from the late Victorian period, one of the high-points in the development of English apples. Laxton Brothers were important breeders at this time and this is probably their most important variety.

Laxton's Superb is essentially a Cox-style apple, but with an interesting twist in flavour inherited from its other parent Wyken Pippin, which had been popular since the 18th century but is now little known. The shape is much more upright than the flattened signature of Cox, and is reminiscent of Adams Pearmain. The colour is dull red flush over green - attractive in a subdued way.

The white-green flesh is quite dense and sweet, and very "appley". The texture is firm rather than crisp, and there is not a lot of juice. Not perhaps characteristics that would endear it to a modern audience, but nevertheless it is actually quite appealing. Like several older varieties it somehow tastes better if you cut it with a knife and eat it in slices or wedges rather than biting into it.

Laxton's Superb represented the state of the art of in English apples at the start of the 20th century, and it is fascinating to compare it with the new varieties such as Meridian and Saturn which have come through at the end of the century. All these varieties use Cox's Orange Pippin as a starting point, but the appearance and combination of flavours in Laxton's Superb makes it very different from the up-front appeal of most modern varieties.

Lemon Pippin

Good for drying. Small, yellow dotted fruit with greenish-white, crisp, acid flesh.

Limelight

A wonderfully attractive crisp and refreshing apple with a smooth yellow/green skin.

Limelight is a modern English apple variety, developed in Kent by Hugh Ermen. It is an improved 'Greensleeves' type and is ready for picking in September.

Although Hugh Ermen's apples are usually developed with the amateur gardener in mind, Limelight has increasingly been catching the attention of small English growers, who appreciate its easy management characteristics.

Lord Hindlip

A late dessert apple whose name suggests an origin at Hindlip just north of Worcester, yet it was a Mr Watkins of Hereford who first submitted it to the RHS fruit committee in 1896.

The fruit is medium sized and pearmain like in shape. The skin is flushed with some streaks and a variable level of russet. The flesh is aromatic, crisp, sweet and juicy with a deep cream colour. It has a reputation as a reliable cropper, bearing freely on spurs, and its ability to keep until March would have been part of its appeal in the pre-refrigerated storage era.

Madresfield Court

Thought to have been raised by William Crump, head gardener at Madresfield Court. It was first exhibited in 1915 and was then introduced by J. Carless of Worcester.

It received an Award of Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society in 1915.

Fruits are large and conical having a firm, coarse-textured flesh, juicy with a sweet and pleasant aromatic flavour. In a good sunny spot they will ripen to a bright red over a green skin. As a tree it is claimed by some to be a rather shy cropper, but it has been found to crop well as a garden tree.

Martin Nonpariel

A medium sized eating apple said to originate from a Rev George Williams of the village of Martin Hussingtree in 1795. The fruit has a pale green skin turning yellow in storage, with a slightly rough texture and sprinkled with brown russet spots.

Reported to be a vigorous, hardy tree and a good bearer.

The apples are supposed to keep until March. This variety was effectively lost until 2012 with no known examples surviving. Following an article in the Martin Hussingtree parish magazine a pair of old trees in a cottage garden came

to light and the fruit matched the historical descriptions and illustrations. A few young trees have now been grafted thus securing the next generation of this variety.

Mayqueen

Raised by Mr Haywood of Worcester and first recorded in 1888 when it was introduced by Messrs. Penwill. It won an RHS Award of Merit in 1892. This is a fantastic variety and it is hard to see why it is not more popular.

An attractive, medium sized red dessert apple, it is edible in November and has excellent keeping qualities, storing until April.

On the smaller rootstocks is amazingly productive and bears well season after season.

According to Bunyard it is 'a neglected fruit of great excellence and as a fruit for small gardens as cordons or bushes it can hardly be surpassed'. It produces few laterals reducing pruning to a minimum.

Nonpariel

Nonpareil is one of the oldest of all apple varieties. The Victorian pomologist Robert Hogg believed it came from France to England in the 16th century, and noted that its aromatic qualities were apparently better appreciated in England than in the land of its birth. Hogg noted that Nonpareil grew best in the south of England (closest to France), and the flavour was less successful when grown in the north of England.

Nonpareil belongs to a small group of apples which have the flavour of pear-drops. This flavour component is fairly unusual, but is also found in one of Nonpareil's probable descendants, Ashmead's Kernel.

Visually, Nonpareil's dull russet colouring is not that attractive - the appeal of this apple is its unique strong pear-drop flavour.

Onibury Pippin

Raised by Thomas Andrew Knight in early 19th century, Onibury being the location of one of his nurseries.

Pitmaston Nonpariel

This dessert fruit claims (by name) to be the pitmaston russet beyond compare. It was raised at Pitmaston near Worcester by nurseryman John Williams.

The variety first fruited in 1814 before being formally introduced in 1818.

The skin is a bright green with varying levels of russet over it. The fruits have firm flesh with a rich, aromatic flavour. Will keep up to Christmas and beyond.

Pitmaston Pine Apple

A quite different and distinctive russet, claimed by Herefordshire, but associated with Pitmaston in Worcester. Some might be attracted to this particular apple by its reputation as being everything the supermarkets hate, being small, yellow and spotty yet with a fantastic taste!

It makes for a good garden tree with its moderately vigorous and upright growth pattern and the small fruit being ideal for children. The flesh is crisp, beneath a thick yellow skin with a russet of dots. Flavour is intense, being a sweet, sharp and slightly nutty character and as the name suggests with the slightest hint of pineapple.

As a tree it is notably scab resistant although very prone to biennial cropping, with huge crops thrown one year and virtually nothing the next. The variety is neglected because of the small size of the apples. They are ripe from mid-September onwards and if stored well will keep until December.

The variety is thought to have arisen from the pip of a Golden Pippin and although recorded in Hereford in 1785 it was introduced by Williams of the Pitmaston district of Worcester, hence its inclusion in this county list.

Pink Lady (Shropshire grown)

Perhaps more than any other modern apple, Pink Lady epitomises the trend towards product marketing and branding in the sale of apples. Pink Lady was one of the first apples to be marketed under a specific brand name rather than by its variety name. The variety is grown under licence, and then marketed through licenced resellers to the supermarkets. This tight control is intended to keep quality high, and it is portrayed as a premium product.

You may have sometimes seen another variety called Cripps Pink in the shops and noticed the similarity ... it is actually the same variety. Pink Lady is a trademark, the actual variety name is Cripps Pink. In order to preserve the premium appeal of Pink Lady, about 65% of the production which does not meet the standards required for Pink Lady

is sold as Cripps Pink instead. The distinction is primarily made on colour intensity and the sugar/acid balance. Whilst this might at first appear to be a marketing ploy, it benefits consumers because it means that the variability of quality of Pink Lady is less than you might find in other varieties (Braeburn being a notable example).

Cripps Pink was developed in the 1970s by John Cripps in Western Australia, and is a cross between Golden Delicious and Lady Williams. This same breeding programme also led to Cripps Red, which shares the same parentage and is marketed under the Sundowner brand. Lady Williams is not a particularly well known apple variety in Europe or North America, but has been quite widely grown in Australia, having been discovered as a chance seedling in the 1930s. It is probably from Lady Williams that Pink Lady gets its distinct colouring. (However it is interesting that another modern "blush" apple, the orange-coloured Tentation, is also a Golden Delicious cross). Pink Lady and Sundowner are very similar, but we think Pink Lady is just slightly closer to Golden Delicious in terms of flavour.

Pink Lady requires a very long growing period and a hot climate, and hence is only grown in the warmer apple-growing regions of South Africa, USA, southern Europe - and of course Australia. Strong sunlight in autumn is vital for the pink coloration to develop and growers may remove the top-most leaves of the trees to allow light to penetrate. Pink Lady is a moderately vigorous tree and hangs on to its leaves well into winter. It also shares a characteristic found in some other apple varieties in that the quality of fruit in the early years of the tree is not good. These horticultural difficulties meant that Pink Lady was initially unpopular with growers - until they realised the premium prices they could get for this unique pink apple.

Pink Lady apples from the northern hemisphere tend to arrive in shops from late November - but the very long storage life means they are available almost all year round from northern or southern hemisphere orchards.

'Pink Lady' is a registered trade mark of Apple and Pear Australia Limited in more than 80 jurisdictions and is reserved for the exclusive use of licensees. In the USA and Mexico Pink Lady is a registered trade mark of Brandt's Fruit Trees.

Puckrup Pippin

A late dessert apple, first described in 1872, though possibly a much older apple. It may have originated in Puckrup, near Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire. An apple with a sweet, citric flavour and firm, deep cream flesh, storing until February.

Ribston Pippin

Raised at Ribston Hall, Yorkshire, England in about 1707. Received the Award of Merit formt he Royal Horticultural Society in 1962. Fruits have firm fine-textured moderately juicy flesh with a rich aromatic flavour.

Scrumptious

Scrumptious is an excellent modern English early dessert apple, and popular in tasting tests. It was raised by English apple enthusiast Hugh Ermen in the 1980s and intended for gardeners who wanted an early-season apple variety with a bit more flavour than other early varieties. Scrumptious is a great example of how growers are once again looking at flavour as the most important characteristic in a good apple.

Scrumptious has the right pedigree, and more than lives up to the expectations set by its parents. It gets its sweetness from Golden Delicious, but there are also the fresh strawberry flavours from Worcester Pearmain and Discovery. The rosy red colouring and white flesh is also typical of Discovery. Whereas Discovery tends to be fairly small, Scrumptious is a bit more substantial and similar in size to a small Golden Delicious. The colours are also more robust, although like any early apple variety the amount of sunlight in the short growing season can significantly affect the extent of the red flush. (Later varieties are more likely to have uniform coloration because the amount of sunshine averages out over the longer ripening period). The occasional flecks of russet are also similar to Discovery.

The flavour is sweet but not sugary - there is a balancing acidity. Although not a hard apple, the flesh snaps cleanly when you bite into it, again rather like a good Golden Delicious. We have also noticed, occasionally, a very slight aniseed flavour. Don't let this put you off, as it is more of a background sensation than an actual flavour, but it is part of the reason why Scrumptious has more depth of flavour than other early varieties. This suggests that there could perhaps be some Ellison's Orange somewhere in the mix. Ellison's Orange has a pronounced aniseed flavour, and is another early apple variety, but with a lot more complexity and richness than the mainstream early varieties.

This is very much a case of the child exceeding its parents: if you like Golden Delicious or are a fan of the popular English earlies like Worcester and Discovery, then you will love Scrumptious. In terms of flavour and instant snack-appeal, it sets a new standard amongst early apples. Being relatively new, and not popular as a commercial variety, it can be difficult to buy Scrumptious apples, but it is now widely available from fruit tree nurseries, and is an excellent choice if you want an early apple variety for the garden.

Sheepnose (Black Gilliflower apple)

Very uniform in shape and size. Large, oblong, conical ribbed fruit. Dark red deepening to almost black. Greenish white flesh. Rich, mild, sweet flavour and distinctive aroma. Hangs long on the tree but must not be allowed to over ripen as flesh soon becomes dry.

Spartan

Spartan is a small sweet apple, and a great favourite with children. It is very much a "McIntosh" style apple, bright crimson skin and whiter-than-white flesh. We leave ours on the tree as long as possible, until they are crimson all over, as this allows the flavour to develop. Straight from the tree the flesh is very crisp and juicy, but it softens a bit within a week or so of picking - although remaining juicy. This is also a good variety for juicing - the juice colour is not especially remarkable but the flavour is sweet and pleasant. Spartan is an excellent garden apple, being easy to grow, resistant to scab, fairly resistant to mildew, and it crops very reliably - and by growing your own you can enjoy Spartan at its best, straight from the tree. However it can be prone to canker in wetter regions.

Spartan is a historically interesting apple, being an early example of a variety developed in a formal scientific breeding programme in Canada. It was raised at the Canadian Apple Research Station in Summerland, British Columbia, in the 1920s, and the mother variety is McIntosh (of course). There is some uncertainty over the pollen parent, it is usually thought to be Newtown Pippin.

Spartan is also one of the few North American apple varieties that can be grown successfully throughout the UK, where it has long been a popular garden apple variety.

If you only have space for one of the McIntosh-style apple varieties in your garden orchard, Spartan is a good choice - straight from the tree on a cold autumn morning, the vinous sugar-rush is hard to beat!

Sunset

Sunset is a popular Cox-style apple, widely recommended as an alternative to Cox's Orange Pippin as it is much easier to grow. The parentage is not known but it is almost certainly a seedling of Cox. Disease resistance is far better, and cropping is good. It is also self-fertile, which is fairly unusual in apples and means it can be grown without the usual requirement for a pollination partner.

Like Cox it is a mid-season variety, ripening slightly ahead of Cox - so expect to pick around mid-September in northern Europe. Sunset does not keep especially well, and is best stored in a refrigerator, where it will last a month or so.

The main horticultural problem is that the fruit tends to be small, but this is easily corrected by thinning the fruitlets as the develop in May and June.

Visually Sunset is quite close to Cox's Orange Pippin, but often with a slightly more yellow hue to the characteristic orange flush.

Our main concern with Sunset is that the flavour can be very variable. There is no doubt that in principle it is quite close to Cox, with similar aromatic qualities and good sweetness. However whilst it invariably crops well in both good and bad seasons, the flavour can be very disappointing in a poor year - although even then it remains a crisp and sweet apple. We have also had reports that flavour varies quite noticeably between M9 and MM106 rootstocks (with M9 producing a better flavour). We therefore think its popular billing as a "Cox substitute" should be taken with caution.

However, taking it purely on its own merits, Sunset is undoubtedly a good apple for the northern European gardener, crisp, sweet-flavoured, reliable cropping, easy to grow ... and in a good year the promise of some of the aromatic flavours of Cox too.

Tupstones

Little is recorded or written anywhere about this variety, with it first showing up in a 1945 County fruit trial. Its exact origin is unclear and where it is listed it is simply recorded as originating in Worcestershire.

This obscure apple is a real gem of a find and has many good qualities. The fruits are attractive with a green and dark red running to almost purple skin colour and when ripe with some russet. The flesh is yellowish white, sweet, firm and possesses a nutty characteristic.

It is a good keeper and stored in a cool shed is still very good come February and March. It grows well as a garden tree and forms spurs, easily cropping from the second year onwards on the more dwarfing rootstocks.

Of all the heritage varieties of the county this highly obscure variety is a real find and well worth growing in any garden, allotment or orchard.

Yellow Ingestrie

Yellow Ingestrie is an old English apple variety, quite well-known for its distinctive yellow coloration. The yellow becomes more pronounced as the fruit is left to mature. The flavour is pleasantly aromatic.

The Victorian pomologist Hogg records that Yellow Ingestrie was the result of a cross between Orange Pippin and Golden Pippin, made in about 1800, by a Mr Knight of Herefordshire. As a result it is often mistakenly thought to be related to Cox's Orange Pippin but "Orange Pippin" is an older apple with a similar name.

Wheelers Russett

This apple as a table fruit deserves the highest character; it is rather larger then the old nonpareil, much like it in appearance and flavour. It is a great bearer and will keep till May. A very nice russet eater probably 200 years old or more. Cinnamon colour, ripening in January. A good keeper. Old trees have been seen in the Clyde Valley with fruit hanging on well into the New Year.

William Crump

This apple takes its name from Mr William Crump who was the one time head gardener at Madresfield Court near Malvern. He is credited with raising the variety and personally exhibited it in 1908 when it received an RHS Award of Merit.

It is believed to be a cross between Cox's Orange Pippin and a Worcester Pearmain.

It was later exhibited by Earl Beauchamp also of Madresfield and won a First Class Certificate in 1910. It was then introduced by Rowe's nursery of Worcester and is a good quality and attractive looking dessert apple, yet not one you will find commercially available today.

As a tree it has an upright growth habit and seems to do well on a range of rootstocks. The fruit are medium to large and with a green to dark red skin colouring. The flesh is firm, crisp and juicy and of good flavour, a nice balance of sweetness and acidity, coming ripe by mid October with good keeping qualities through until February.

Again, one of those varieties that on the face of it has much going for it yet is now comparatively rare.

Betty Geeson

This obscure and now rare cooking apple is believed to have been introduced in 1854 by a Mr Davies of Pershore. However, its name suggests a possible link to Betty Geeson of Belvoir who, some claim, raised it from a pip, in which case it would actually be a Leicestershire variety in true origin.

It was grown extensively in the Midlands as a commercial variety in the 19th century until superseded by better commercial varieties, most notably Bramley.

Betty Geeson appears to have a sluggish growth pattern so some nurseries propagate it on M25 rootstock in an attempt to give it an extra boost. The apples themselves are a flat round shape and have a light green / yellow skin which in a good summer can turn a red flush. They store well, keeping until Christmas, but develop a slightly greasy skin in late storage. The flesh has a yellowish appearance and is sharp, juicy and crisp when first ripe, softening with age. When cooked it has a rich, sweet texture and holds together in slices.

Bramley

Our tale of the Bramley apple begins about 200 years ago with Mary Ann Brailsford. Young Mary Ann lived with her mother, father and little sister in a cottage in Easthorpe, a tiny village on the edge of Southwell, in Nottinghamshire. One day, sometime around the year 1809, Mary Ann took some pips from an apple her mother was baking in a pie and planted them in a pot. One of the pips grew into a healthy seedling that, eventually, had to be transplanted into the cottage garden. Time passed: Mary Ann's tree grew; she married in about 1813 and moved out of the family home; her father, Charles, died and her mother, Elizabeth, stayed in the cottage until her death in 1837. Mary Ann appears to have inherited the property, which was bought by a butcher, Matthew Bramley, in 1846. By this time, Mary Ann's tree was mature and producing fruit.

Enter Henry Merryweather, son of a Southwell nursery owner. In 1856, aged just 17, he came across a friend carrying some attractive, large, green apples and, clearly sensing a new branch for the family business, asked where they had come from. So he went to see Mr Bramley and asked if he could take some cuttings from the tree to grow in his father's nursery. Mr Bramley agreed – provided the plants were called Bramley's Seedlings.

H Merryweather & Son Nursery went on to develop the Bramley, their first recorded sale being on 31 October 1862, when they sold three apples for two shillings (10p).

The Bramley apple is now grown at hundreds of sites in the UK, producing thousands of tonnes of fruit every year. There's a particular variety that's been developed in Northern Ireland, the Armagh Bramley, which has protected status and a six-page HM Government product specification, including the following characteristics:

– Large in size (60-120mm diameter);
– Flat sided, ribbed apex, large eye which is part opened;
– Solid green colour with reddish blush;
– Sepals are brown and downy;
– Stalk is short and thick;
– The flesh is white with a tinge of green and is firm and moist;
– Tangy flavour;
– Maintains texture and taste when cooked;
– Robust allowing for longer storability.

Butterball Crab

Malus 'Butterball' is a heavy-fruiting tree which produces distinctive golden yellow fruits, which remain through autumn and into winter. As with all crab apples, 'Butterball' is very popular with bees, and thus will bring more pollinators into your garden, which is a blessing if you have other apple trees. 'Butterball' is especially good as a pollinator for all apple trees, and flowers throughout the pollination season, which gives it more chance to pollinate other trees. The fruits of this tree can sometimes be eaten fresh, although they can be sour. They are better stewed and used as jams, as they have high levels of pectin, which helps with the setting of jam

Burr Knot

An old English variety of unknown origin first recorded in 1818. Characterised by burrs at the base of branches which will root if planted. Burr Knot and similar varieties, which were propagated from cuttings, were widely grown by small farmers in 19th Century particularly in South Wales. Burr Knott has been used as a rootstock in the past.

Large, round fruit. Red flush on a very greasy yellow skin. Cooks to a yellow puree which is sweet and pleasantly flavoured.

Dick's Favourite

Who Dick was and why this was his favourite is sadly not known.

A culinary apple, thought to have been raised in the late 1800s by Carless, foreman at Rowe's Nurseries, Worcester. A green apple with red flushing when ripened in a good year. Fruits are crisp with an acid flavour. Cooks well.

Golden Noble

Golden Noble is a well-known English cooking apple, originating in the early 19th century. It was discovered by the gardener of Sir Thomas Harr of Stowe Hall in Norfolk, who obtained a cutting from a tree in a nearby orchard. Sir Thomas presented it to the Horticultural Society of London in 1820. It soon established itself as a popular culinary apple.

Golden Noble remains a popular garden apple in the UK to this day. It has several excellent qualities and deserves consideration if you are looking for a more interesting alternative to Bramley's Seedling. It produces attractive blossom, and the tree generally grows in neat and tidy fashion (unlike Bramley) making it a good choice as a feature tree for the garden. It also bears fruit early in its life. In the kitchen it cooks down to a puree with, for a cooker, a relatively sweet flavour which holds up well in cooking.

Golden Noble therefore has all the attributes of a good cooking apple - at least in English eyes. It has not had much success outside the UK, probably because in Europe and North America there is a preference for apples which keep their shape - what the English regard as a puree the Americans see as a mush.

Hanwell Souring

Said to have been raised at Hanwell near Banbury, Oxfordshire. It was recorded in 1820. Fruits have firm, crisp flesh with a sharp flavour. A traditional Victorian cooking apple. It is called a first-rate kitchen apple.

Herefordshire Beefing

The Herefordshire Beefing is one of the oldest cooking apples in England, with its first reference dating back to the 1700s. The name derives from the historic English county of Herefordshire in the West Midlands.

The apple is rather small in size, with a roundish shape and ribs. It is dark red with a cinnamon-coloured russet. The Herefordshire Beefing is valued for its rich flavour; a good, sharp and slightly sour taste that sweetens with time. It is at its best when used early in the season. It keeps its shape well when cooked, thus making it excellent for tarts and cakes as well as for drying. It is a solid, crisp and very juicy apple. It ripens in October and can be stored until January.

Mere De Menage

Known in the late 1700s. Fruits have firm, greenish, rather coarse-textured and rather dry flesh with an acid flavour.

Newland Sack

This variety, as its name indicates, originates from the district of Newland just outside Malvern. According to the Herefordshire Pomona the variety arose around 1800, supposedly from a pip that grew from a disgarded pile of pomace (the pulp left over from a cider press) at Newland Court.

Recorded as an excellent culinary apple it was said to keep until May without any tendency to decay even if bruised (a highly unusual characteristic as most varieties rot quickly if bruised). However, if left until after Christmas it was supposed to have sweetened to the point of making it edible as a dessert apple, so something of a dual-purpose variety.

It was exhibited at the RHS in 1888 by William Crump, head gardener at Madresfield Court, the same estate that owned Newland Court. As a tree it is said to be very hardy and a heavy cropper. One of the tenant farmers at Newland Court in the 1800s claimed it was "the best family apple known" and he wished all his orchards were of Newland Sack. Despite these heady days it has long since waned in popularity and is now an extremely rare and obscure variety.

Scotch Bridget

Scotch Bridget is an attractive orange-flushed cooking apple originating from Scotland. The flavour is richly acidic and the flesh is soft and juicy - good characteristics for a successful cooking apple. The apples keep for several months, and can be eaten raw after the New Year.

Scotch Bridget found a second home in the north-west of England where it was widely grown around Lancaster by the end of the 19th century. Unlike most apple varieties it will crop reliably in areas of wet winters, and poor summers.

Rated by Victorian author Robert Hogg as "an excellent culinary apple".

Whiting Pippin

An obscure culinary apple that arose in Worcestershire, being first recorded in 1883. It was said to be much grown in Worcestershire and neighbouring Shropshire in the 19th century.

Very little in the way of written records or evidence about the variety is known other than that Robert Hogg describes the fruit in his Fruit Manual of 1884. The apple is probably another of those cooking apples that was superseded by better modern varieties, an interesting historical culinary apple but one of which there are undoubtedly better varieties.

Cider Apples

Dabinett

Somerset variety, the seedling being found probably in early 1900s by a Mr. William Dabinett. (Dabinett being quite a common surname in Somerset). Good crops of apples which are smallish, greenish-yellow with red stripes and a red flush. They have a strong aroma and distinctive flavour. Dabinett is grown in most cider producing areas as it makes a bittersweet cider with a mellow, full-bodied astringency. Many cider makers use this variety as a single apple variety due to its excellent qualities.

Dunkerton's Sweet

Dunkerton late sweet is a cider apple that produces a sweet light fruity cider with low tannin. The flesh is yellow green with a firm chewy texture. The skin is pea green turning yellow with a slight flush of red when ripe. It was introduced by Mr Dunkerton of Baltonsborough, Somerset in the 1940s.

It is a strong growing tree with a good resistance to disease especially scab.

The fruit can be picked as late as November.

Harry Master's Jersey

A traditional English cider apple variety, producing a bittersweet juice.

Lady's Finger of Hereford

Lady's Finger was a collective name used for a number of elongated apples found from Somerset Lancashire and beyond. Originating from Herefordshire it is a very old variety, but it's first recorded mention is from Dr Robert Hogg in 1884. Distinctly oval shaped, green skinned with occasional red flush, creamy yellow coarse dry flesh and a strong, sharp but rich flavour. This particular variety makes a compact and moderately vigorous tree, producing good crops of apples maturing in early October. Stores and keeps well until February. It produces a light, medium brisk cider that makes a useful contribution to a blend.

Sams Crab

Sams Crab is a medium sized yellow green early cider apple, flushed and streaked red. Firm flesh with a sweet flavour. Hertfordshire C.1830.

Tom Putts

This west country variety was raised in either Dorset or Devon in the late 1700s. Very useful dual purpose apple used for cooking, and for cider making or adding sharpness to cider blends. Fruit has bright red flush with stripes; flesh is firm, crisp and quite sharp, but sweet when cooked. Vigorous, spreading habit, good regular cropper.