

## **THE COMMUNITY ORCHARD**

In 2011 Friends of The Byes (or the BEE project as it was called then) was granted Big Lottery Community Space funding towards a number of projects to make the Byes more community and also wildlife friendly.

With the help of many local volunteers and local school children, planting for the orchard began in 2012, with the site having been tidied and fenced off first.

Local businesses and individuals were invited to help create the community orchard by sponsoring trees as a gift or in memory of a loved one, which still forms an important part of what the FoTB group does today.

Many different varieties of apples and pears, plums, cherries, peaches, nectarines , most supplied by Adam's Apples, were planted and the orchard was officially opened by Anne Swithinbank.

Over the next two years more trees were added and soft fruit planted along the fence. Even fig trees and a banana plant were given a spot.

Three locally handcrafted wooden benches and two large wooden gates were installed and it was decided to keep the orchard as a dog-free area to give the trees a good start.

Then, over the next few years FoTB has planted native hedging around the edges, wildflowers around the benches and daffodils throughout, constructed wildlife-friendly log piles and installed two picnic benches, as well as continuing yearly maintenance tasks such as weeding, mulching and pruning the trees and fruit bushes.

The most recent additions are a spiral herb bed (2015) and in 2016 a living-willow arbour enclosing the 'story telling' circle, which the infant classes from Sidmouth C of E Primary School helped to build.

The orchard is a lovely, sunny and peaceful spot, ideal for a family picnic or meeting of friends and perfect for observing the local wildlife.

It has become our group's main meeting place on Saturday mornings for the working parties and anyone is welcome to join us.

And in the autumn there is the fruit harvest to look forward to!