Sheffield: City of Trees Arboriculture on allotments

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Sheffield has recently been praised for including domestic gardens in its remit.

The City has a huge hidden asset in the form of all the fruit trees both on public space and also in private gardens and allotments. Wouldn't it be great to record the range of varieties and even map them to know where to find them?

The presence of all these fruiting trees in Sheffield represents a continuous tradition of self-sufficiency and reminds us of the independence of spirit which has characterised its inhabitants. In the current upsurge of interest in local food, many more people are planting fruit and edible perennials .

CATEGORIES

1. Public Open Space

e.g. Community Orchard on the Ponderosa in Netherthorpe.

Popularity and usage judged by the fact that local people have established a network of desire lines around and between the fruit trees as they check and pick the crops. Medlars "retting" (starches turned to sugars by frost.)

e.g. Sweet Chestnuts from Ecclesall Woods.

2. Orchard Allotments - On certain allotment sites, such as where the soil is heavy clay and the land slopes to the north, the sensible option is to plant perennials which means the soil doesn't need to be cultivated each year.

e.g. Barry New's Hazlenuts as featured on BBC 1 Gardener's World in August.

e.g. Hagg Lane – the 'executive allotment'. Once established, a standard plot of 1/8 th acre is capable of producing up to 500 lb / 250 Kg of fruit each year.

3. Forest Gardens

e.g. Highcliffe site. Disguised from the road by overgrown plots.

So many of the tenants have planted fruit that the whole site is developing the feel of an extended "forest garden" (ref. Robert Hart). Ancient plantings of Rhubarb, Raspberries, Blackcurrants and Gooseberries have survived since the heyday of allotment use back in the 1950's.

4. T.P.O.'s on Specimen Trees

e.g. Eucalyptus in the centre of Hagg Lane site.

e.g. Row of mature Oaks down middle of Hangingwater site.

5. Designate Derelict allotment sites as Woodland

e.g. Rivelin Valley – a beautiful new café and heritage park rather spoilt by derelict allotments.

e.g. Clough Fields where Sheffield Environmental Training have established paths and clearings around an allotment site which was abandoned in the 1960's.

A selection of some of the 30 rare and exquisite varieties of apple which Richard Clare from Sheffield's Organic Food Initiative has grown on local allotments.

Sheffield Organic Food Initiative will be organising a series of workshops on fruit planting and permaculture over the winter.