

Austrey Community Orchard

'Minutes' of meeting held in the fresh air April 23rd 2024

Present: Neil and Jill Hayward, Elaine Horton, Tony Rabin and some marvellous young helpers

Big Dig

We settled on a Working Party date of Saturday May 18th at 10am, all will be invited to come to the Big Dig.

Jobs on that day to dig over/weed the beds, mulch the ones at the two top corners, dig out the central bed ready for meadow/wild flower planting. Retain some areas where dandelions are growing.

Neil and Jill to set up a FB page to publicise the date and link to Austrey FB pages, but also to appeal for plant/cutting donations from the village and generally increase awareness of the project.

Elaine to provide juice and donuts for the workers.

The PC has given £250 for mulch, Neil to order 6 x 100L bags (@ £18 for 2) from Newton Regis garden centre, to a) support local business and b) possibly get sale plants from them at reduced prices. Maybe ask them to 'sponsor' us?

Open Day

TBD, but Tony suggested having it at the end of the summer, with apples and cider and seasonal focus on apples. We might have even grown some! Could have bake sale, face painting, ice cream van, rock painting/hunting and more.

Jill's Fantastic Ideas

Painting rocks, bug hunting, hedgehog sanctuary, hibernation hole

A children's painting competition with the winner's picture incorporated into the Orchard sign.

A small pond (with a safety cover) to be created from a tin bath or similar to attract frogs and newts

A log pile to encourage bugs etc. Tony to ask local tree surgeon to donate logs

Cracked terracotta pots to make another bug haven. (Neil ask NR garden centre if they have any cracked or broken pots?).

Donation of rocks for a rockery.

Hedgehog Sanctuary

Bat/bird houses – appeal for anyone in the village with woodworking skills to make them

The right kind of plants to attract butterflies and bees

Other Stuff

An Amazon wish list to be compiled instead of asking for cash donations, but also set up a JustGiving page in case people do want to contribute £.

Tony to look at setting up a one page awareness webpage, with links to Amazon wishlist and JustGiving page to be added. Also Tony to approach primary school to see if interest in being involved. The orchard is a short and safe walk from the school so very suitable for class outings.

Neil to ask Sam G-N to add Tony to the whatsapp group

Richard from the PC has offered to donate a bench, which will be painted to a design by Jill

Donations of plants or £ from people who would like memorial or celebratory small wooden signs on/around the silver birch tree, possibly with the bench underneath to make a memory/contemplation corner.

Tara Higgs from Warwickshire CC Ecology team wants to be involved, Elaine to email her the date of Big Dig and ask advice re where else we can apply for funding.

Elaine to email Tony's photos to Tara for her project report to the council, and for any publicity they can provide.