

## **Picking advice**

Easton Royal orchard belongs to the village so all villagers are welcome to pick any fruit from the orchard for their personal use. School children are also encouraged to take and eat fruit from the tree. No pesticides are used so the fruit is safe to eat straight from the trees.

### **When to pick fruit**

#### **Apples**

Depending on variety, apples can ripen between the end of August and the beginning of November. The orchard plan gives a guide to when each variety ripens. Ripening times can vary depending on factors such as when the fruit comes into blossom in Spring.

You can tell if an apple is ripe by cupping it in your hand and giving it a slight twist. If it comes off easily it is ripe. The seeds inside will be brown if it is ripe.

Some eating apples taste sour when picked from the tree. Many of our varieties will not be as sweet as supermarket varieties as these have been bred to have high sugar content. If the fruit is too sour to eat it is a good idea to keep it for a few weeks, you will find the apple will become less acidic and more palatable.

#### **Pears**

Pears are better if they are not left to ripen for too long on the tree as they have a tendency to go mushy. Read the orchard plan to get an idea of when the variety ripens, watch for a slight change in colour and pick before they are fully ripened. Store at home until ripe.

Watch out for the Black Pear of Worcester. This pear is recorded as early as 1388 and is still used on Worcestershire County Council and Cricket Club badges. It does, however, need to be boiled for at least an hour to be edible and is still quite gritty!

Other pears in the orchard, however, such as Pitmaston Duchess, if picked at the right time, have a beautiful soft buttery texture.

#### **Plums and damsons**

Plums and damsons usually ripen in late summer. They will soften when ripe and should be picked before the birds and insects eat them! Damsons are usually too sour to eat straight from the tree but they make delicious preserves and pies or for the truly adventurous try making damson gin.

#### **Quince and crab apples**

We have one quince tree and one crab apple in the lower field. The quince has not produced much in the way of fruit yet. Quince are ready to harvest in October or November. They are noted for being very aromatic and make delicious jelly and membrillo.

The easiest way to see if crab apples are ripe is to cut one or two open – if the seeds are brown the apple is ripe. The most common use is to make crab apple jelly.