

Handbook 2026



ESTABLISHED 1933

National Fruit Show

4th November 2026

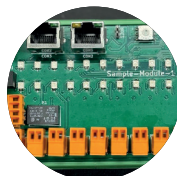
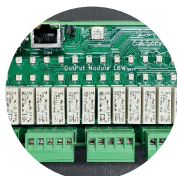


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01303 233883

jamie.mcgrorty@kelsey.co.uk

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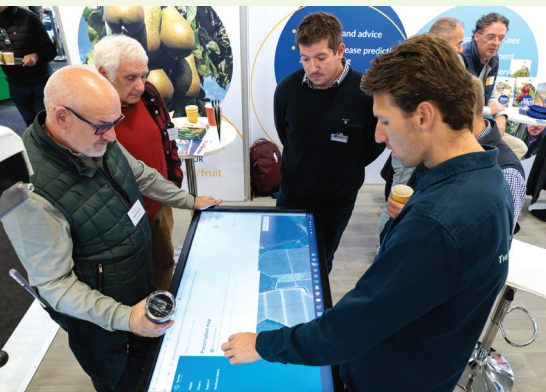
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Timetable

- 08.45** President's breakfast (invite only)
- 09.00** Doors open
- 09.45** Ali Capper opens the Show
- 16.00** Trophy presentation reception
- 17.00** Show closes



SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday 3rd November



2027

Meet the AgriiTM Fruit Team

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At Agrii, our fruit agronomists do far more than advise on crop protection. Bringing specialist expertise across horticulture, including top fruit, soft fruit, and viticulture, while helping growers access the products and services they need to succeed. From agronomy and compliance to environmental planning, budgeting and ancillary product supply, our team provides tailored support designed to meet the real-world challenges of modern fruit production.



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Rain, hail, heatwaves and persistent drought

Welcome to the 2026 National Fruit Show. Looking back on this time last year, as President of the Malden Fruit Show Society, which hosts and runs this premier event for the top fruit industry, I am reminded what a rollercoaster ride anyone in primary production faces year after year.

This time last year, we celebrated a 2025 top fruit harvest which largely produced excellent quality and volumes, encouraging strong retailer interest and tangible enthusiasm, rightly, for British fruit. In 2026, as I write, it will take a small miracle for the harvest to cast off the pressures it has experienced with weather. Rain, hail, heatwaves and latterly the extreme and persistent drought in many regions left many growers and cider-makers warning it could be the worst harvest since records began in 1984.

Parts of England experienced their driest July in 200 years. Persistent lack of rain and high temperatures dried up water sources and caused trees to shut down or drop fruit early to conserve water. Orchards reported significantly smaller, shrivelled, or malformed apples that are often unsuitable for commercial use, with some falling and rotting on the ground weeks ahead of schedule. Both smaller and highly commercial producers in regions like Cornwall, Herefordshire and Somerset report severe yield reductions (some down by 40% or more), with certain orchards completely abandoned for the season and yields swept up for compost instead of pressing.

Those who have been working so hard to bolster the supply chain should continue



***Catherine Paice,
President of the National Fruit Show***

to be celebrated, at the Show and beyond. Food producers are resilient, and so too, with more Government support, should the supply chain and buyers be able to withstand inevitable volatility. While the Government continues to pay stronger lip service to the importance of food security, there can be no let-up in communicating that need, while also recognising the place for international trade. That place needs, in part at least, to be underpinned by what is possible for domestic markets as a result of excellent research on better disease resistance and longer storage potential.

As always, I would like to congratulate those involved in increasing the use of social media to communicate these messages. Posting takes time and effort and is often done on a voluntary basis and personal level. The more that businesses can contribute to this the better, however — not least because growers in other sectors are working hard to ramp up their own messaging, and it is essential for reinforcing the lobbying and dedicated work of British Apples and Pears and also the MFSS education arm.

Efforts this year on the education front have continued to raise visibility and demonstrate the real value of top fruit with fun, stirring and action-packed interaction with children and young adults (see page 62). Mandy and Irainne work wonders with very limited funding – please consider donating if you can and haven't already.

We continue to build on the success of a one-day Show. I would like to thank our major sponsors NP Seymour and Hutchinsons for underwriting, both financially and in many other less tangible ways, the unique opportunities that the Show provides to share access to knowledge and best practice relating to the growing, storing, packaging, display and marketing of fruit. Thanks also to Staxson Mechanical & Electrical Services for supporting the growers' competition by

sponsoring the Bonanza prize.

On that note, the focus and dedication of MFSS chairman Nigel Bardsley, trustees chair Claire Seymour, show manager Eileen Haffenden and all committee members who have taken the time and trouble to exhibit, compete, and support this year's Show also deserve credit.

Thanks also to BAPL, and to their dynamic outgoing executive chair Ali Capper, who has made a real difference during her tenure and will no doubt continue to do so. We are honoured that she has agreed to open the Show this year as one of her final swansongs in this particular sector.

Most of all, our thanks to everyone who is at the Show today. Have a great day. Learn, share, and spread the message beyond the boundaries of this excellent Kent showground.

A final plea: the Show is hosted by the MFSS and its members, all working on a voluntary basis towards making the best day possible, and with inaugural social events promising to be a bonus to membership. It costs little to become a member, and new participation would be welcomed, from anywhere in the country, as we continue to help the Show grow in stature and relevance. ■



Shared commitment to excellence

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 2026 National Fruit Show on Wednesday 4th November, a day that continues to stand as one of the most important gatherings in the British Top fruit calendar.

Each year, this show brings together growers, industry leaders, innovators, and supporters from across the country, united by a shared commitment to excellence in British Top fruit. Today is no exception, and I am delighted to see such enthusiasm and pride reflected in every corner of the event.

We are honoured that Ali Capper, Executive Chairman of British Apples & Pears, is opening the show this year. Ali's leadership, advocacy, and tireless work on behalf of growers have made a significant impact across the industry. Her presence today sets an inspiring tone, reminding us of the strength and unity that underpin British Top fruit. Ali continues to champion the interests of growers at national level, and her support for the National Fruit Show reinforces the vital role this event plays in showcasing the very best of our sector. Ali is leaving BAPL in November, and we wish her every success in her new role with BSF.

This season has been one of both challenge and achievement. Growers have once again demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of unpredictable weather patterns, shifting market pressures, and the ongoing need to innovate. Despite these hurdles, the fruit on display today is a testament to the skill, professionalism, and determination that define our industry. Every exhibit represents months of careful planning, hard

work, and dedication — from nurturing orchards through difficult conditions to adopting new technologies and refining growing practices. The quality of entries this year speaks volumes about the commitment of our growers and the pride they take in producing fruit of exceptional calibre.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our main sponsors, Hutchinsons and NP Seymour. Their continued support is invaluable to the success of the National Fruit Show. Hutchinsons, with its long standing expertise in agronomy and crop production, plays a crucial role in helping growers navigate the complexities of modern horticulture. NP Seymour, a trusted name in specialist machinery and equipment, continues to support growers with the tools and technology needed to remain competitive and efficient. Both organisations share our commitment to excellence, innovation, and the future of British Top fruit, and we are deeply grateful for their partnership.

A vital part of the National Fruit Show's mission is to inspire and educate the next generation, and I am delighted to highlight the continued success of our Education Programme, led with passion and dedication by Mandy Hounsell. Mandy's work has been instrumental in bringing horticulture to life for thousands of young

people, helping them understand where their food comes from and encouraging them to explore careers within our industry. Through school visits, hands on activities, and engaging resources, the programme continues to grow in reach and impact. Mandy's commitment ensures that the National Fruit Show is not only a celebration of today's achievements but also an investment in tomorrow's growers, innovators, and leaders. Her contribution is invaluable, and we are immensely proud of the difference this programme makes year after year.

My thanks also go to Eileen our show manager, the show committee, exhibitors, judges, volunteers, and industry partners. The National Fruit Show is built on collaboration, and it is the collective effort of so many individuals and organisations that makes this event such a highlight each year. From those who prepare the show exhibits, to the teams who work tirelessly behind the scenes, every contribution helps create an event that celebrates achievement, encourages learning, and strengthens our industry.

I wish all exhibitors the very best and hope every visitor enjoys the outstanding displays, expertise, and passion on show today. May this year's event continue to inspire, connect, and strengthen our industry for the seasons ahead.

I hope that you will all read Robert Oliver's obituary. He really was an influential man, a stalwart of the show, he will be sadly missed.

I am looking forward to seeing you all at the show. ■

Nigel Bardsley,
Chair of the National Fruit Show



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1999 – 2007 (The late) The Right Hon. Lord Mayhew of Twysden, PC, QC

2007 – 2008 (The late) Lord Bruce-Lockhart of the Weald

2009 – 2019 The Right Hon. Michael Jack

2020 – 2022 Tereasa Wickham

2023 – Catherine Paice

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1933 – 1934 (The late) JA Raynham, JP

1934 – 1957 (The late) Capt. James Day, MC

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(The late) Mrs B Sarson (1980)

Mr P Winch (1989)

Mrs H Carpenter (1992)

(The late) The Earl of Selbourne, KBE (1993)

(The late) Mr P Tipples (1993)

(The late) Mr P Tompsett (1995)

(The late) Mr A F Todd, MBE (2002)

Mr R Mitchell, MBE (2008)

(The late) Lord Mayhew (2008)

Mrs C Quinlan (2011)

Mr J Scott (2011)

*Eileen Haffenden, Nigel Bardsley,
Catherine Paice, Annette Bardsley,
Chris Morris, and Claire Seymour*



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Gaskains Ltd	Lambert & Foster	UKCA
Greenway Fruit Farm	Landseer	Victoria Brown
		Worldwide Fruit
		Yara Ltd

Judges



Jonathan Blackman	Chair of Judges
Caroline Ashdown	Top Fruit
Chris Atkinson	Nuts
Colin Bird	Top Fruit
Richard Brewer	Top Fruit
Andy Bull	Top Fruit
Charnee Butcher	Top Fruit
Sarah Calcutt	Top Fruit
Gloria Endredi	Top Fruit
Richard Gaskin	Top Fruit
Max Harper	Top Fruit
Nigel Jenner	Top Fruit
Gary Saunders	Top Fruit
Julian Searle	Top Fruit
James Shillitoe	Top Fruit
Mike Stoker	Heaviest Apple/Pear
Ivan Velasco	Top Fruit
Ryan Williams	Top Fruit

Correct at time of printing

Picking a winner

Selecting prize-winning fruit involves far more than finding the biggest apple in the orchard.

Selecting prize-winning fruit involves far more than finding the biggest apple in the orchard. At Wilsley Park Farm, farm manager Trevor Bartlett and his team scour the orchards for the best examples of their crop before weeks of careful handling and preparation for the National Fruit Show, continuing a tradition started by former orchard worker John 'OJ' Wilkins.

Claygate Farms has become a successful competitor at the National Fruit Show, achieving the highest overall points score for the past two years, but Trevor's involvement began for rather more personal reasons.

When brothers Mel and Andrew Streek bought Wilsley Park Farm in 2015, the orchards came with experienced orchard worker 'OJ' – known as Orchard John to his colleagues – who had been entering the National Fruit Show for many years.

Following OJ's death, Trevor and colleague Andy Gregory, who was helping

with spraying and orchard husbandry, decided to enter some fruit in his memory. "We wanted to do something," recalled Trevor. "We thought we'd put something in for the show." They came away with a cup and several rosettes. The following year they entered again and won more.

"We thought, actually, this is getting us on the map and is quite a nice thing to do. It promotes the industry."

At a time when other growers were grubbing orchards in response to difficult economics, Claygate Farms decided to continue investing. "

I said: "Everybody's pulling out trees. Should we do the opposite? Should we plant apples?"" recalled Trevor.

His reasoning was simple: if production was falling, there should ultimately be a market for those prepared to keep growing.

Written by
Nigel Akehurst,
published courtesy of
South East Farmer
magazine



Searching the whole orchard

Success at the Fruit Show begins with finding the right fruit.

Trevor walks the orchards with farm workers Andy Gregory and Clem Young, selecting potential entries from across the commercial crop rather than setting aside particular trees for showing. "We select from the whole orchard, and we select different trees at different points," he explained.

The team first considers which classes to enter and the required size bands before assessing fruit for quality, shape and colour. The final selection isn't made until around two days before the team prepares for the show.

"We'll do a rough select on size and quality and shape, because the shape is very important," said Trevor.

Knowing how each variety should look is essential. A show-quality Bramley, for example, should have a characteristic slightly flattened top and bottom and a good curved appearance. Trevor wants it at the right green stage, rather than turning yellow, and without excessive blush. A russet requires the right shape and an even covering of russetting without too much green showing through.

The aim isn't simply to find the biggest or most colourful apple, but an exceptional example of the variety – and enough individual fruits that match to create the exhibit.

White gloves

Once potential winners are picked, handling becomes critical because bruises, marks and other damage cost points.

"It's white gloves, basically," said Trevor.



Trevor walks the orchards



Once potential winners are picked, handling becomes critical



Even repeatedly turning an apple can leave marks on the skin, so fruit is handled as little as possible before being carefully placed into trays.

Pears are stored upright to prevent their stalks bending, while part of the skill is understanding how fruit will behave in trays for as long as six weeks before the show.

The selected fruit is eventually floated, polished and assessed again before the final exhibits are assembled. Trevor estimates that the final floating, polishing and selection alone can take around 12 hours.

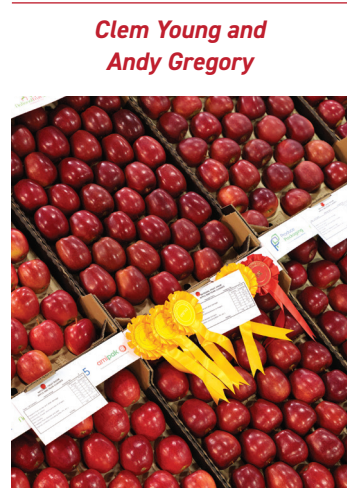
It is a considerable investment of time, but it is in these details that good commercial fruit becomes show fruit.

Getting on the map

Winning has also helped Claygate Farms establish itself within an industry it entered relatively recently. "We're the new kids on the block," said Trevor.

Since taking on Wilsley Park in 2015, the team has gone from entering largely as a tribute to OJ to competing successfully against growers with generations of experience.

Trevor says that recognition has helped get Claygate Farms noticed within the fruit industry, while seeing the farm's name on supermarket shelves provides another source of satisfaction. "You go into the supermarket and you see some apples with our name on it – Claygate Farms. To me, it makes it all work very well."



**Clem Young and
Andy Gregory**

He believes the industry could go further by allowing award-winning growers to communicate their success to consumers at the point of sale.

His comparison is with wine, where medals and competition results are routinely displayed on bottles. "If you're going to buy one and you see a label on it that says gold winner, you think someone else has said 'that's good'," he said.

Trevor argues that National Fruit Show recognition could similarly help differentiate quality British fruit from imported produce and give growers greater recognition for what they produce. "I've been on about it for a few years," he said.

Continuing OJ's legacy

For all the commercial benefits, Wilsley Park's involvement remains rooted in OJ Wilkins. He had entered fruit for years without quite achieving the level of success the farm has enjoyed more recently. Trevor believes he would be delighted to see what has happened since. "He never got that little bit further," he said. "We've just taken it up a notch." But despite the competitive streak, Trevor insists the trophy isn't what ultimately motivates him.

"When you grow something, you look at it and it's healthy. The fruit is the right shape. It's clean. That's my inspiration because it's good. We've done it. It's fantastic." Simply seeing that fruit displayed alongside the best produced by other British growers is, for him, an achievement.

"When you win a cup for it, it's not about winning the cup. The cup's second to it," he said. "That display, whether we win or not, being on that display along with all those people – and we produced that. That's my passion. That's my inspiration."





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Apple and Pear Competition Classes

Championship Prizes and Trophies.

Best exhibit in Show

- 69 The NFU Prize of £400
- 70 The Roderic Sarson Memorial Trophy – Best all round exhibit of apples

Best exhibit of culinary apples

- 72 The Podger Norton Trophy – Best exhibit of culinary apples
- 75 The Fruiterers Company Medal – The most meritorious exhibit of culinary apples
- 77 The Fyffes Salver – Best exhibit of Bramley
- 86 The Dan Wuille Cup – Exhibit of culinary apples showing the best colour and skin for variety

Best exhibit of dessert apples

- 71 The Stokes Bomford Rose Bowl – Best exhibit of dessert apples
- 74 The Fruiterers Company Medal – The most meritorious exhibit of dessert apples
- 78 The UKF Fertilisers Cup – Best exhibit of Cox's Orange Pippin or any Sport
- 79 The John Henshall Salver – Best exhibit of any dessert apple grown in the UK outside Kent
- 87 The R Mitchell Challenge Cup – Best exhibit of any dessert apple variety introduced to the UK after 2000

Best exhibit of pears

- 73 The Bayer Rose Bowl – Best exhibit of pears
- 76 The Fruiterers Company Medal – The most meritorious exhibit of pears

Exhibitors Under 40

- 42 Arthur Goatham Memorial Trophy – Best exhibit of Bramley
- 44 The David Burd Memorial Trophy – Entrant with most points in all classes
- 85 The W Bruce Challenge Cup – Best exhibit of dessert apples excluding COP or any Sport in all Classes (Dessert apples, Exhibitor under 40)
- The Sue Daly Novice Trophy

Highest points

- 80 The Winch Memorial Challenge Cup – Exhibitor gaining the highest points total for Weald of Kent. Exhibits in all classes (restricted to exhibits grown in Kent, south of the M20 motorway)
- 81 The John Thwaites Challenge Bowl – Exhibitor gaining the highest points total for all exhibits in all classes (restricted to exhibits grown in Kent, north of the M20 motorway)
- 82 The Fiennes Cornwallis Trophy – Exhibitor gaining the highest total of points in all classes
- 88 The BIFGA prize – Exhibit gaining most points entered by a BIFGA member
- 89 The John Acock Memorial Rosebowl – Exhibitor with most points in culinary classes
- 45 Agrovista Regional Champion Cup – Grower with most points from Eastern Counties
- 46 Agrovista Regional Champion Cup – Grower with most points from West Midlands

Other prizes

- 83 The Cantagrians Association Cup – Best exhibit picked and packed by a former student of Hadlow College, KFI or KHI
- 91 The J R Breach Prize – Nuvar™; Cheerfull Gold™ NC1; Stardance™ NC2; Cabaret™ NC3; Misty Rose™ NC4

Competition Classes

Classes 1-17 judged and displayed at the show

Each entry will consist of three 60cm x 40cm trays. **Only Tray A will be presented for detailed examination by the judges.** Trays B and C must be of the same size and colour as Tray A.

Prizes: **First – £150** **Second – £50** **Third – £25** **Classes 1-16 Open to All Growers**

Class and Perpetual Trophy (held for 1 year)		Prize Money for Class sponsored by
Class 1	Bramley 90-100mm diameter The Alfred Shread Challenge Cup	Agrii
Class 2	Bramley 80-90mm diameter Squire Salver	AMFRESH™ GROUP
Class 3	Any other variety of culinary apples 75-100mm diameter, with 5mm differential Dufaylite Developments Cup	AC GOATHAM & SON OUR FUTURE IS GROWING
Class 4	Harlequin fit for a King (Fruits will be of differing sizes) Systhane Cup	Landseer® LIMITED
Class 5	Cox's Orange Pippin or any Sport of Cox 65-70mm or 70-75mm diameter Vernon Hayes (Seeds) Ltd Challenge Cup	F EDMED & SONS
Class 6	Cameo 65-70mm or 70-75mm diameter Cornwallis Cup	AMFRESH™ GROUP
Class 7	Jazz™ 65-70mm or 70-75mm diameter Fuller Water Systems Trophy	WORLDWIDE fruit
Class 8 The Roger Worraker Class	Gala or any Sport of Gala 65-70mm or 70-75mm diameter Pask Cornish & Smart Cup	emt EAST-MOUNTAIN TRADING
Class 9	Russets: All varieties 65-70mm or 70-75mm diameter Henshall Rose Bowl	FRUIT EXCHANGE
Class 10	Magic Star 65-70mm or 70-75mm diameter A R Piller Challenge Cup	AMFRESH™ GROUP
Class 11A	Braeburn or any Sport of Braeburn 65-70mm The WASP Bin Trophy	WORLDWIDE fruit
Class 11B	Braeburn or any Sport of Braeburn 70-75mm or 75-80mm diameter The Horticultural Containers Wine Goblets	NFU Mutual Canterbury and Sittingbourne
Class 12A	Any Other Variety of Dessert Apple introduced before 2013 Small fruited varieties 65-70mm or 70-75mm diameter Large fruited varieties 70-75mm or 75-80mm diameter George Harlow Cup	WATERMELON & APPLE COMPETITION
Class 12B	New Variety of Dessert introduced after 2013 Small fruited varieties 65-70mm or 70-75mm diameter Large fruited varieties 70-75mm or 75-80mm diameter Invicta Petroleum Shield	CHAVEREYS

Class 13	Comice 70-75mm, 75-80mm or 80-85mm diameter Ernest White Cup	Lambert & Foster
Class 14	Conference 60-65mm or 65-70mm diameter AMG Trophy	 RH GROUP
Class 15	Concorde Fruit must be 60-65mm, 65-70mm or 70-75mm diameter East Kent Packers Cup	 RH GROUP
Class 16	Any Other Variety of Pear 60-65mm, 65-70mm, 70-75mm, 75-80mm or 80-85mm diameter Segro Salver	 NFU Mutual Flimwell / Tunbridge Wells

Entrants under the age of 40

Under 40s culinary class has been removed. Please enter your pears and culinary apples in classes 1-3, 13-16 as appropriate. Dessert apples may be entered in class 17 or any other dessert apple class. To encourage U40s' entries the entrant does not have to grow the fruit, but must pick it and pack it themselves. U40s entrants are eligible for all the relevant championship trophies on page 3, as well as those specifically for U40s. The name and date of birth of the individual entrant must be completed on the entry form.

Judge's Score Card: Apple and Pears

Freedom from disease and pest	20
Freedom from bruise and other damage	20
Internal condition (including bitter pit etc)	15
Skin quality	15
Uniformity of colour	15
Uniformity of size and evenness of shape	15
Total	100

Class 17	Dessert Apples - Entrants under age 40. Western International Market Shield for Dessert Apples	 HAYNES AGRICULTURAL LTD.
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Competition for the Tastiest Apple

Sponsored by  **PRIZE:** **Winner - £300**

Conditions: Five apples per entry must be submitted separately to your other classes.

Competition for the Five Heaviest Apples

Sponsored by  **PRIZE:** **Winner - £75**

Conditions: Five sound apples of any one variety.
(2005 World Record 1.849kg Chrisato Iwasaki - Hirosaki City, Japan)

Competition for the Five Heaviest Pears

Sponsored by  **PRIZE:** **Winner - £75**

Conditions: Five sound pears of any one variety.

Classes 22-27 Long Term Farm-Stored Classes

Prizes:

First – £75

Second – £50

Third – £25

Landseer Ltd will also award a special prize of £50 to the Store Operator of the Best Winning Entry. The Ron Tassell Trophy is awarded for the Store Operator of the Best All-Round Exhibit in the LTFS classes.

Class and Perpetual Trophy (held for 1 year)		Prize Money for Class sponsored by
Class 22	Gala or any Sport of Gala The Bloomfields Award	
Class 23	Bramley The John Wills Award	
Class 24	Any Other Variety of Dessert Apple introduced before 2013 National Fruit Show Award for Long Term Farm Stored AOV before 2013 and The Marks & Spencer Trophy for the Best Entry of Cox	
Class 25	Any Other Variety of Dessert Apple introduced after 2013 National Fruit Show Award for Long Term Farm Stored AOV after 2013	
Class 26	Pears National Fruit Show Award for Long Term Farm Stored Pears	
Class 27	Braeburn The Lambert & Foster Award	

Judge's Score Card: Long Term Farm-Stored Apples

Ground colour of skin	25
Absence of shrivel or greasiness	25
Firmness of flesh	25
Absence of disorders and rots	25
Total	100

Judge's Score Card: Long Term Farm-Stored Pears

Ground colour of skin	25
Absence of shrivel or greasiness	25
Firmness of flesh	15
Absence of disorders and rots	15
Ripening of fruit at 18°C	20
Total	100

Long Term Farm-Stored Classes 2025/2026 - Results

Class and Perpetual Trophy (held for 1 year)		First	Second	Third
Class 22	Gala The Bloomfield Award	Mansfields Farm Ltd	Ian Overy Farms	J L Baxter & Son
Class 23	Bramley The John Wills Award	A C Goatham & Son	John Collingwood Fruit Farms	Adrian Scripps Ltd
Class 24	Any Other Variety of Dessert Apple National Fruit Show Award for Long Term Farm Stored AOV	Newling Fruitgrowers Ltd (Magic Star)	Newling Fruitgrowers Ltd (Cameo)	Mansfields Farm Ltd (Smitten)
Class 25	Jazz The Marks & Spencer Trophy	J L Baxter & Son	Chandler & Dunn	Mansfields Farm Ltd
Class 26	Pears National Fruit Show Award for Long Term Farm Stored Pears	Moatlands Farm Ltd	A C Goatham & Son	Mansfields Farm Ltd
Class 27	Braeburn The Lambert & Foster Award	Mansfields Farm Ltd	Newling Fruitgrowers Ltd	Adrian Scripps

Ron Tassell Trophy for the Store Operator of the Best All Round Exhibit

Store Operator: Jonathan Blunt
Best All Round Exhibit: Newling Fruitgrowers Ltd

Cobnut and Walnut Classes 2026

Prizes: **First – £100** **Second – £50** **Third – £25**

Organised in conjunction with the Kentish Cobnuts Association and The Walnut Club.

Class and Perpetual Trophy (held for 1 year)		Prize Money for Class sponsored by
Class 50	Kentish Cobnuts	S&W
Class 51	Cobnuts – any other variety	THE RURAL PLANNING PRACTICE
	The John Bardsley Tankard for the Most Meritorious Entry of Cobnuts	
Class 55	Walnuts - Eight nuts in their shells unbleached in each punnet. Open to commercial and amateur growers.	BENNETT OPIEL

Judge's Score Card: Cobnuts

Fullness of kernel and internal condition	40
Taste	20
Freedom from pest and disease	
External	10
Internal	10
Attractiveness and uniformity of shell colour	10
Size and uniformity of size	10
Total	100

Judge's Score Card: Walnuts

Size, uniformity and appearance	30
Kernel percentage and appearance	30
Shell thickness	15
Taste	15
Freedom from pest and disease	10
Total	100



Robert Oliver 1943–2026

A stalwart of the National Fruit Show for the last 40 years.

On reading through the many tributes to Robert, two qualities recur again and again: he was a doer, and he was always willing to share his time with others. It was these qualities that allowed him to make such monumental contributions to every part of his life, and the Society is so fortunate that one of these was the National Fruit Show.

Robert joined the committee in 1986 and served on the Schedule Committee. Upon his retirement in 2003, it was he who suggested adding an apple juice competition to the show, and he



single-handedly ran and stewarded that competition for many years. In 2003, under Robert Mitchell's chairmanship, he became the key figure behind the movement of the show fruit and staging, first to Ampleforth Abbey and, in the years that followed, on to Kew Gardens, Chatsworth House, Borough Market and Defra, taking the very best of English apples and pears to a much wider audience.

In 2006 he became Vice Chairman to Jeremy Scott, and a Trustee of the Society. He continued as Vice Chair well into Sarah Calcutt's tenure, always offering sound knowledge and steady advice. His last contribution was the excellent idea of selling trays of fruit at the close of the show, with the proceeds going to the Education Fund.

Robert was born in Suffolk in 1943, where his father was an estate manager. His



childhood was spent at Igtham in Kent. He was educated at Sutton Valence and at the Kent Farm Institute in Sittingbourne. His first position was as farm manager for Michael Bartlett at Gallants Farm, East Farleigh, followed by many years as farm manager for Tony Redsell, a post he held until his retirement at 60, on account of the diabetes he had been diagnosed with at the age of 21.

At Redsell's, Robert grubbed out and replanted the old cherry orchards with apples, pears and hops, and was named Grower of the Year in 2000. He was also a steward at the National Cherry Show, where the farm regularly entered up to twenty exhibits a year.

A love of machinery lay at his heart. He was never happier than when repairing farm tractors, designing machinery, coaxing a temperamental grader back into life, or working out how something ticked.

After retiring, Robert joined Brogdale as a guide. It was there that he met Jane Garrett, and he became instrumental in the planning and eventual move of the National Fruit Collection to Luknor Castle in Scotland and to Highgrove in Gloucestershire.

For relaxation, he played with cars. It began at a very young age, driving around the orchards with his lifelong friend Simon Durling. Together with his wife of 57 years, Liz, he went on to compete in Hill Climb Trials all over the country, with their children Sharon and Nicholas in tow. In later life he bought an MG C, and through it met many like-minded souls with whom he could share his passion and talk cars, which was, of course, his very favourite kind of conversation.

The show will miss Robert greatly. Before he died, Robert set up a yearly award,



to be given for the next ten years, to the committee member who has contributed the most in time and effort to the show that year.

If you are reading this before the show, do try to buy a tray of show fruit at its close. Robert would have been so very happy to know that his idea was still contributing to the Education Fund. ■

South Africa 2026

The NextGen Fruit Group brings together the next generation of people working across UK horticulture, creating opportunities to learn, develop, build relationships and share ideas. With more than 350 members across the fruit sector, the group has become an important network for those looking to develop their careers and contribute to the future of the industry.

International trips are an important part of what NextGen offers, providing delegates with the opportunity to step outside their usual working environment, experience different production systems and spend time with people facing many of the same challenges in very different circumstances.

In early February 2026, a group of NextGen members travelled to South Africa for a week-long programme across the Western Cape. The region was selected because of its importance to South African fruit production, with significant pome and stone fruit, soft fruit and vine production. The programme provided an insight into production, technology, genetics, markets and the wider agricultural industry.

Seeing horticulture from a different perspective

One of the greatest strengths of the trip was the variety of businesses and production systems visited. The itinerary took the group from plant propagation and commercial orchards through to soft-fruit production and agricultural inputs. Visits included VitroPlant SA, Rustfontein Farm, ZZ2, Cape Sweet Nursery, Du Toit Agri, United Exports, Uitzicht, Haygrove Heaven & Earth and Kelpak.

For many delegates, seeing these businesses first-hand was a valuable reminder that there is rarely one right way to grow fruit. South Africa's climate, geography, labour availability, water constraints and export markets create very different circumstances to those faced by UK growers. Yet many of the underlying questions are remarkably familiar: how do we produce consistently high-quality fruit, make the best use of resources, improve efficiency, manage risk and ultimately deliver what the customer wants?

The visits provided plenty of opportunities to compare approaches and question why particular systems had been adopted.



Whether looking at orchard design, varieties, propagation, irrigation, protected production or harvesting, the group was able to see how businesses have adapted their systems to suit their own circumstances.

VitroPlant SA offered an insight into large-scale plant tissue culture, while United Exports demonstrated a vertically integrated approach to production, with a particular focus on genetics and export markets. At Haygrove Heaven & Earth, the group saw how soft-fruit production had been developed in a location selected specifically for its climatic advantages.

Perhaps the biggest takeaway was that innovation does not always mean adopting the newest technology. Often it is about understanding the environment, identifying a problem and developing a system that works.

Learning from one another

However, the farm visits were only part of what made the trip such a success.

Perhaps the most valuable element was the networking. Bringing together people from different parts of the UK fruit industry and spending a week together created an environment where conversations happened naturally.

Delegates came from a wide range of businesses and roles, including growers, farm managers, agronomists, suppliers and people working in technical, commercial and operational positions. That diversity is one of NextGen's greatest strengths. The group is not simply a collection of people at a similar stage of their careers; it is a network covering different crops, businesses and areas of expertise.

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The time spent travelling between visits, sharing meals and discussing what had been seen often proved just as useful as the formal programme. Ideas were compared, experiences shared and new relationships developed.

The trip also reinforced how much can be learned simply by asking questions and sharing experiences. South African growers are operating in conditions where water availability, climate and export logistics can be significant constraints, yet the businesses visited demonstrated a willingness to adapt, invest and continually look for improvements.

For UK delegates, seeing those challenges from a different perspective provided plenty of food for thought about the future of our own industry.

Bringing the experience home

A trip like this is ultimately about more than what happens while you are away. The real value comes from returning home with new ideas, new contacts and a different perspective on familiar challenges.

The South Africa trip gave the NextGen delegates all three.

It also reinforced the importance of international connections. UK horticulture does not operate in isolation, and understanding how production systems operate elsewhere can help us better understand our own position within an increasingly global industry.

The NextGen Fruit Group would like to thank everyone who made the trip



possible, particularly those who provided financial and practical support. Without that commitment, a trip of this scale would not be accessible to the group in the same way. Their support represents a genuine investment in the development of the next generation of UK horticulture, and the group is hugely grateful to everyone who contributed.

What next for NextGen?

The South Africa trip was another important milestone for the NextGen Fruit Group, but it is certainly not the end of the journey. If anything, the trip highlighted the appetite within the group for more opportunities to learn, network and experience different parts of the industry.

NextGen continues to grow, with its programme developing alongside the membership and continually looking for new ways to bring people together and provide valuable learning opportunities.

That momentum is already continuing. In August 2026, NextGen made its first visit to Scotland, with a two-day programme including a visit to Angus Soft Fruits, followed by a visit to Angus Dundee Distillers. The trip is another example of the group looking beyond traditional horticultural boundaries, combining technical learning with the opportunity to experience another part of the UK's agricultural and business landscape.

The South Africa trip demonstrated exactly what NextGen can achieve when people come together with an open mind and a willingness to learn. The farms and businesses may have been thousands of miles from home, but the most valuable things the delegates brought back were a stronger network, a wider perspective and a renewed enthusiasm for the future of horticulture. ■

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Growing innovation for British orchards

British Apples & Pears Limited (BAPL) has strengthened its Research & Development (R&D) programme with a new R&D strategy and governance structure, ensuring investment is focused on the priorities that matter most to British apple and pear growers.

BAPL's ambition is to build an annual R&D portfolio worth more than £500,000, including around £350,000 of BAPL investment alongside external grant funding. The programme is already on track to exceed target, reflecting the growing scale and impact of BAPL's research activity.

Every project begins with growers. Research priorities are identified by the BAPL Technical Committee, supported by the Agronomy Group, before being developed into practical projects with leading research organisations, agronomists and commercial growers.

Current work focuses on integrated pest and disease management, sustainable crop production and orchard resilience. Details of all projects can be found on the BAPL website.

One of this year's highlights is a completed project investigating whether encouraging earlier leaf fall can reduce pest and disease pressure. Results showed reduced primary scab inoculum, lower European apple canker infection



through leaf scars and fewer rosy apple aphid colonies the following spring, while maintaining normal flowering and leaf decomposition. BAPL is now exploring larger commercial-scale trials.

BAPL has also submitted three funding applications worth around £600,000, focusing on functional fauna for natural pest control, macro-predation in orchards and preparedness for brown marmorated stink bug.

Research only delivers value when growers can use the results. Findings are shared through Technical Days, Tree Fruit Day, factsheets, newsletters and the members' area of the BAPL website.

Growers remain at the heart of the programme, helping shape priorities, host trials and translate research into practical improvements for British orchards. ■

SAVE THE DATE: the next BAPL Technical Day will be 9 February 2027.



National Fruit Show

STAND S26



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Celebrating success and building stronger partnerships

By the time you read this, the 2026 harvest will be well underway. Early reports have pointed to excellent flavour and dependable supplies – a reflection of the expertise, resilience and commitment of British apple and pear growers. While every season brings its own challenges, it has also been another year of progress for our industry.

Speaking up

BAPL continues to ensure that growers' voices are heard by retailers, policymakers

and the media. Whether highlighting the need for fair returns, tackling unnecessary audit duplication, or making the case for policies that encourage long-term investment in British orchards, we are working to create the conditions for a more profitable and resilient sector.

Sharing knowledge

Supporting growers means more than representation. Through our Smart Orchard Grower Workshops, case studies and factsheets, we're helping to share the latest research and best practice across the industry. It's all about continuous improvement and collaboration.

Celebrating success

This year we've expanded our Retailer Awards to recognise those supermarkets delivering outstanding support for British apples and pears. By celebrating leadership and sharing success, we're encouraging stronger partnerships across the supply chain and greater recognition of the value of British fruit.

Looking ahead

Everything BAPL does is built on collaboration. Whether championing growers' interests, sharing technical knowledge or promoting the benefits of British apples and pears, our focus remains the same: helping British top fruit businesses thrive today while building a stronger future for tomorrow.



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It's all part of the service



While walking back to the office the other day, I overheard a customer leaving our parts shop talking on the phone. I can only guess what the person at the other end had asked, but the response was clear:

"Yes, they had it. It's probably been sitting on the shelf for 20 years, but at least we've got what we need."

Few businesses would want to draw attention to having something in stock for so long. But I couldn't help smiling that a customer had been able to get their hands on some obscure part, during the growing season when a few days of downtime for a machine can have a significant knock on effect.

At events like the National Fruit Show, it is sometimes too easy for us to focus on showcasing the narrow Fendt tractors and specialist machinery we sell.

But our parts and workshop teams are just as integral to our business and remain a large part of the reason growers trust us with their fruit and vine machinery needs year after year.

This support dates back to 1974, when Dad started the business as a mobile agricultural engineer. From the beginning, the aim was not to just supply machinery. It was to understand it, look after it properly and help customers keep it working for as long as possible.





Long standing relationships with trusted manufacturers matter here the most. We have worked with Fendt, Braun, Fischer and OCLL since the 1980s, and with Berthoud and Perfect van Wamel since the early 1990s. Every manufacturer whose machinery we supply was chosen for its high manufacturing standards and that quality extends beyond the machines to the parts and consumables.

Today, we carry more than 12,000 lines of genuine and after market parts stock at our Avon Works site in Kent which are ready for same day collection or next day delivery. This means that we typically have what growers need, when they need it most.

And because we have worked in the fruit and vine sector for more than 50 years, we also still carry parts for older and less common

machines, including for equipment made by manufacturers that are no longer trading.

This means that whether a customer bought a machine from us last year or several decades ago, we are still able to support it and for us that is what true after sales care should look like.

It is not simply about putting tractors and machinery onto farms, for us it is about having the experience, knowledge, parts and workshop support needed to keep that machinery working reliably for the long term.

Nick, Claire, and the NP Seymour team look forward to welcoming you onto their stand at this year's National Fruit Show.

See N P Seymour on stand 027. ■

Extensive research programme

Hutchinsons has been committed to the horticulture sector for nearly 90 years and the investment in people and developing the services available to customers continues as strong as ever.

“Whether you are a client dealing with us every week, or are looking to discuss the options we can provide, the National Fruit Show is the ideal opportunity to talk to us,” says Phil Carpenter, Regional Director for Horticulture.

The Hutchinsons Horticulture Team is involved with an extensive research

programme, including the Hutchinsons Enhanced Light Interception Orchard System (HELIOS) planting system trials; a three-year codling moth control study; a Canker Reduction in Apple Fruit Trees (CRAFT) project; and another project (IRIS) that aims to improve resilience of scab fungicide programmes amidst a diminishing fungicide armoury.



HUTCHINSONS
Crop Production Specialists

"We don't see single year trials in horticulture as providing strong enough data. Instead, we want to support products for which we have data from a number of seasons and therefore good confidence when we start to advise them on farm. This season has been very different and it is going to be crucial to develop strategies to increase crop resilience going into 2027 and beyond."

As well as being able to talk to the team about the latest trials work and building resilience, specialists will be on hand to discuss digital tools such as Omnia, and class-leading TerraMap high-definition soil scanning.

"An increasing number of growers are moving to the Omnia platform within the fruit and vine sectors. And, with new forms of spatial measurement being developed for the fruit sector, such as flower or canopy

density measurements, there will be even more scope for growers to accurately map and manage variations in crop performance to maximise output in the future."

Our ability to capture and record accurate data at every stage of the supply chain has advanced dramatically in recent years, and crucially, so too have the systems needed to help growers and agronomists turn this wealth of information into meaningful, and ultimately profitable, management decisions on-farm, says Hutchinsons digital specialist, Tom Johnson. "Omnia now includes a fully functioning crop pesticide application module so that you can manage and record all your crop inputs alongside your agronomist."

Discover how Hutchinsons can help your business at stand 025. ■



Encouraging young people

The Marden Fruit Show Society AGM was held jointly with British Apples and Pears Ltd at Niab, East Malling.

Held jointly with British Apples and Pears, the AGM reviewed a successful 2025 Show, highlighted continued growth in entries and attendance, and outlined plans for the year ahead, alongside updates on the Society's education programme and the Long Term Farm Stored fruit competition.

Opening the meeting, President Catherine

Paice thanked members for their continued support and highlighted the importance of encouraging more young people into agriculture, particularly as labour shortages continue to affect the sector.

Chairman Nigel Bardsley presented his report, confirming that the National Fruit Show is now on a stable footing following the move to a one day format.



SAVE THE DATE: the next Marden Fruit Show Society AGM will be held on 27th April 2027.



Proud 2026 sponsors

Staxson is helping farmers improve energy efficiency.

This year in support of the National Fruit Show, Staxson are sponsoring the Bonanza Prize and the winner will receive an air to air heat pump system suitable for a room approximately 20-25 m².



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Mechanical & Electrical Services

Managing energy use is essential for agricultural businesses looking to control costs and improve profitability. Based in Sittingbourne, Staxson Mechanical and Electrical Services delivers tailored solutions that help farmers operate more efficiently.

Founded in 2018 by Steve Ingram, Staxson works across agricultural, healthcare, commercial, industrial and residential sectors. Its agricultural services are led by James Tumber, who brings decades of experience in refrigeration, controlled atmosphere storage and mechanical and electrical systems.

Staxson installed a remote energy monitoring system providing daily usage reports to help identify savings. During peak summer months, the farm exported surplus solar electricity while keeping its cold stores fully operational.

Staxson is also developing renewable energy solutions for remote sites. A

proposed solar-powered grain store system combines efficient fans and LED lighting, with installation estimated to cost around half that of a mains connection. A Kent wine store powered entirely by solar panels and battery storage is also being prepared.

Within the fresh produce sector, Staxson supports ripening operations, including work for Worldwide Fruit, The Avocado Company and Chiquita.

The company provides design, installation, servicing and maintenance for refrigeration, controlled atmosphere systems, grain store ventilation, controls and packhouse machinery.

By combining practical experience with modern technology, Staxson helps agricultural businesses reduce operating costs, improve reliability and build for the future, with ongoing support to keep systems running efficiently throughout their working life. ■



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Judi Perry retires from BIFGA

After more than 34 years of service, Judi Perry retired at the end of May this year, from the position of Secretary of the British Independent Fruit Growers' Association (BIFGA).

A Lincolnshire farmer's daughter, Judi grew up on a mixed arable, livestock, and horticultural unit, which included cereals, cows, pigs, capons, turkeys, mushrooms, rhubarb, tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, and bulbs. She particularly enjoyed bunching daffodils for the wholesale market, and helping display home produced vegetables and salads on the local NFU Agricultural Show stand.

Judi also belonged to the local Young Farmers Club for several years. After leaving school, her travels included a visit to New Zealand in 1964, to look at the then state-of-the-art milking equipment that was in use there at the time.

In 1970, when newly-married, Judi and her husband spent a year in the South Island of New Zealand where, amongst



Judi Perry was presented with Biddenden Sparkling Wine, flowers, and a cheque, at the 2026 BIFGA Summer Farm Walk. Left to right: John Breach, BIFGA Chairman; Katherine Seaman, BIFGA Secretary; Judi Perry, retired BIFGA Secretary; Richard Ball, Biddenden Vineyards

other things, she did some tobacco planting, and apple grading.

Judi and her husband returned to the UK, and in 1972 she went to work for the Bulmers Cider Company in Hereford, until her son was born in 1978. Because of her husband's work, Judi and her family moved to Brenchley, in Kent, in 1986. After moving to Kent, Judi worked for a well-known land agent company, where she enjoyed using her agricultural knowledge when showing prospective clients around farms, but she still found time to be a Beaver leader, and a Sunday school teacher! For many years Judi has been, and still is, the leader of a local walking group.

Judi joined BIFGA as Secretary in 1992. As well as carrying out all the usual Secretary

duties, Judi was keen to promote BIFGA and the British apple and pear industry at every possible opportunity, and she was recognised for this with the Fruiterers' Fruit Culture Award in November 2024. Judi's work included helping to organise: farm walks; technical days; AGM's; and, BIFGA quizzes; Judi also helped organise visits to places as varied as: RHS Wisley; The British Brands Museum; Brogdale Collections; Headcorn Aerodrome; and, Bedgebury Pinetum. Judi also helped with BIFGA's responses to several Government enquiries.

Judi has been a really great BIFGA Secretary, and she has always gone about her work in a most enthusiastic, thoughtful, and cheerful manner. I am sure that everyone wishes her a very long and happy retirement. ■



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The 2025 growing season and fruit maturities

Weather during the 2025 growing season

2025 saw the biggest ever British top fruit crop being picked, totalling 216,000 tonnes (BAPL

By Caroline Ashdown, Allied Growers Ltd and Joe Harvey, Worldwide Fruit Ltd.

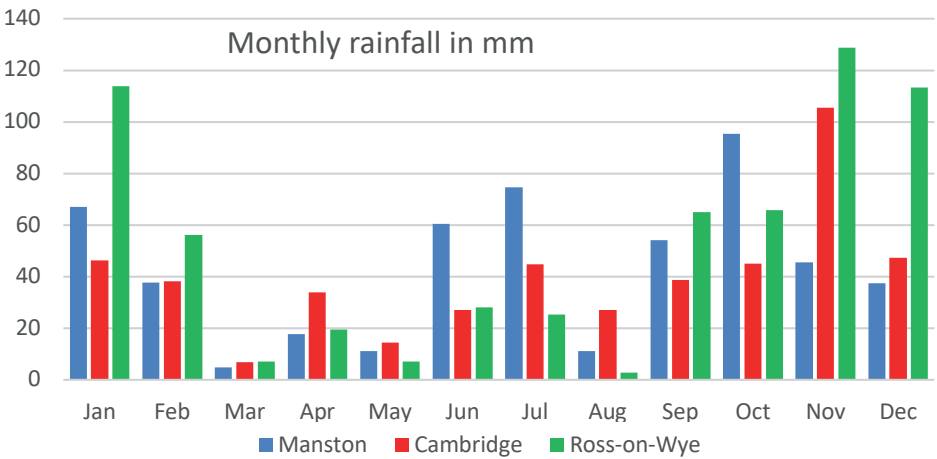
figure). This was because of the favourable growing conditions experienced throughout the season.

The year started cold and relatively dry, except in Ross-on-Wye, temperatures slowly increased in February and then things really began to move in March which was incredibly dry. It was an early blossom period, which combined with the dry conditions and warm weather led to a huge set and excellent shape and skin finish.

Table 1: Comparison of the last 6 growing seasons - 2018 data supplied by FAST LLP at Brogdale, 2019 data onwards taken from Manston station recordings on Met Office website

Year	Mean temp °C	Rainfall mm	Sunshine hours
2018	14.2	471.2	1,681
2019*	-	577.4	1,814
2020*	-	604.2	1,955
2021*	-	612.3	1,636
2022*	-	488.8	2,043.7
2023*	-	656.8	1,814.2
2024*	-	562.6	1,599.3
2025	-	517.1	1,959.1

Graph 1: Total rainfall for each month by growing region. All data obtained via Met Office website



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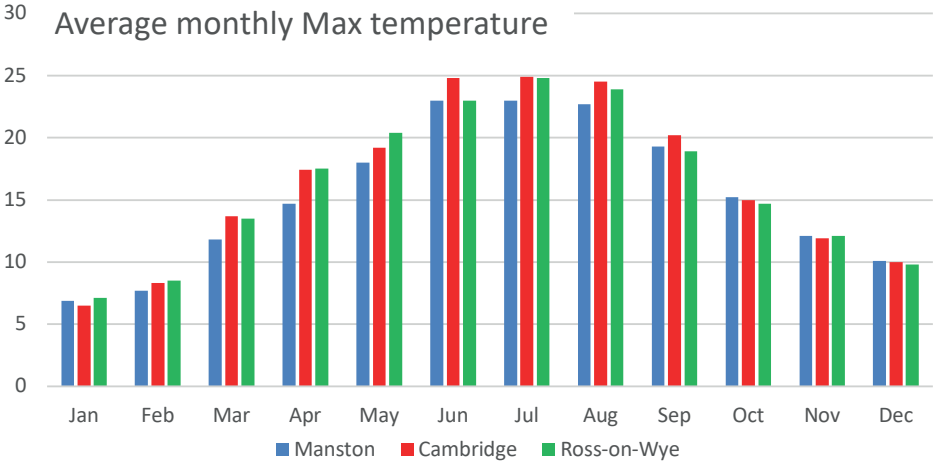


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When summer arrived, there was some much welcome rainfall in June and July for Kent before things went dry again in August, combined with good sunshine levels resulted in an early harvest.

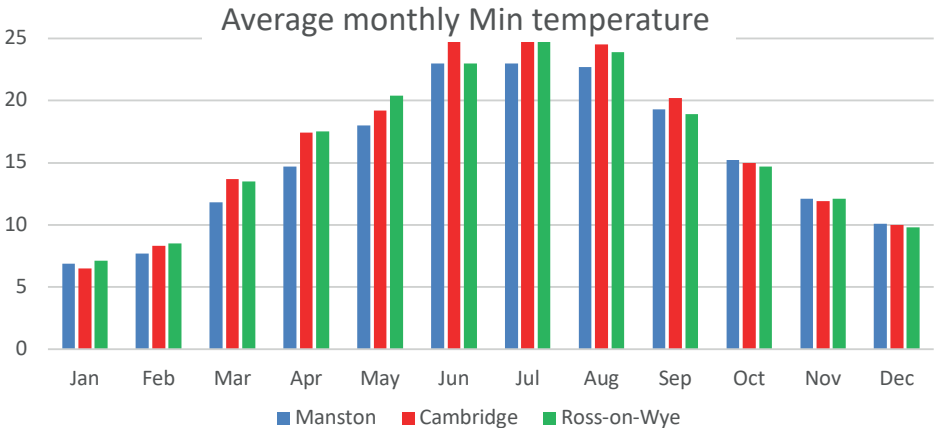
Rainfall

The year started off incredibly wet for Ross-on-Wye, which received almost double the amount of rainfall as Kent. Cambridge was the by far the driest. March was unseasonably dry at all three locations, with slightly more in April.

Graph 2: Average Max temperature °C for each month by growing region.
All data obtained via Met Office website

What was unusual was that Ross-on-Wye consistently had less rainfall in the months of April, May, July and August compared to Cambridge and Kent. In the period from March-November, Ross-on-Wye recorded 220mm, Cambridge, 237mm and Manston had 329mm of rain. In 2024, Ross-on-Wye had 212mm alone in September, so demonstrates just how dry it was in the West Midlands in 2025.

Graph 3: Average monthly minimum temperature °C for all growing regions.
All data obtained via Met Office website



Temperature

2025 started cold for all growing regions and all stations recorded over 10 air frosts in January. The temperature did not really jump until March and into April which led to a very short blossom period, resulting in the excellent set. Again, unusually Ross-on-Wye recorded slightly higher temperatures than Cambridge in April and May, but Cambridge soon regained its position as the warmest growing location. In July it achieved 24.9oc. Ross-on-Wye was slightly warmer than Manston in both July and August, tying in with the drier conditions seen as well. Overall, the temperature curve was a clear bell and at its highest from June-August, which was very similar to 2024.

Manston recorded the highest minimum temperatures for every month in 2025, which can be seen in graph 3. November and December were especially mild, with only 17 air frosts recorded in all three locations over that period, which was almost identical to 2024 with 16 air frosts over the same period.

Sunshine hours

The 2025 season had very good sunshine levels, Kent saw 360 hours more sunshine compared to 2024, which was only 84 hours down from the sunniest year of 2022. Across the year Ross-on-Wye was considerably sunnier than 2024 and had an accumulative

total of 1,636 hours in 2025 compared to 1,188 hours. There are no sunshine hours available for Cambridge weather station.

Harvest 2025

The following maturity data was supplied by Worldwide Fruit Ltd and is based on Fruition PO assessments conducted across a range of orchards throughout Kent during the 2025 season.

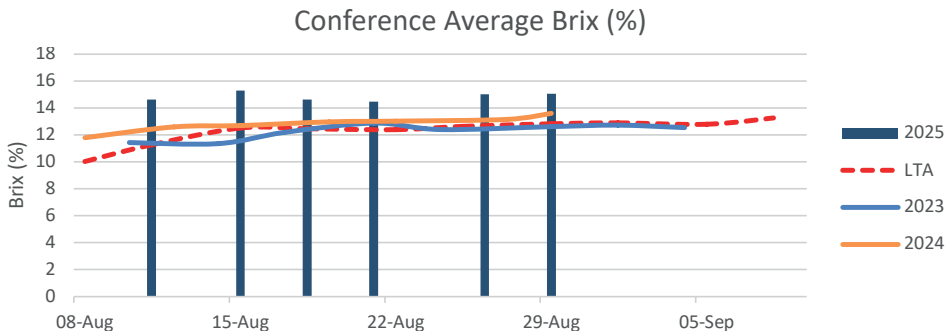
Following a warm August, fruit maturity advanced rapidly across most varieties as harvest approached. Fruit firmness declined more quickly than average, starch degradation accelerated, and sugar accumulation was generally ahead of seasonal norms. As a result, first picks for many varieties commenced one to three days earlier than those recorded in 2024.

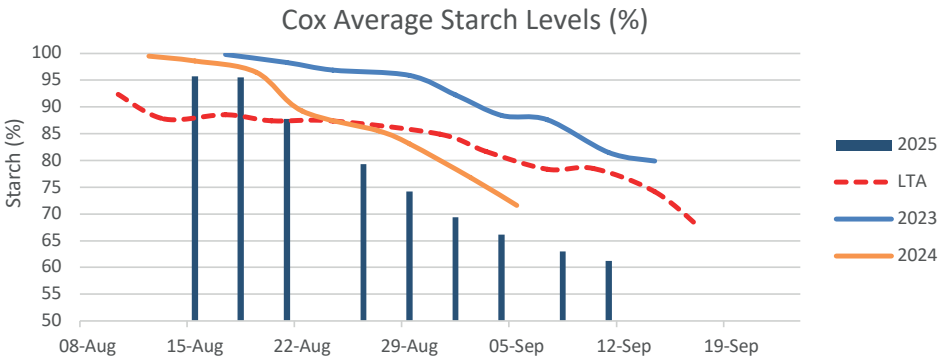
The following sections provide a variety-by-variety overview of maturity progression throughout the 2025 season and the factors influencing harvest timing across Kent.

Conference

Conference pears showed advanced maturity from early August onwards. Elevated soluble solids levels provided one of the earliest indications that the season was developing ahead of normal.

Graph 4: Conference brix levels and seasonal comparisons





Graph 5: Cox starch decline seasonal comparisons

By 15th August, many orchards across Kent were recording average Brix levels of 14%-16%.

Fruit firmness was consistently lower than both the 2024 season and the long-term average, with fruit typically measuring around 0.5kg softer than expected for the time of year. Starch degradation also progressed rapidly, indicating a faster approach to optimum harvest maturity.

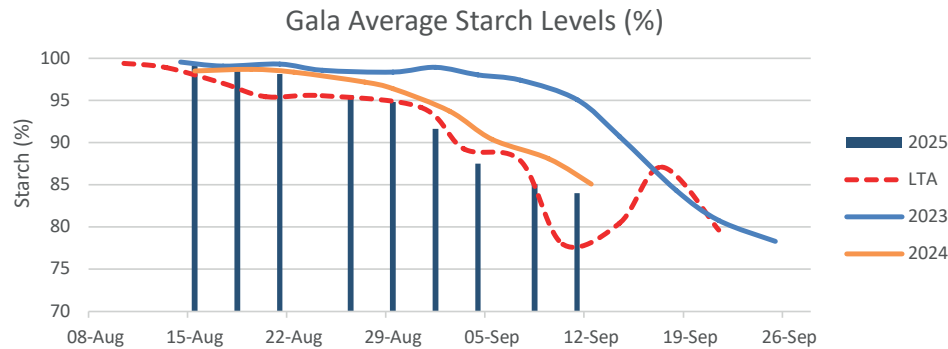
With Brix levels increasing, starch breakdown progressing and firmness declining, harvest commenced early across most growing areas. First picks were generally underway by the third week of August, with most orchards harvested several days earlier than in 2024.

Cox

Cox followed a similar pattern to Conference, with maturity levels advancing ahead of the previous season. By 21st August, starch levels were already declining, several days earlier than observed in 2024. Continued warm conditions throughout August maintained the rapid progression of fruit maturity. By 4th September, average starch levels had fallen to approximately 65%.

Firmness declined steadily during late August, reducing by around 0.5kg per week on average. On 4th September, average firmness measured 8.6kg, although some of the earliest orchards had already fallen to around 7.5kg. This encouraged growers to begin harvest

Graph 6: Gala brix levels and seasonal comparison





Cox starch



Conference starch



Braeburn starch



Gala starch

as soon as colour and Brix levels were suitable to maximise storage potential.

As a result, many growers commenced storage picks from 1st September onwards, generally several days earlier than in 2024.

Warm and relatively dry conditions leading up to harvest also resulted in watercore being observed in a number of orchards. This added complexity to harvest management, requiring careful decisions regarding picking dates and storage strategies to allow symptoms to dissipate effectively.

Gala

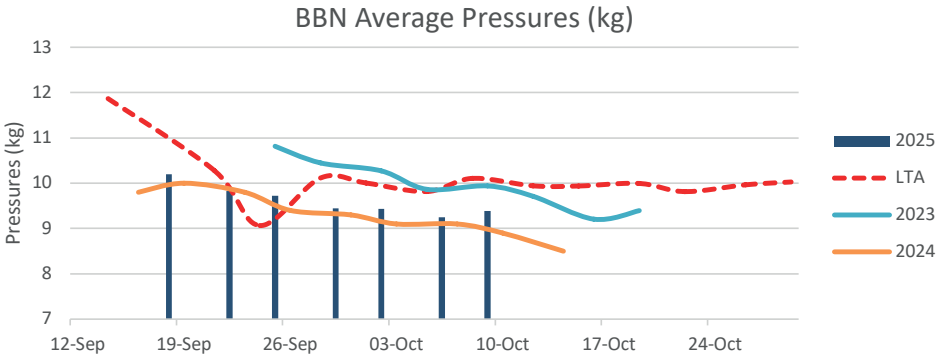
Gala continued the season-wide trend of accelerated maturity development, with first picks commencing during the first

week of September.

Foreground colour developed well during the latter half of August, particularly in younger orchards and those planted with high-coloured clones. While colour was generally sufficient, Brix levels were more variable between orchards and became the main factor determining harvest timing.

In some cases, growers delayed picking for several days to achieve target sugar levels.

Fruit firmness was slightly lower than in 2024 but declined in a relatively controlled manner throughout the harvest period. This allowed growers to manage picking schedules effectively and maintain fruit quality for storage. Overall, Gala maturity was ahead of average but remained manageable across most orchards.



Braeburn

Unlike the earlier varieties, Braeburn demonstrated a more gradual rate of maturity development during the latter part of the season. Maturity trends closely followed those observed in 2024, resulting in harvest dates that were broadly comparable between the two seasons.

By 9th October, average starch levels had fallen below 75%. As is often the case with Braeburn, sugar accumulation remained the primary factor influencing harvest decisions. Average Brix levels had reached approximately 11% by this stage, although the most advanced orchards were recording values between 12% and 13%.

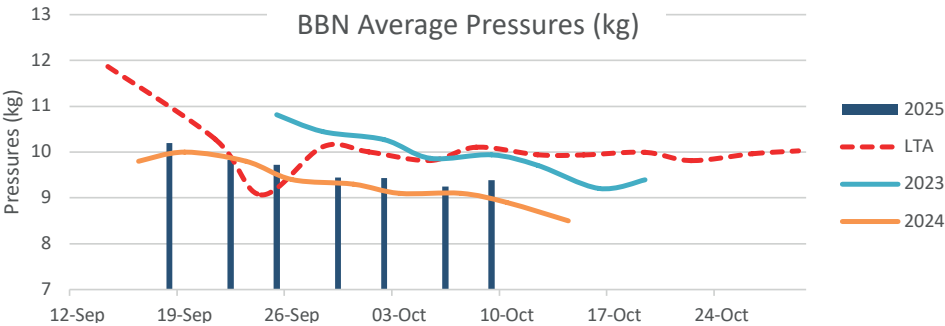
Overall, Braeburn maturity progressed steadily and predictably, allowing growers

Graph 7: Braeburn starch decline seasonal comparison

to target harvest dates based primarily on flavour development and storage objectives rather than rapid changes in maturity indices.

To conclude, the 2025 season was characterised by an accelerated maturity profile across most varieties, driven largely by warm conditions during August. Early-season varieties such as Conference, Cox and Gala reached optimum harvest maturity several days ahead of the previous season, while later varieties such as Braeburn followed a more typical progression. Overall, careful monitoring of firmness, starch degradation, colour development and sugar accumulation was critical in helping growers optimise harvest timing and storage potential. ■

Graph 8: Braeburn pressure seasonal comparison





The Worshipful Company of FRUITERERS

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The Worshipful Company of Fruiterers is dedicated to driving excellence across the fruit and fresh produce industry. Today, just as for centuries past, the Company champions education and research, raises funds for charity, and fosters fellowship among its members and partners across the industry.

With a history dating back before 1300 AD, the Fruiterers are one of the City of London's oldest Livery Companies, standing 45th in order of precedence. In medieval times, the Company played a central role in the fruit trade, setting standards, training apprentices, caring for members, and giving back to the community.

Fast-forward more than 700 years, and those same principles continue to guide its purpose. By supporting the City of London and welcoming new members, the Fruiterers remain a vibrant, relevant, and forward-looking organisation. At the heart of its mission is a commitment to promoting excellence in every part of the fruit and fresh produce industry. Education, research, and innovation remain priorities, supported through the Company's Awards Council.

Each year, a series of awards and grants recognise outstanding contributions to the industry and help encourage the next generation of talent. Knowledge is also shared through a new mentoring scheme. More details can be found at www.fruiterers.org.uk/awards, and the Awards Council article highlights some of the most recent projects and achievements.

Philanthropy is equally important. This year alone, the Fruiterers have raised more than £10,000 for causes including the Next Gen Fruit Group, SSAFA (the Soldiers', Sailors' & Airmen's Families Association), and the Lord Mayor's Appeal.

The Company's activities reflect both tradition and modernity. From formal City dinners and the prestigious City Food & Drink Lecture, to technical conferences, charity walks, international visits, and even planting fruit trees at historic landmarks, the Fruiterers demonstrate how an ancient Livery Company can play an active role in today's world.

Rooted in history yet focused on the future, the Worshipful Company of Fruiterers continues to bring people together, champion excellence, and make a lasting difference across the industry and beyond.

For more information about the Worshipful Company of Fruiterers, our work and industry awards, please visit www.fruiterers.org.uk or use the QR code.



Progress towards apple canker control

Niab's Mat Papp-Rupar and Scott Raffle outline how canker continues to challenge apple growers and report on some positive progress in improving its management and spread.

Apple canker, caused by the fungal pathogen *Neonectria ditissima* continues to be the principal disease challenging UK apple growers, causing branch dieback (Figure 1), tree death and postharvest fruit rot. It has major impact on orchard profitability with up to 30% of trees dying in some newly planted orchards, and despite repeated research to identify new chemical control products, very limited success has been achieved with this approach.



Figure 1: Branch dieback caused by *Neonectria ditissima*

The infection process is simple and can be very rapid. Pathogen infects any wound or natural opening on the tree. Infections develop into lesions which restrict the sap flow and kill the portion of the tree above the lesion. Canker lesions also release asexual (conidia) and sexual spores (ascospores – Figure 2) during wet weather in the autumn, winter, spring and summer thereby allowing infections to occur all year round.

The scale of infection is huge given that a mature 1cm long canker lesion can release up to 10,000 conidia and ascospores every time it rains. As it takes as few as five to ten spores to cause new infection, it is impossible for growers to stop its spread using fungicide sprays inactivating the spores.

The spores infect wounds on the tree which may have been created during picking and pruning or damage caused by frost, machinery, woolly apple aphid or manganese toxicity. Infection can also take place through bud scales, fruitlet scars, leaf scars and petal scars. Infection can take place throughout the year in wet and mild conditions, during bud burst, summer leaf fall, fruitlet drop, summer pruning, fruit harvest, autumn leaf fall, winter pruning or fruit cracking.

Despite growers' best attempts, it is impossible to spray canker away with fungicides. Protection of leaf scars is

possible but needs good spray coverage, correct timing and continual application. Relatively large picking and pruning wounds are impossible to adequately target and protect. UK growers have relied heavily on spray products containing captan, dithianon, tebuconazole and other actives, but increasing restrictions and pending loss of these and other chemical controls is increasing the pressure to find alternative control methods. Whichever spray products are chosen, experience shows that doubling the spray effort for several years still results in the same percentage of trees with canker.

Pathologists have demonstrated that pruning out canker lesions is more effective than spraying. Doubling the pruning effort results in cleaner orchards with fewer spores produced. Pathologists recommend that apple orchards be walked four times per year to remove lesions including pre-harvest, post-harvest before leaf-fall, during a winter tidy-up, and at bud burst in the spring. However, pruning needs to be done on dry days, is very labour intensive and growers may be unable to afford to do this four times per year.

Reducing apple canker with soil amendments and wildflowers

Niab scientists have been working to find novel approaches to canker management. One project funded by Growing Kent & Medway, has yielded results that growers have already started to adopt. Working with Agrovista and AM Fresh, Niab investigated if amending the roots of newly planted commercial apple orchards (Figure 3) with arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF, Plantworks) and two Trichoderma based biocontrol products (Triatum-P and Vintec) can reduce canker. Work was also done to increase the populations of AMF in established orchards by sowing wildflowers (known



Figure 2: Ascospores are released from red perithecia



Figure 3: Amending the soil at planting time to reduce canker infection

to support AMF activity) and inoculating alleys and tree rows with AMF.

Newly planted Gala trees amended with the combination of Vintec (*Trichoderma atroviride*) and AMF had five times lower tree mortality (<1%) three years after planting compared to untreated trees (>5%) on all six commercial grower sites assessed. Single or other combined treatments reduced tree mortality by about 20%. The reasons for tree death may have differed across sites, and not all trees died of canker.

AMF alone reduced the number of branch cankers found on the trees three years after planting by around 25%, compared to the unamended control.

It is more challenging to increase the presence of AMF in mature established orchards compared to newly established. Certain wildflowers are known to support the growth of naturally occurring and introduced mycorrhiza. A native perennial wildflower mix was used to support mycorrhizal fungi but also provided flowering throughout the growing season to maximise attraction to pollinators and predatory insects. The mix was sown in alleys of established orchards in late autumn after the alleys had been treated with herbicide and well cultivated. The research confirmed that sowing both wildflowers alone and with added AMF (mixed with seeds) increased AMF root colonisation in all three mature orchards included in the project. The short life of the project did not allow the time to investigate the spread of AMF into the apple roots from the wildflower strips.

In addition, AMF were applied to the established tree roots by dispensing commercial inoculum with a modified root pruner developed by Agrovista. Tree growth was found to be reduced by root pruning, whilst root pruning and wildflowers alone both reduced fruit size and diameter. However, the addition of AMF negated reduction in growth and restored fruit size and diameter to that recorded in the untreated control.

Apple growers have started to adopt these results but it should be noted that neither Triunum-P (*Trichoderma harzianum*) nor Vintec (*Trichoderma atroviride*) are authorised for use as soil amendments at planting, although work is in progress to secure EAMU authorisations for this

type of application. Full details about the rates of products used to amend tree roots at planting, and the wildflower mix and establishment technique carried out, are listed in dedicated factsheets produced by Niab and free to view on the Niab website: www.niab.com/services/membership/niab-fruit.

The impact of soils on canker expression

In previous research, Niab used trees propagated in the same nursery and uniformly inoculated with *Neonectria ditissima*. Trees were planted on three different commercial orchard sites in Kent. Significant differences in the incidence of mainstem and branch cankers were observed between these three sites and between blocks on the same site within three years post planting. There were differences in soil properties between the three sites so it was questioned whether these differences might explain the observed differences in canker expression. This led to a BBSRC funded project supported by The East Malling Trust and British Apples and Pears Ltd which, with the help of many UK apple growers, collected existing data from many orchards across the UK. This data was analysed for variety, orchard age, canker infection levels and previous soil sampling results. A number of orchards were selected for further investigation, with 144 soil samples being collected from 14 farms across four regions representing eight different soil types (Figure 4).

The scientists correlated the average number of cankers across all assessed trees with average soil parameters. They discovered higher levels of canker in orchards where soils had high levels of organic matter, total carbon, total nitrogen, calcium, cationic exchange capacity (CEC) and a high percentage

of clay. They discovered lower levels of canker in orchard soils with high levels of iron, molybdenum and silt. This however is the first step and further research is needed to confirm the relationship between soil parameters and canker.

The latest research projects

These latest research findings linking canker incidence to soil parameters are being further investigated in a new project being funded by British Apples and Pears Ltd entitled Pome fruit Resilient Orchards through strategic Sustainable Pest & disease Ecology Research (PROSPER). Niab will assess the effect of increasing iron, molybdenum and potassium levels on tree growth, fruiting and canker susceptibility. Investigations will also be carried out to understand if a method of soil lipid profiling can inform growers about the biological status of their soils in relation to canker.

Also in the PROSPER project, Niab is seeking ways to hasten leaf fall during the autumn months. Climate change has led to more mild, wet autumn and winter weather which delays and prolongs the period over which leaf fall occurs and this is thought to be exacerbating canker. The aim is to assess a range of treatments which will both hasten leaf drop and speed up the degradation of apple scab infected leaf litter. The team will optimise the timing, doses and mixes of the best candidates and assess their impact on canker development.

The PROSPER project will also investigate commercial biocontrol agents of canker which have worked successfully in the laboratory. When applied to leaf scars in the autumn during leaf fall, the agents have failed to colonise the apple tissue. In this project, attempts will be made to establish the biocontrol agents over the summer months during the active growing season

to improve establishment and hopefully enhance canker control.

Two further projects funded by Innovate UK have recently begun which may help with the management of canker. In the first, biochar, *Trichoderma* species and AMF will be used as soil amendments at planting time to assess if they might hasten establishment and fruit production, whilst improving orchard sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint of orchards. This follows on from the Growing Kent & Medway funded work and may also enhance canker control. The second is seeking to develop an early detection system for apple canker based on spectral signals and artificial intelligence with the aim of mapping visible lesions and possibly detecting canker before it becomes visible to the human eye. AI generated maps will help growers to better target their canker removal efforts in the orchards. Importantly, detection hardware would be mounted on standard orchard machinery. ■



Figure 4: Different soil types were assessed in the project

Novel approaches to management of apple blossom weevil

Niab's Sarah Arnold and Scott Raffle present the findings of British Apples and Pears Ltd funded research to find new ways of managing apple blossom weevil.

With the continuing loss of authorised plant protection products in apple and pear crops, some pests and diseases are becoming more prevalent in orchards and new approaches to control are urgently required. Apple blossom weevil (*Anthonomus pomorum* - Figure 1), has become a more serious pest in recent years.



Figure 1: Apple blossom weevil has become a more serious problem

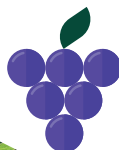
Incidence is rising resulting in very significant yield loss for some growers with up to a third of flowers or more being lost. Adult females lay their eggs in developing flower buds in spring leading to capped blossoms with the weevil larvae developing inside. The flowers fail to develop into fruits. The larvae pupate in the blossom and the adult emerges around a week later, causing light feeding damage on the foliage for the remainder of the season.

Working on behalf of growers, British Apples and Pears Ltd (BAPL) funded the PAPPLe project in which Niab investigated novel control measures for some of the most damaging pests and diseases. In the case of apple blossom weevil, attention has turned to natural and biological means of control.

Niab investigated three different control agents including naturally occurring parasitoids, introduced entomopathogenic nematodes (EPN) and entomopathogenic fungi (EPF). At the start of the project, the entomology team conducted a questionnaire of growers which sought to correlate the prevalence of apple blossom weevil with certain orchard characteristics. They later carried out experiments with the natural control agents to assess their usefulness within control programmes.



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Results

The questionnaire showed some slight indication that apple blossom weevil may be more prevalent in orchards with less vegetation growing in the alleyways between the tree rows. It also identified higher populations of weevils close to mixed hedgerows, particularly containing hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), and potentially more prevalent close to vine and cherry crops. Further work funded by BAPL is building a more robust dataset and better understanding of those orchards at greatest risk.

Parasitoids

Commercial growers kindly submitted samples of capped blossoms to the team from orchards across 22 production sites. 12.1% of the blossoms examined contained a parasitoid wasp. These kill the developing apple blossom weevil. On two sites, over 30% of the blossoms contained parasitoids. The main species identified was *Scambus pomorum* (Figure 2), a parasitoid which according to historical records was twice as abundant in the past. It is thought to be more prevalent in organic orchards, but this is unsurprising



Figure 2: *Scambus pomorum* was isolated from capped blossoms

as apple blossom weevil is also more prevalent there. Ongoing research is exploring its preferred environment and food, if it can be reared commercially to boost natural populations, and further work could ascertain if it is sensitive to commonly used spray control products.

Entomopathogenic nematodes

Predatory nematodes are commonly used to control the larvae of other weevil pests such as vine weevil in soft fruit and ornamental crops. Niab assessed two species (*Steinernema carpocapsae* and *Steinernema feltiae*) for their efficacy at controlling apple blossom weevil larvae. The larvae are hidden within the flower petals so targeting them is difficult, but as nematodes can swim in films of water, it was proposed that they might be able to penetrate apple blossoms in the spring.

In the field, the team dipped capped blossoms (Figure 3) in nematode suspensions containing a wetting agent (0.5% solution of Silwet-77). 100% infection of weevil larvae was achieved when the blossoms were returned immediately to the laboratory for incubation. However, control was slower and incomplete where the blossoms were left in the field for longer periods. Infection of weevil larvae reached 50% if left in the orchard for nine days. Further investigation is required but it is hoped that given time and under the right conditions, the nematodes will enter the buds and infect the larvae. Although they are unlikely to achieve 100% control in the field, weevil populations may steadily decline if nematodes are applied annually. Wetting agents in spray applications help nematodes spread to the target. Some leaf toxicity was found following use of the 0.5% Silwet-77 in the application, so it may be necessary to reduce the concentration of Silwet-77 further to 0.05%.

Entomopathogenic fungi (EPF)

Many EPF strains are isolated naturally from beetle and weevil species. Commercially available *Beauveria bassiana*, *Metarhizium anisopliae* and *Metarhizium brunneum* are already sold to control all life stages of various weevils. Niab carried out laboratory bioassays using Naturalis-L (*Beauveria bassiana*) and a *Metarhizium* product, not yet registered for use, to assess if either were effective against apple blossom weevil. Although EPF infection of apple blossom weevil adults was achieved the efficacy was low. Further research is required to optimise EPF use for apple blossom weevil control before these can be adopted by growers.

Further work

Future research should focus on understanding how to manage alleyway vegetation to attract and support natural enemies of apple blossom weevil such as parasitoids which are already present in orchards. The optimum mix of native trees that will harbour *Scambus pomorum* also needs to be identified to provide positive guidance to growers on enhancing the diversity of vegetation around their orchards. Although nematodes have high potential to control blossom weevil larvae, further work should focus on optimising application methods and the timing of application. ■



Figure 3: Capped blossoms were dipped in nematode suspensions

Hugh Summerfield

Accountant, mentor, business leader, countryman, arts enthusiast, husband and father, friend and “ultimate ‘go to’ person” Hugh Summerfield sadly passed away last autumn at the age of 75.

Born into a farming family, Hugh’s connection with the land continued throughout his life, although his career took a different direction when he became an accountant. He joined Finn Kelsey & Chapman Ltd in Ashford early in his career, later becoming a senior partner.

In a busy and generous life, he supported Age Concern and Young Enterprise, became chairman of Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, served on the board of

Canterbury Festival, and was honorary treasurer for both KCAS and the Marden Fruit Show Society, organisers of the National Fruit Show.

Members were deeply saddened by the news of his passing and remember Hugh with great affection. He was dependable, thoughtful and deeply committed, giving freely of both his time and professional expertise.

Throughout his career, Hugh was known not simply for his financial knowledge, but for the care he took over the people and organisations he advised. Methodical, conscientious and practical, he became a trusted adviser and friend to many. He was someone people could turn to for guidance and reassurance, and he was rarely content simply to identify a problem without helping to find a way forward.

He brought those same qualities to his role as honorary treasurer of the Marden Fruit Show Society. Hugh played an important part in maintaining the Society’s financial strength and supporting its charitable aims, while taking a genuine interest in its growers, members and the wider fruit industry.

Hugh will be remembered not only for everything he contributed, but for the generosity, good judgement and friendship with which he did it. He will be greatly missed by everyone at the National Fruit Show.





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Why do we do what we do?



Mandy Hounsell reflects on another year.

The National Fruit Show Education Team is well established, and I am frequently asked how we engage with young people on behalf of the industry. As the purpose and value of our work can sometimes be taken for granted, this article provides a valuable opportunity to explain both what we do and why we do it. Our primary objective has always been to promote British top fruit and highlight the exceptional opportunities available within our industry.

Through age-appropriate activities and opportunities, the Education Team connects young people with British top fruit and supports their development at every stage. By building awareness, knowledge, and enthusiasm, we aim to inspire the next generation to recognise the value of the industry and explore the rewarding careers it offers.

Early Years Foundation stage

The first five years of a child's life provide a unique window of opportunity for brain development, making early engagement

especially valuable. Nutrition at this stage does more than meet children's physical needs: it supports learning, behaviour, emotional well-being, and lifelong health. As approximately one million new neural connections are formed every second, our workshops encourage children to develop a positive relationship with food through tasting fruit and learning through play. These positive experiences support both nutritional awareness and cognitive and sensory development.

Primary Education

For this age group we have always hosted workshops that work alongside the National Curriculum (NC). The main aim is to promote British Top Fruit, so we provide opportunities to try more than one variety, explaining that different varieties have different tastes and textures. Research shows that children are becoming more averse to food in its purest form, so we break our workshops down by trying food in different ways but are still part of our five a day.



Children creating their own orchards with apple printing



Looking at how an apple tree grows and its journey through the seasons connects to the NC and the understanding of where our food comes from. Our opening question is always "Where do apples come from?" The majority of the responses are supermarkets, but when we question further, a lot of the time they have not understood that apples grow on trees. A child's amazement of how apples grow never ceases to surprise me, and the questions that follow once we have talked through the whole growing process always fascinates me, showing how a young mind works. As we are kindly donated trees from Frank P Matthews, we are able to leave a fruit tree at every school we visit. This provides an excellent opportunity for the children to be involved in and see firsthand how fruit is grown.

Habitats and living things are also part of the NC, so we look at what animals and habitats are within an orchard, explaining the process and the need to work in collaboration with nature to provide natural habitats to encourage thriving eco systems.

Careers collaboration



Secondary Education

Curriculum to careers. This age group has a pool of young people that often do not know what they want to do in the future. In this stage of a young person's life, it is important for them to experience different opportunities to help them choose a career path.

By linking something they have learnt in school to how it could be used within our industry can spark interest in careers within agriculture and horticulture. At our careers events we show the broad range of different jobs within our industry and have been fortunate to work alongside companies and professionals who have guided us, so we are offering real life experiences.





Growing a love for fruit



**Tasting session at
Countryside Days Yorkshire**



Our hopes and expectations for the years ahead

We are currently working alongside Agrii, Orchard Cooling and Mobi tech to develop practical careers workshops that we can highlight at careers events. Showcasing the diversity of our industry is important to inspire the next generation.



Thank you

We would like to thank our sponsors, as we could not manage to do the things we do without their support not just financially but with up-to-date professional advice.

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First visit to Scotland

Members of the NextGen Fruit Group travelled to Scotland on 20 and 21 August 2026 for two days of farm visits, technical discussions and networking, marking the group's first organised visit to Scotland since it was formed almost 60 years ago.

Despite the Group's long history, having been established as the Under 40s Fruit Growers in 1967, and numerous visits to fruit growing regions in the UK and further afield, it had never previously organised a trip to Scotland.

The two-day programme was generously supported by the Group's partners Biobest and Netafim alongside sponsors International Water Solutions, NP Seymour in partnership with Fendt, Agrovista, Certis Belchim, BIOGROW and Cordon Technologies.

The first visit was to Angus Soft Fruits at East Seaton, near Arbroath, where the group was given an overview of the business. Established in the 1990s, it today supplies berries grown in the UK and overseas while Angus Growers, its associated producer organisation, is owned and managed by 16 growers based mainly across Angus, Perthshire and Fife.

The group then headed into the tunnels to look at strawberry and raspberry production, hearing about some of the

challenges of growing soft fruit on the east coast of Scotland.

The coastal location offers some protection from extreme temperatures, but it also exposes the farm to strong winds and storms, so the tunnels have been designed with this in mind and some remain covered through the winter.

Technology is being used to improve crop protection and Thorvald robots from Saga Robotics are applying UV-C light to help control powdery mildew in strawberries, working through the tunnels regularly so the treatment can be used alongside the farm's wider crop protection programme. The farm is also involved with autonomous drone technology for pollination and yield monitoring.

"We are proud to sponsor the NextGen Fruit Group, in partnership with Fendt, to help give the next generation of the fruit industry opportunities to look beyond their own farm gate or, for those working in supporting roles, beyond the businesses





For more information about NextGen head to: www.nextgenfruitgroup.co.uk

and clients they see every day," said Claire Seymour, Director at NP Seymour, National Fruit Show major sponsor.

"Visiting different growers gives people the chance to ask questions, compare approaches and return home with new ideas. That exchange of knowledge helps encourage best practice and supports the positive development of British fruit.

"Agriculture can also be an isolating industry, so the friendships and professional connections built through NextGen are incredibly important. Bringing people together to share their experiences and support one another is something we are very proud to be involved in." ■



Cheers to a new initiative

National Fruit Show organisers hold first members-only event.

Organisers of the National Fruit Show, the Marden Fruit Show Society, held its first dedicated members-only event on 12 August 2026 as part of a new initiative to provide greater value for growers and others working in the UK fruit sector who support the Society through membership.

Members visited McCanns Brewery at Hukins Hops near Tenterden, Kent for the inaugural event, which was sponsored by The Fruit Grower magazine and Torran Construction Ltd.

The evening formed part of the Society's work to further strengthen the value of membership and encourage wider support

from across the industry for its work. As a registered charity, the Society aims to promote the better growing, grading and marketing of fruit, delivering a national fruit-based education programme, the National Fruit Show, and annual commercial top fruit and nut competition.

Speaking at the brewery, Marden Fruit Show Society President Catherine Paice said: "The thinking behind a members-only event like this was to provide an opportunity to learn from other parts of the fruit and wider agricultural industry and, just as importantly, give members a chance to meet and exchange ideas outside an annual trade show setting."



For information about membership of the Marden Fruit Show Society, Eileen can be contacted via email at: info@nationalfruitshow.org.uk

The first visit took members beyond the fruit sector to explore another branch of UK agriculture with strong links to some of the country's main fruit growing regions.

McCanns Brewery operates from a converted American style oast at Hukins Hops, with around 80 per cent of the hops used by the brewery grown on the farm.

During a tour of the brewery, members followed the brewing process from malt and hops through to conditioning, kegging and canning, while hearing how diversification and connections with other local agricultural businesses form part of the operation.

Spent grain from the brewing process is supplied to a local farmer for cattle feed, with beef subsequently returning to the brewery for use in the onsite Hop House kitchen's menu. Members also heard about plans to install reed beds to allow water to be processed on site.

The visit concluded with a beer tasting and light supper, with members also able to watch the partial solar eclipse.

Show Manager Eileen Haffenden said: "We are very grateful to Paul and the McCanns team for welcoming us and giving such an interesting insight into the brewery, and to The Fruit Grower magazine and Torran Construction Limited for sponsoring our first members only event.

"Thank you, too, to everyone who joined us and helped make the Society's first members-only gathering such an enjoyable occasion. We would also encourage anyone who is not yet a member to find out more about joining the Society. Membership helps support the national education programme, the commercial fruit competition and the annual National Fruit Show." ■



National Fruit Show 2025



Return of the Tastiest Apple



Judith Batchelar OBE opened the show



Nick Seymour awarded the Jon Jones Award









First time entrants

Control systems for fresh produce

Controlled Atmosphere Services Ltd (CA Services), established in June 2022, is energised to support customers, friends and colleagues within the farming & fresh produce industry.

As a group of like-minded,

customer-orientated engineers with over 50 years of combined CA experience, CA Services is driven to give the best service and support to customers.

With that in mind, the company felt it was important to progress

quickly into producing its own control systems. As a result, we have a growing number of new scrubber controllers fitted in Van Amerongen CO₂ scrubbers and 11 of our new CA Control systems fitted as new installations or replacement systems this year.

CA Services is also busy installing new refrigeration control systems, having installed three for this season. Both CA and refrigeration systems can be viewed on stand S33 at the National Fruit Show. The bespoke systems were designed, developed and built in house.

The company is also delighted to welcome Robertas Virkutis, who has added more experience to the team.



Specialist trapping systems and bespoke AI monitoring service



Backed by decades of Russell IPM's trusted expertise in pheromone trapping systems, the company's innovative service uses cutting-edge AI image recognition to transform how growers monitor and protect their yield.

Russell CropCare provides a direct online platform for buying specialist trapping systems manufactured by Russell IPM, featuring essential field solutions for major threats like aphids and spotted wing drosophila. The company's bespoke pest monitoring service combines these industry-leading traps with cutting-edge AI image recognition to track pest dynamics in real time.

Stop guessing and start knowing. Russell CropCare provides real-time insights into key pest population dynamics, allowing growers to identify critical hotspots accurately and instantly and evaluate control methods before they become a major problem. This proactive, data-driven approach minimises crop damage, reduces guesswork and supports a sustainable farming future.

Russell CropCare's affordable, bespoke packages are tailored to growers' specific needs, ensuring a high-tech solution that delivers a clear return on investment. Speak with our team to discover how Russell CropCare delivers precision and predictability.

Trials with newly emerging biostimulants

Over the season, Landseer Ltd has worked closely with growers on crop protection, fruit quality, storage management and the adoption of new technologies. The company's pre-harvest work continues to include Corteve products such as Flexidor and Tracer, alongside trials with newly emerging biostimulants.

Post-harvest remains a major part of Landseer's work, particularly through SmartFresh™, where growers and store managers are supported with advice on fruit maturity, storage conditions and the management of quality through long-term storage. This season has been particularly challenging, with spring frosts followed by prolonged dry weather creating unusual growing conditions. As a result, careful storage management and

regular monitoring of fruit quality have been more important than ever.

Technology is also becoming an increasingly important focus for the company. Tools such as Hectre are helping growers improve fruit sizing and harvest management, while remote pest monitoring systems such as Trapview provide useful information on pest populations throughout the season. Landseer is also involved in trialling non-destructive fruit testing and hyperspectral imaging, with the aim of making crop quality assessment more precise and efficient.

For Landseer, the priority remains simple: combining practical horticultural knowledge and practices with useful technology to help growers produce, store and market better fruit.



See us
on stand
S26

Hortifeeds is excited to welcome visitors to stand S17 at the National Fruit Show, which takes place on 4 November at the Kent Showground, to discuss the company's extensive range of crop nutrition and associated products.

The team will be presenting Hortifeeds' new photosynthesis enhancing product HortiSynthesis and will be available for questions at the stand throughout the day.

They will also be discussing the benefits of Amētros, a calcium mobility product designed to increase calcium movement

Enhance your fruit crop

within the plant and improve its availability where it is needed. Amētros enhances class one yield and improves fruit firmness across a variety of fruit crops, making it a valuable addition to any crop fertiliser programme.

The Hortifeeds team will be highlighting the advantages of regular applications of the complete biostimulant, HortiBoost. When used in tank mixes with programmed sprays, HortiBoost strengthens plants to resist stress factors such as extreme heat and drought.

The 'little and often' application method makes it a cost-effective way to help protect crops throughout the year.

In addition to these products, Hortifeeds will showcase the company's extensive range of fertilisers and biostimulants, including foliar products suited to all fruit crops and growth stages, as well as bespoke soluble fertilisers for both top and soft fruit.

See us
on stand
S17

Expansion of the RapidAim network in the UK

Agrii returns to the National Fruit Show with a larger stand for 2026. Its fruit agronomy team will be on hand to meet growers and help answer their questions.

The fruit agronomy team will be joined by colleagues from Agrii's digital technology farming team to discuss the company's latest developments to support British fruit growing businesses. This includes the RapidAIM codling moth trap network.

This year has seen an expansion of the RapidAim network in the UK. Agrii is looking to grow this further to provide a greater depth of information on

the spread of codling moth throughout the season. The team will be keen to discuss the traps and their benefits with growers.

"We're excited to be supporting the National Fruit Show for another year," said Matt Greep, Agrii's area business manager for fruit. "Agrii is the biggest agronomy services provider for the UK fruit sector, and we feel our presence reflects that."

"We look forward to meeting growers to discuss how the season has gone."

See us
on stand
S29

See us
on stand
S24



Expert teaching with extensive practical experience

Choosing a college is about finding somewhere that allows you to pursue your interests, develop your skills and feel inspired by what you are learning. NKCC Hadlow College's unique setting gives you an opportunity to do exactly that.

As Kent's only rural and land-based college, Hadlow is proud to offer an educational experience that combines expert teaching with extensive practical experience. The 265-acre site gives students the opportunity to learn in real working environments, from caring for animals and working with horses to developing horticultural and agricultural skills and understanding the natural environment.

The college is incredibly proud of the specialist knowledge and expertise of its staff and the opportunities it gives students to learn by doing. The aim is to help every student develop not only the technical skills they need for their chosen career, but also the confidence, resilience, and independence to succeed.

Whether you have always dreamed of working with animals, want to build a career in agriculture or horticulture, or are passionate about protecting and managing our natural environment, NKCC Hadlow College can help turn your passion into your future.

NKCC Hadlow was recently named as one of the UK's top performing land-based colleges.

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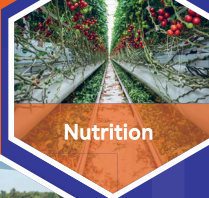
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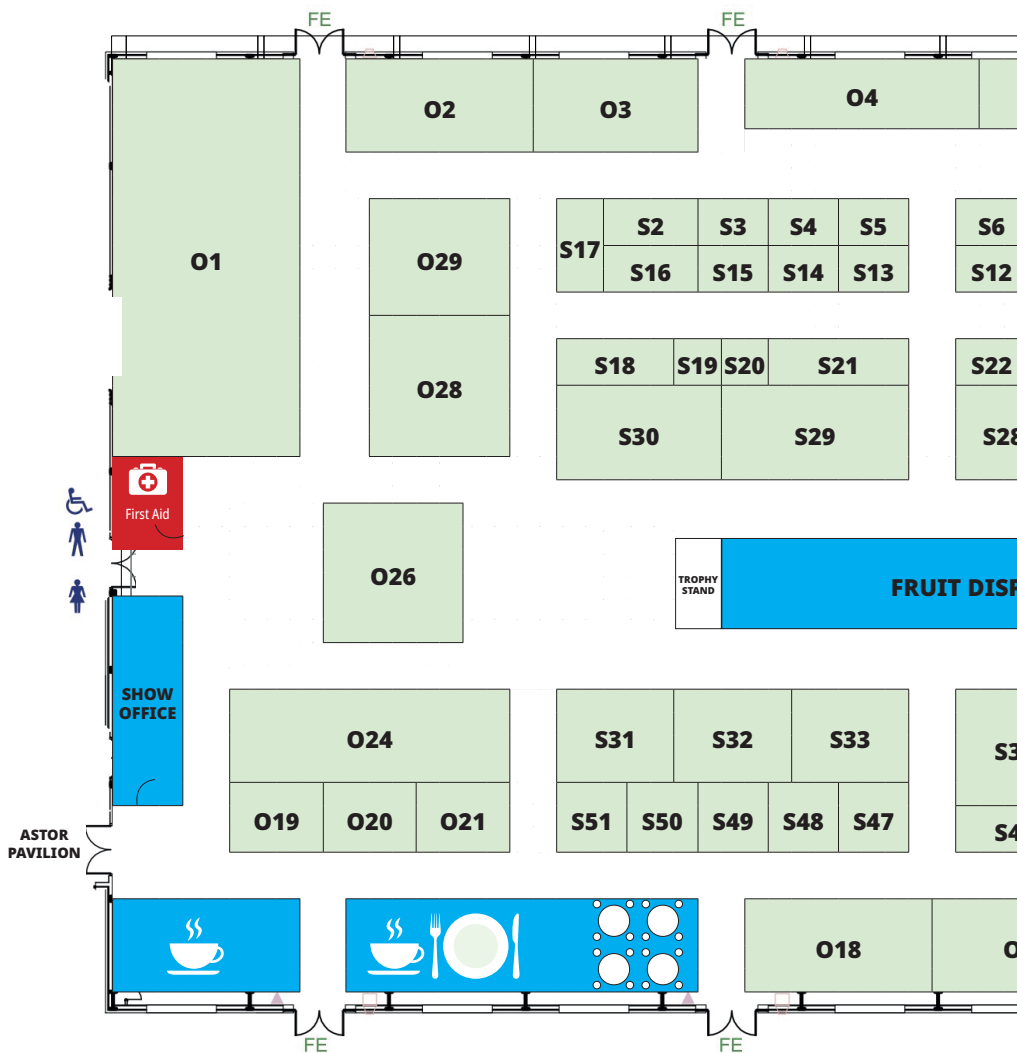
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