



## Planning your orchard

### *Location*

Most fruit trees have similar needs and can grow in a wide range of soil types and situations. You will need to think about a few details however:

- Drainage – avoid lower lying areas that collect water after rain
- Soil – avoid heavy and compact soils, its worth having a bit of a dig about to find out what's below the surface
- Air – spring frosts can damage trees so avoid planting in places where cold air collects or where frosts stay longer, for example in hollows or along wall at the base of a slope
- Sunshine – this is what ripens the fruit, so find the sunniest spot you can
- Shelter – strong winds can damage trees and fruit, so find a spot as sheltered as you can.

If you don't have much space or soil in your school grounds, fruit trees can be grown in pots. They need to be as large as you can get, and you should use good compost. Place them in a sheltered and sunny spot. You may need to think about wrapping the pots in fleece during the winter to protect the roots, which are more susceptible to damage if they're above the ground.

Also, think about how you are going to use the orchard. Are you simply growing fruit, or do you want to use the orchard as a learning space, do you want to incorporate other wildlife, what kind of access will the orchard have, for example at break times.

Think about what the ground is currently used for, or has been used for. There might be underground services, access issues or contamination to consider. Your local authority might be able to help here.

### *Tree form*

Your trees have been grafted onto dwarf root stock, which will prevent them from growing too big that you can get to the fruit. However, you can still grow your trees into a range of shapes and sizes, depending on the space you have (see photos below).

- Bush – ideal if you have a grassy space and want to create a small grove. These are more traditional trees, pruned and kept at a sensible size
- Flat – often called espalier, fan or cordon forms, these involve training the tree branches along a wall or fence, or into a hedge like structure. These can be kept very low (called step-over forms) and grown along a path or a vegetable bed.
- Custom prune – you can prune and train your trees to grow along other structure, for example over a pergola, a gate, or simply up tree poles. Compact column form is great for pot or container growing, or if you have limited space.



**See fruitful schools growing tips – choosing what to grow guidance note.**

All trees will involve regular pruning and training to maintain whatever form you decide on, and to keep it fruiting. More advice on this is available elsewhere in the pack, and free training courses are available through Clyde Valley Orchards Group, Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership, and through Forth Valley Orchards. Keep an eye on their websites for more info (see useful links)

**See fruitful schools growing tips: training & pruning and Tree care guidance note.**

*Design for the future*

We hope that your orchard will be a resource the school can use well into the future, all it needs is a bit of planning and some care & attention. Here are some other ideas for your orchard which you may wish to consider when planning where and how to plant the trees.

- Space for nature
- Space for socialising
- Space for learning
- Get the kids involved from the start



Espalier apple tree



Cordon apple tree



Step-over apple tree



Compact column apple tree

