

The community of Hatton of Fintray planted an orchard at Laird's Park Recreation Area in March 2018.

The Community Orchard is a joint venture involving Fintray Community Council, Fintray Community Association, Hatton of Fintray Primary School and Aberdeenshire Council. The orchard consists of varieties of apple and plum trees, as well as blackcurrant, gooseberry and redcurrant bushes. Autumn fruiting raspberries will be added in October.

In the first year, the apple and plum trees were initially staked and had guards added to protect them from rabbits and the council mowers. They have since had their formative pruning (to establish their shape), been fed and dressed with compost. 2018 was an unexpected hot dry summer, so weekly watering was required from June to mid-August.

The plum and apple trees blossomed beautifully in May 2018 with a large number of fruits being set. Wisdom says to not let the apples fruit in their first year, so we removed over 70 apples to allow them to store energy for future years. Some of the plums were left to ripen. The blackcurrants and gooseberries produced some fruit and the children of the village tried them out; 'Mmmm a bit bitter' was the conclusion! The redcurrants didn't fruit in the first year.

### **Orchard Planting Event – 13 March 2018**

Gardening legend Jim McColl from the Beechgrove Garden planted the final tree (a Plum Victoria) with the help of the children from Fintray Primary School, and shared his expertise on the care of the apple and plum trees and fruit bushes.

Commenting on the project, Jim said, 'I'm so pleased to be here today to help launch this community orchard in Hatton of Fintray and especially to see the youngsters from the primary school. A garden is a fantastic opportunity for learning and it is so important to involve children from the start. This is a project for the future – their future – and will help them understand what pleasure there is in a garden and what fantastic produce they can grow here on their own doorstep in the north east of Scotland.'

Jim, with the youngest and oldest members of the school also buried a time capsule, packed with village memorabilia collected from the community. The children showed their appreciation by singing the

song, 'Let It Grow', and reciting poems written by them for the occasion. In true village style, the event concluded with home baking, tea and homemade lemonade in the village hall.

