

HFS Orchard Workshops for February 2023

February is a great month to join in an HFS Workshop!

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HFS Volunteer Workshops at Pettys Orchard Heritage Block

Wednesday 1 February - 9am to noon

Sunday 5 February - 9am to noon

Wednesday 15 February - 9am to noon

1 Homestead Road, Templestowe - Melway 22 A11

Meet at the big white marquee



Recent photo of Egremont Russet apples in the HFS collection, slowly changing from red to russet

The dates for the next HFS Volunteer Workshops at the Petty's Orchard Heritage Fruit block are:

- the month's first Wednesday, **1 February**
- the month's first Sunday, **5 February**
- the month's third Wednesday, **15 February**

You're cordially invited to help us with:

- Picking early-season apples, in preparation for our Tastings (see below)
- In the HFS Nursery:
 - Checking on status of trees and the irrigation system
 - Maintaining and expanding the "tree bath" system
- Extra irrigation (if required)
- Mowing, weeding, whipper-snipping, hole-filling and removing blackberry plants
- Summer tree pruning
- Painting labels on trees (*weather permitting*)

As ever, we'll make time to revel over cuppas and home-baked specialties. Please **bring your own keep-cup** to avoid generating unnecessary rubbish. We look forward to seeing you there!

IT'S A BONZA YEAR AT THE HFS HERITAGE BLOCK!

For most of the last ten years, many of the apple trees in the HFS Heritage Block have fruited poorly or not at all. But somehow, this year the weather and bees have hit a sweet spot: we're seeing not only more fruit than usual, but also fruit is maturing on some of our rarest and shyest-bearing varieties! We are looking forward to presenting a number of extremely seldom-seen apple varieties in our Tasting events over the next few months. The dates for these will be published soon.

SUMMER TREE-WATERERS NEEDED

We need a few more helpers to water our newly planted trees this summer.

Over the last two years, we have planted many new trees in the Heritage Block. Like all of us, they need some nurturing early in life: young fruit trees can be severely retarded or even killed if they're not adequately irrigated during hot weather. Unfortunately, our drip-irrigation watering system doesn't serve these trees well, as it's designed to deliver occasional multi-day deep soakings. That works well for our mature trees, but our young trees need a lesser amount of water more frequently.

In past years, we've struggled to water all of our young trees during summer consistently, and we have lost quite a few of them as a result. With so many new young trees, watering this summer will be crucial ... and we need you to help! This will involve rolling out the hoses, connecting them to the dripper system, and hand-watering of some of the more isolated trees. For most of the summer, we expect that two hands-on waterings per week should be sufficient (some of which will be done as part of our Workshops). We'll also want to be informed about what watering has been done, as well as any issues which might require immediate attention. There's nothing onerous in all this, and detailed but easy-to-follow instructions will be provided.

If you can commit to one or two hours of watering at the Heritage Block at least twice over the summer period, please [email](#) us, or speak to John or Fred at one of our Workshops.

REMARKABLE HERITAGE FRUIT TREES

To start of the year, here are snippets about a few significant (historically or otherwise) fruit trees you might find interesting:

The oldest apple tree in Victoria (probably)

An apple tree planted in about 1840 on a property in Greensborough originally owned by John Batman is probably the oldest living apple tree in Victoria. What its actual variety or varieties are is uncertain, but most likely it is either Rymer and/or Whatmore's Fancy, and possibly it was grown on Winter Majetin - all of which were commonly grown in the UK at the time. Whatever it is, it's a magnificent tree, now about 6m high and about 10m in width (the bicycle in the first picture below is exactly 2m long, for reference). It's easily accessed from the path along the Plenty River in Greensborough, just southeast of the Maroondah Aqueduct pipe-bridge. A good compendium of information about this remarkable tree is at <http://images.heritage.vic.gov.au/attachment/70109> .



Batman's Tree, in 2014 ...



... and in 1910

The oldest pear tree in Victoria (probably)

A 170-year old Black Achan pear tree stands not far from the south-east corner Ruffey Lake Park, Doncaster. This is the last remaining tree from former orchards in this area planted in the 1850s by German immigrant families. It still bears fruit and is quite an attractive specimen. More details about the park are [here](#), and details about the tree and its condition are [here](#).

Vast orchards in Melbourne's eastern suburbs (historically)

Is it any coincidence that these old fruit trees are both in Melbourne's eastern suburbs? Not really: much of the area was dominated by fruit orchards up until the 1950s. To grasp the extent of this, check out aerial photos from 1945 overlaid with recent images at <https://1945.melbourne/> (use the slider in the centre to adjust the layering; you can zoom in to a limited extent): it's easy to see that the entire area from Templestowe to Donvale was largely orchards then. Zoom in even closer using the standalone 1945 aerial photo set at <http://maps-collection.library.unimelb.edu.au/historical/1945melb/> .

The most varieties of apples on one tree (maybe)

It's fun to graft new apple varieties onto your trees. This skill is especially handy if you live in a small space and can only wedge in a few trees, but still want more variety in your crop. One man in the UK took this concept to extremes, and grew an apple tree which has 250-plus varieties of apples! Amazing pictures and the background story are [here](#).

... and a new Australian collection of heritage apple cider varieties

A collection containing dozens of apple cider tree varieties has recently been established by the Department of Primary Industries in New South Wales. This orchard was formed by duplicating the varieties from a private collection gathered over many years by a cider-making enthusiast. Details about this are [here](#).

COVID-19 NOTICE

COVID-19 restrictions are now but a distant memory, but nonetheless:

- If you are feeling unwell - even with only mild symptoms - please protect yourself and others by **doing the right thing** and staying at home and getting tested
- All volunteers should endeavour to **maintain social distancing** at all times
- Please feel free to wear a **mask** at any time

Memberships

We are a membership-based group. It is only through the support of our members that we can continue doing the work we do. Please consider becoming a member.

Click below to go to our web site. Payments are via PayPal.

[Memberships](#)

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Our email address is: heritagefruitsociety@gmail.com

Our mailing address is:

24 Rathmines Street
Fairfield 3078 Victoria
Australia

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