Highbury Community Orchard Project – Grafting Workshop

13/03/2010

On March 6th 2010 a grafting workshop at Fox Hollies School was attended by 16 people who grafted some 40 saplings using psions (topstock) taken from the Chamberlain-era 'fruit tunnel' at Highbury's Four Seasons Garden Project. The saplings will now be looked after in pots at the TV gardens at Kings Heath Park until they are large enough to be planted out at a Community Orchard site and other locations, possibly including private and public gardens and nurseries.

The 'fruit tunnel' is about 100 years old, and consists of apple and pear trees whose fruits were most likely grown for use in the Chamberlain kitchen. These surviving trees are the source of a new generation of trees being nurtured by local volunteers for a Highbury Community Orchard. The orchard is still in the talking phase, but is being developed on a 3-year timeline.

This grafting workshop was the first use of the antique stock. It is hoped that the resulting trees and orchard will be within Highbury Park, and near to the apiary so as to benefit from the attention of Highbury's bees. Some starts will be sold or donated to other organisations or for private use, maintaining the heritage by expanding the number of places they're planted.

The workshop was led by Wade Muggleton, a Senior Countryside Officer for Worcestershire County Council who has also written articles on grafting for *Permaculture* Magazine

Philip (Oz) Osman, of Kings Heath Centre Partnership, who organised the workshop with support from Alys Fowler, Fox Hollies School, Four Seasons Garden Project and Highbury Park Friends, said "Most of the participants had had little or no grafting experience but we anticipate a reasonable success rate with the grafts. We plan to run a workshop each year in February/March and build up a stock of saplings which we can use for the Highbury Park Community Orchard and maybe other similar projects in the area."

For information about future grafting workshops and the Community Orchard, contact Oz by email ozzz@blueyonder.co.uk (preferably) or phone on 07816 622 459.

Photo by Philip Osman