

HFS Orchard Workshops for September 2022

September is a great time to be part of an HFS Workshop!

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HFS Volunteer Workshops at Pettys Orchard Heritage Block

Sunday 4 September - 9am to noon
Wednesday 7 September - 9am to noon
Wednesday 21 September - 9am to noon

1 Homestead Road, Templestowe - Melway 22 A11

Meet at the big white marquee



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

- the month's first Sunday, **4 September** (*special plum/apricot workshop - see below*)
- the month's first Wednesday, **7 September**
- the month's third Wednesday, **21 September**

You're cordially invited to help us with:

- Our on-going annual winter pruning
- Doing checks on trees throughout the heritage block, especially in the plum collection
- In the HFS Nursery:
 - Checking on status of trees and the irrigation system
 - Preparing for installation of new "bath" areas there
 - ... and a range of other on-going improvements
- Mowing, weeding, whipper-snipping, hole-filling and removing blackberry plants
- Painting labels on trees (*weather permitting*)

As always, there will be ample time for a very social break over cuppas and home-baked delights. Please **bring your own keep-cup** to avoid generating unnecessary rubbish. We hope to see you soon!

POTTED (!) HISTORY OF THE HFS PLUM AND APRICOT COLLECTIONS

At our orchard workshop at Petty's on Sunday September 4, we will concentrate on our plum and apricot collections. We have a number of plum trees to be potted up for another year or to be planted out in the main orchard, and will also graft some plum scion onto rootstock. Additionally, we'll install basic kangaroo protection around all these trees, check the status of all the existing planted trees and do a complete inventory.

A bit of background about these collections in the Heritage Block will help put this effort,

as well as much else that HFS does, into context. Petty's Orchard was one of the many commercial orchards in the Doncaster-Templestowe district when it was established in 1911, initially specialising in producing apples and pears. Three generations of the Petty family managed the orchard until 1981, when it was acquired by Metropolitan and Melbourne Board of Works (MMBW). Ownership of the orchard has since been held by state government bodies, firstly Melbourne Parks and Waterways from about 1992. It now rests in the hands of Parks Victoria, which leases it to the private operator who has run it as a family business since the early 1990s.

The description which follows is drawn not from any written history of the property (records are surprisingly scanty), but from discussions with "old hands" and our own observations and conclusions. What we now call the Heritage Block was planted out in 1984 with two sections:

- a 'Demonstration Orchard' section (originally the first five rows nearest the Café), in which eleven of the most commonly-produced apple varieties of the day were grown, each on five different trellis or training systems frequently used back then: Vase System, Central Leader, Lincoln Trellis, Tatura Trellis and EBRO Trellis. This section was probably used for demonstration or training purposes for trainee orchard operators to learn the peculiarities of pruning these varieties on each of those systems, and thus to be prepared for work in full-scale fruit orchards. The rootstock used for these was probably a non-dwarfing rootstock such as Northern Spy.
- an 'Antique Apple Cultivars' section, which originally comprised the remaining nine rows. The first five rows of this section were grafted on non-dwarfing rootstock (quite possibly Northern Spy), while the remaining four rows were mainly grafted to a dwarfing rootstock (likely M26 or M27).

From 1999, members of what later became HFS (itself incorporated in 2006) began to be involved with maintaining the entire Heritage Block. Within the last few years, it's become increasingly clear that the health of the forty-year-old trees in the first ten rows - those planted on non-dwarfing rootstock - had begun to decline markedly.

The long and on-going process of replanting these rows began about ten years ago with the removal of the original Row 10. In its former place is now a double row of closely-planted apple trees grafted to dwarfing rootstock, which has permitted us to substantially increase the number of apple varieties held in the collection. The original Rows 1 and 2 were also removed about two years ago. The width of these rows was greater than elsewhere, allowing us to insert five closer-spaced rows in the same space.

All of this aligns with our always seeking a good answer to the obvious long-standing question about HFS: Why is there an 's' in 'Heritage Fruits?' The answer, of course, is that preserving culturally and historically significant fruit varieties extends far wider than just apples - and we've always hoped to find space in the Heritage Block to implement this.

And so, over the past three years, we've been able to establish new collections of plum (about 90 varieties) and apricot (about 20 varieties) trees to the Heritage Block at Petty's. We have sourced scion material for these over many years, largely from collections (some now dissolved, for example the Bathurst Research Station) in Victoria and New South Wales. We've painstakingly grafted these up, nurtured them for several years, and planted them out into the freshly-vacated areas of the Heritage Block at Petty's Orchard. Also on the cards within the next few years is the development of a limited pear collection.

Unfortunately, many of those new young plum and apricot trees we've planted in the Heritage Block have suffered severely from the ravages of kangaroos and inconsistent watering. We've responded by improving how and when we plant out new trees, as well as

the protections they are given until they grow to become more resilient. Work in this vein on the plum and apricot collections in particular is the main focus of the workshop on Sunday 4 September. **Please come and help if you can!**

SPEAKING OF POTTED ... GOT ANY SURPLUS 200mm POTS?

If you have any spare 200mm planting pots, please bring some along to any workshop for HFS use. We're always planting up new trees, and 200mm pots have become our standard size for most purposes. Thanks!

ADVANCE ANNOUNCEMENT: HFS AGM ON SUNDAY 2 OCTOBER

As part of our orchard workshop at Petty's on Sunday October 2, we will our HFS Annual General Meeting at 11am. As usual, we'll provide a morning tea and a tour around the orchard to show off what's been achieved over the last year. Please plan to come, and feel free to bring significant other(s) and friends as well. Complete details will be provided closer to the date. We hope to see you there!

COVID-19 NOTICE

Most long-standing COVID-19 restrictions have now been lifted, 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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24 Rathmines Street
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