

A fruit identification project

What are the aims of the project?

There is a huge interest in identifying apple varieties both from the public and from those involved in conservation of heritage fruit and traditional orchard habitats. However, skilled identifiers are few whilst training and reference resources have been difficult to obtain.

In 2009 the apple identification team in the East of England decided to build a reference website for both experts and beginners consisting of high quality zoomable images, searching on observable characteristics and descriptive text including heritage and cultivation notes. This was to be a community effort with expertise freely given and published free for the benefit of all. The website is now live and we have started the huge task of building the content. Several conservation groups have joined in and we are spreading geographically.

We are progressing well, but are only in the third season of building content in what is at least a ten-year journey.

Who is involved and can anyone join?

Although anyone can use the website and there is guidance on botanical terms and interpretation, it is deliberately aimed at horticulturalists rather than the public. We have over 20 editors and 100 associates and have a panel of moderators and experts to guide us. Members have a forum to provide feedback on varieties.

The system requires Microsoft Windows, a broadband connection and benefits from a high quality monitor. The site is at www.fruitid.com and you may be asked to load Silverlight which is a free official download from Microsoft.

How is the content created?

Firstly the fruitID team designed the search methods and characteristics and have loaded this framework into the system. Contributors are invited to research and describe one or more varieties from over 660 names in the system so far and then administrators allocate user permissions accordingly.

The photography and codification are largely based on samples from trees growing in the National Fruit Collection. Each variety is accorded 20-30 images and we have over 7,000 images loaded on the system so far. From the samples and the images, we code the characteristics of each variety and so far we have coded over 45,000 properties on the system. We also load the descriptive text as it is submitted by the editors. Each variety is checked by moderators as it becomes available and is then individually published. Each variety is open to the community for critique. Lastly we will road test a new sample of each variety to see if it is searchable and the properties validated again.

How do we search?

You can search on the name of a variety when using the system as a reference. Searching takes place on synonyms since some apples have many names. In this image we have searched on "Laxton's Early Crimson" and we see the details screen for that variety consisting of zoomable images and detailed description including a cross reference to the literature.



