Start of Spring

March/April marks the end of the winter practical work season. We can now look forward to warmer and, hopefully, drier weather! All across the countryside and urban areas there is new green growth and flowers opening up. The birds and other wildlife are all busy getting ready for nesting and breeding, making use of the longer warmer days.

The Poole Farm staff are busy organising and planning the program for summer work and volunteer and family events up until the end of September. We are now enjoying watching the new hedgerows, planted over the winter, coming into leaf. As well as listening to the chattering birds sing while eating lunch out in the sun soaked landscape.

28th February - marked end of hedgerow planting

Over the winter period, volunteers, school and college groups and PEA (Plymouth Environmental Action) planted 900m of new hedgerows across the Community Park, consisting of 4,500 trees.

On Tuesday 28th February, the last hedgerow tree was planted for the 16/17 planting season. From September until the end of February, 780 volunteer hours of hedgerow planting took place. It was a massive achievement for the volunteers and for the project. All the hedgerows trees are native species that are generally found in conservation hedgerows.
A new venture at Poole Farm has resulted in 200 Christmas trees being planted. The plans for the Christmas trees is to have a pick your own tree plantation in around 5 years time. This will make the festive time of year extra special for the residences of Plymouth.

Volunteers helped to plant the trees between planting the hedgerows over the winter.

On the 11th March, over 70 people attended our largest community engagement day at Poole Farm. They all attended to help plant the City’s largest Community Orchard. The fruit trees planted were a mix of apple, pear, cherry, plum, damson and mulberry, all of which are native species to the UK and are of local varieties.

We were joined for the day by PEA (Plymouth Environmental Action), Buglife and Devon Wildlife Trust to deliver a range of activities for all age groups to get involved with. As well as planting trees, there were opportunities to sow wildflowers on the bare earth areas and to make bug and bee boxes to encourage invertebrates to visit the orchard.

The crop from the orchard is going to be used for a mixture of eating, cooking and juicing. The orchard will also be able to be used as a great learning tool for all age groups that come out onto the site.

The day was a great success. To have such a large number of community participants was amazing to see, and without their help we would not have managed to get 222 trees planted in 5 hours. The weather also held out for the day which helped to keep the volunteers motivated.

A huge thank you to all the volunteers that got involved, along with the other organisations that were involved. Also a massive thank you to Joe Bestwick, an apprentice at Poole Farm, who designed the orchard and planned the day to ensure that it all ran smoothly.

City’s Largest Community Orchard

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Christmas trees at Poole Farm

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What to look out for

Being spring there are many different elements of nature to look out for. All plants and trees are a hub of energy ready for new growth to start. Trees are coming out in blossom, flowers are coming out and trees are turning green.

From April to June is the perfect time to look out for Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*). These take the appearance of dark purple flowers, growing up to 40cm in height. The leaves are dark green in colour and form a rosette on the ground. They are commonly found in grassland and woodlands.

The common spring flower associated with woodland, Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), can been seen coming into early flower in April. They are very characteristic flowers looking like a bell shaped flower, generally blue in colour. They are schedule 8 protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1998. This means that the flowers can be picked or bulbs dug up. They are also important habitat indicators as they are often associated with ancient woodland indicator species along with others.

Learning New Skills

Spring is the perfect time to start learning new skills in ID-ing, get your tree ID books out and start brushing up on your skills as the new leaves start coming out. Also brush up on grassland and ground flora species ID-ing.

Come May time we will be running some basic ID training days to run along side our Citizen Science program at Poole Farm. These will give you the opportunities to learn, brush up and expand your ID skills of flora in a range of habitats including grassland, hedgerows and woodlands.
**Schedule of Events**

- **4/4/2017** — Volunteer practical day. 9.30-4pm meet at Poole Farm PL6 8NF
- **6/4/2017** — Family Easter fun event. 11-2pm meet at Poole Farm PL6 8NF
- **11/4/2017** — Volunteer practical day. 9.30-4pm meet at Poole Farm PL6 8NF
- **18/4/2017** — Volunteer practical day. 9.30-4pm meet at Poole Farm PL6 8NF
- **22/4/2017** — Guided Walk. 10-3pm. Meet at St Matthews primary school PL6 5XP
- **25/4/2017** — Volunteer practical day. 9.30-4pm. Meet at Poole Farm PL6

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Please email derrifordcp@plymouth.gov.uk to book onto any of the above events or for more information.