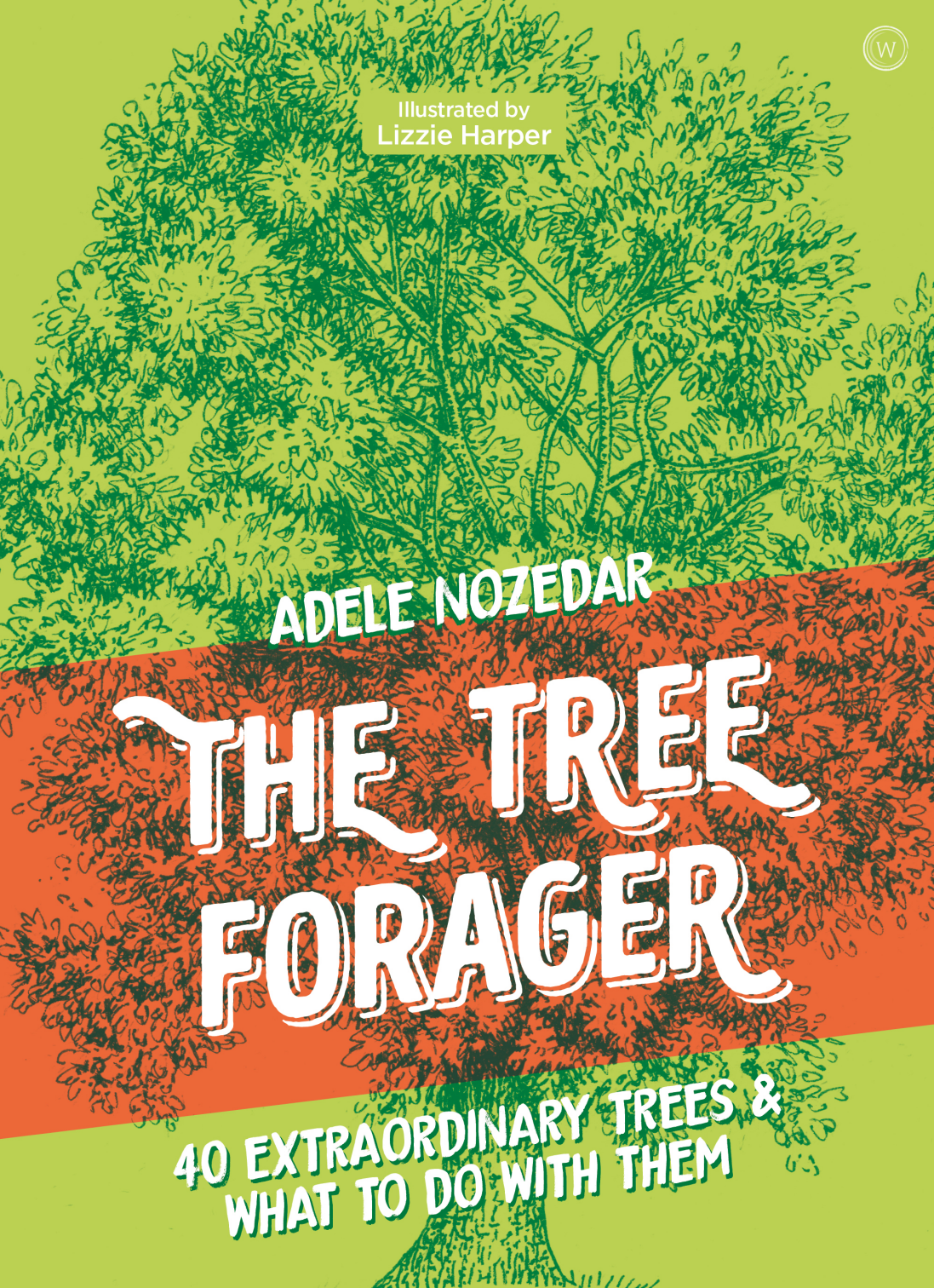

Illustrated by
Lizzie Harper
ADELE NOZEDAR
THE TREE FORAGER
40 EXTRAORDINARY TREES & WHAT TO DO WITH THEM

THE TREE FORAGER

Adele Nozedar

Illustrations by Lizzie Harper

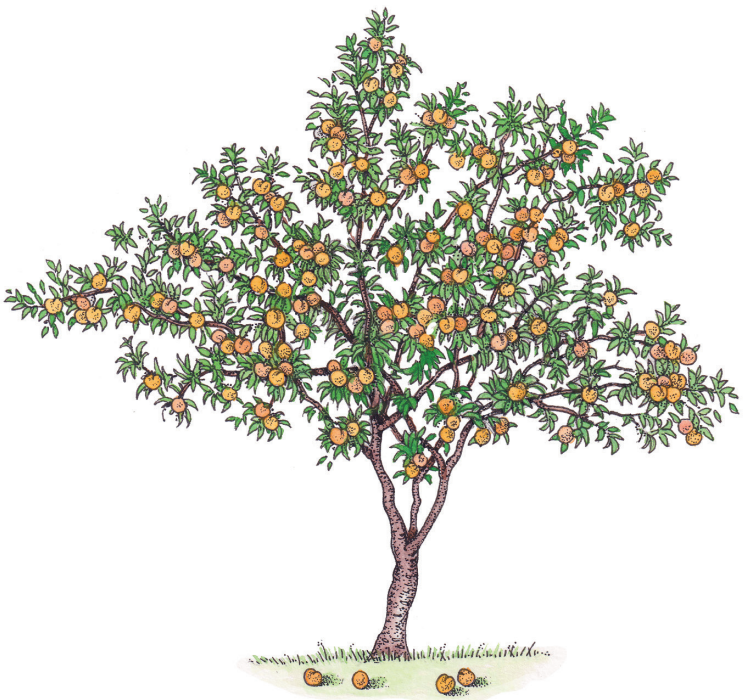
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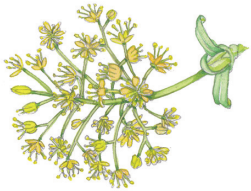
This book is dedicated to

Amanda Rudman,
"to whom I owe the leaping delight
that quickens my senses".
With love, Dominic



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The Tree Forager
Adele Nozedar

First published in the UK and USA in 2021 by Watkins, an imprint of Watkins Media Limited
Unit 11, Shepperton House,
83–93 Shepperton Road
London N1 3DF

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COMMISSIONING EDITOR: Fiona Robertson
EDITOR: Ingrid Court-Jones
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Brittany Willis
HEAD OF DESIGN: Glen Wilkins
COMMISSIONED ARTWORK: Lizzie Harper
PRODUCTION: Uzma Taj

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

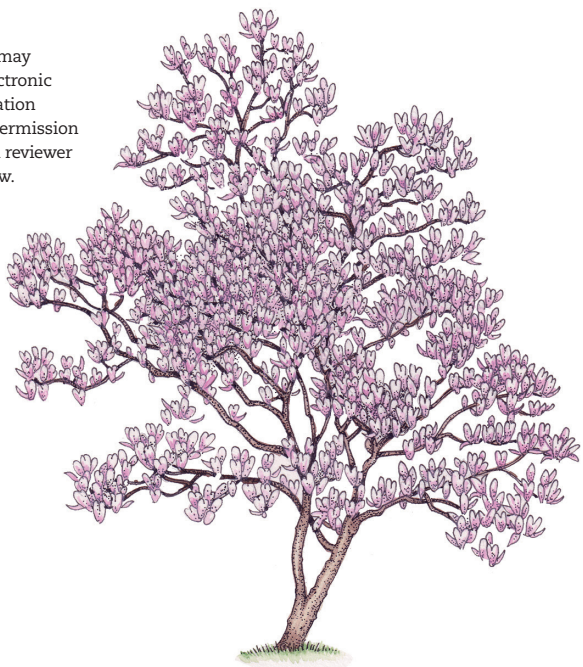
ISBN: 978-1-786785-47-3 (Hardback)
ISBN: 978-1-786785-74-9 (eBook)

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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FOREWORD:
The Sound of a Tree

You might think the idea of there being a connection between trees and music is quite obscure, even esoteric. But if you're lucky enough to grow up, as I did, surrounded by forests and able to create music, you'll know that it makes a lot of sense. In fact, even without these advantages, it's true. Let me tell you why.

Outside my home there's a large parking place, and right in the middle there's a big old chestnut tree. Recently, on a bright morning, I saw a stranger with her arms wrapped around the tree, hugging it passionately; the hug lasted for such a long time that I actually felt quite awkward watching the ritual. But it made me think that perhaps I'd do the same if I didn't have music to express my connection to the trees and the forests.

The smell, the light, the sound and the pure existence of trees has been a part of my being for a long time – since forever. I remember taking long, long walks with my father and my family into the woods. The amount of time that I have on earth, set against the perspective of the age of the forest, always gives me a feeling of great humbleness, making me feel grounded, connected to the moment, inhaling the essence of the might and beauty of the trees, inhaling every portion of oxygen that they give us.

I get that same "utterly alive" feeling when I sit on my bench in front of a grand piano. I use a technique called "prepared piano", in which lots of unexpected items are placed inside the body of the instrument – from sweet wrappers to ping-pong balls to things you've picked up from the ground. The audience watches me

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experiment with sounds, creating the sound of cracking wood, the rattling of leaves or the knocking of a woodpecker. Together, these sounds create a rhythmical texture that can be either in synch or else randomly arranged, complete chaos, an expression of one moment in that particular place. Even I don't always know exactly what's going to happen!

Music, for me, has always been about much more than melodies and harmonies. It is, in a way, nothing more or less than the combination of sounds in a certain place, either with, or without, an instrumentalist. So, the stage, without the pianist and before the concert, is already music. The piano tuner tuning the piano is also music. If I think about a walk in a forest, this is also music – with or without me. The rhythm of the bird song, the leaves, the breeze in the trees and all the other elements that create sound are very specifically connected with the place, creating a unique identity for that one particular moment.

Trees and music are, for me, rudimental elements in my existence, and the invitation to write this foreword has really made me think.

Thanks, Adele, for inviting me to share some thoughts.

Volker Bertelmann (Hauschka), 2021

Volker Bertelmann is a German pianist and composer who mainly performs and records under the name Hauschka. He is best known for his compositions for prepared piano.

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INTRODUCTION:
Connecting with Trees

"The question is not what you look at, but what you see."

Henry David Thoreau (1817–62)

Like you (after all, you're reading this book), I have a deep, deep love of trees. They're gentle, magnanimous, always there, giving us so much even though we don't give them very much in return. They're so common that we often don't really notice them, and yet they're absolutely vital to life on this planet. This is why, as a forager, I realized I needed to turn my attention toward them, to gather them together as it were, in a celebration of their extraordinary ordinariness and their mind-blowing possibilities. And, of course, the sheer, breathtaking beauty of them.

I didn't randomly choose the trees I've included in this book; rather, they're trees I know personally, and which are part of my own story for various reasons. This is not a "normal" book about identifying trees and, dare I say, it's not a "normal" book about foraging, either. My aim in writing this book is simply to get you to notice trees. The more you take notice of trees, the more you'll find that you can't stop looking.

Trees may well become an obsession for you, as they have for me. As human beings, we are all tree foragers whether we realize it or not, and you'll recognize other members of our club by the interesting debris that we have in our pockets. X-ray vision would reveal something like the following:

- Unknown seeds, stuck grittily into the seams of the pocket
- A pinecone or two
- A small magnifying glass, in need of a polish
- A piece of stick with oakmoss attached

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- A few acorns
- An oak apple
- A pencil stub
- A redundant key
- Dog biscuits

Does this sound similar? It's actually a bona fide inventory of my own pockets right now!

The Scent of a Tree

The book you are holding is about trees; even though the paper may be "wood-free", it is still made from trees. Could you do something for me? Bury your nose in this book and have a good, deep, noisy sniff. Isn't the scent delicious? When I worked in a bookshop, I knew that I would always like the customers who instinctively stuck their noses into a book, as you just did, not because they wanted to read it, but because they wanted to inhale that wonderful, fresh, new-book scent.

One day in the future, in about 60 years' time, this book – the one you are holding now – will smell different. It will smell even better; it will smell like an *old* book. That mellow, unmistakable scent, which I have tried (and failed) to replicate with various ingredients, is the aroma of pages gently rotting. If you pick up an old leaf from the leaf litter on a forest floor or one that's been buried in a compost bin for a while, you'll get a scent that's almost the same as that of an old book. And you'll suddenly realize why the pages of a book are also called leaves.

Listening to a Tree

There's another aspect of trees that I've noticed and never really spoken about until now, largely because I find it hard to explain. Somehow, trees and music are inextricably linked. I realize that this might seem quite an abstract concept, but as I've been writing this

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book, the idea has become more and more insistent. It was said that Gertrude Jekyll, the formidable and infamously eccentric writer, photographer, artist and garden designer, could recognize trees by the sound made by their leaves as the wind blew through them. Indeed, the sounds that trees make – the rattling of brittle leaves, the swooshing of boughs, the whispering susurration of a sudden breeze met by the rise and fall of a branch – have a music all of their own. They take what's given by the weather and conduct an orchestral score that's different every time, impossible to copy or repeat. And like the best kind of music, tree music carries you along with it, without you knowing what the orchestra will do next. I find, though, that it's in the elusive spaces, the silences among the sounds of a tree, that the true music lies.

You'll see that for each tree in the book I have chosen a song or a tune. You might think the songs are a good fit – or you might not. It doesn't matter. The idea is to try a different way of thinking. I have also put together a Spotify playlist, called "The Tree Forager", which is a collection of tree-related songs. It's open to collaboration, and I'd love to hear your choices!

Planting a Tree

I'm not going to go into detail about the damage our relentless human busyness is causing to the planet. Instead, with this book, I want to concentrate on what we *can* do on the most personal level, to bring back the balance and restore harmony. And since we are such an imaginative, problem-solving species, I've no doubt that we will find a way to do it.

The easiest place to start is by planting a tree. Not everyone has vast tracts of land in which to do this, but I can promise you that wherever you are there will be a tree conservation project near you. You could start, or join, a woodland group. My local one has been going for eight years now, meeting once a month. We manage the woodland sustainably, and the timber from fallen trees keeps the

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fires of twenty or so families going all year. As well as this, we get to spend a few carefree hours outside in the forest. It costs nothing. The Woodland Trust, based in the UK, supplies baby trees to community woodland groups like ours. And when you plant a tree, bear in mind that you are planting it for the entire world.

If you'd like to get involved with conservation, rewilding or tree planting projects, it makes sense to look at what is most local to you. In the USA, the American Forest Foundation, based in Washington DC, has spent three quarters of a century helping family forest owners to care for their land. And their work continues as, faced with growing threats to forests, it is more important than ever that family woodland owners actively steward their land.

In the UK, I'd like to highlight the work of the Penpont Project, a revolutionary restoration scheme that is led and managed by young people between the ages of 12 and 18. The project is not only about trees, but the bigger environmental picture, with a strong educational emphasis, too. Also close to me is another fabulous organization, Stump Up for Trees, which aims to plant a million trees in the area of the Brecon Beacons National Park, where I live. Which brings me to the dedication at the front of this book.

I wanted to be able to "pay back" some of the trees that were used in the physical manufacturing of this book. Normally the dedication would be written by me and illustrator Lizzie Harper, but we decided instead to raffle the opportunity for someone else to write it, with the proceeds going to Stump Up for Trees. Take a look on page 3 where the winner's chosen words are revealed!

How to Use This Book

There is no one, "correct" way to use this book. You might like to use it to help you identify trees, or read up about the wildlife they attract, their medicinal uses and folklore, and then make it your mission to find each species, one by one; or you may prefer simply to take a more ad hoc approach and just dip in and out as the fancy

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takes you. Above all I'd love this book to become a trusty companion you take with you on foraging trips that gets grubby with handprints and dog-eared from being in your pocket. I want you to enjoy it – and yourself – as well as the trees around you.

If you are new to foraging, a good place to start is by simply taking a walk through a place where there are trees. It doesn't need to be a heavily wooded area or an arboretum. Even in a city you can find amazing trees, often hidden in plain view. Their names don't matter. Just look at them, admire them and get to know them.

I hope, too, that you'll be inspired to try the recipes I've suggested – whether for food, herbal medicine or even ink – as well as the many diverse craft-making activities I've included.

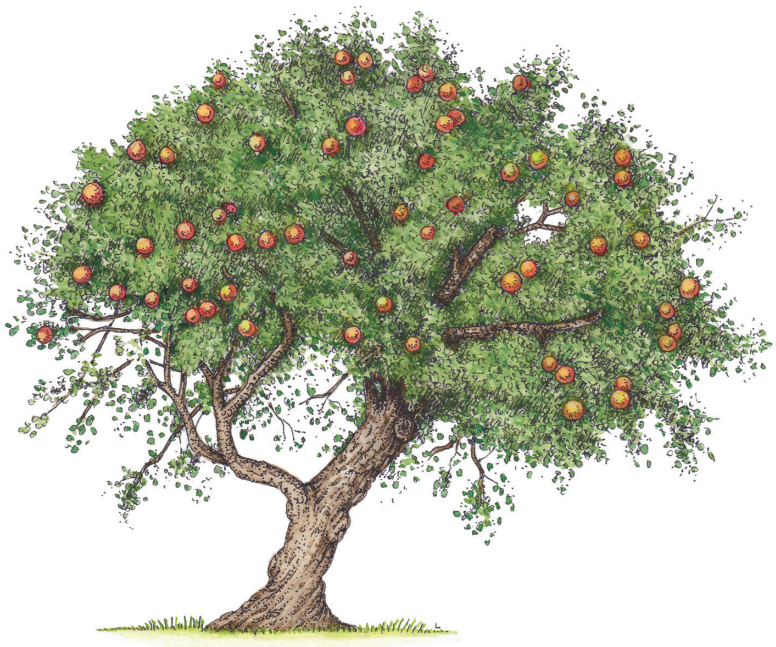
Everything I do – whether it's a foraging walk, making gin blends from wild plants, encouraging kids to drag their parents out to find edible plants, or even writing books – is really only ever about one thing: getting people to see and appreciate what we have, right here, right now, on this planet that we are so incredibly lucky to be part of. This is a roundabout way of saying that this book is about much more than trees. It's about finding ourselves as we get to know a little bit more about our world. Although some of us might think otherwise, we're not special, we're not separate and we're definitely not superior to any other life form on this planet. We're inextricably linked to the natural world and its fate is our fate, too. That's my belief, anyway. I find this idea comforting – liberating, even.

I hope this book encourages you to spend time exploring and appreciating nature. But most of all, I wish that one day you will look at a tree you've seen a thousand times before and suddenly be blown away by it. You'll know when this happens – the magic will stay with you for the rest of your life.

Happy foraging!

Adele

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Apple

Malus sylvestris and *Malus domestica* (ABOVE)

Song: "Hike" by Hauschka

When I was a kid, I was fascinated by the miniature apples that fell from the trees along the grass verge outside our house. In fact, I have just realized that these little apples were the very first wild food I ever foraged. I thought they were utterly magical, something from Alice's Wonderland and Narnia all rolled into one. The disappointment, though, came when I tried to eat one. Crab apples are generally mouth-puckeringly bitter, though not always. But because these were "my" apples, I pretended they were delicious anyway. Some crab apples are very palatable, especially if you're prepared for the worst.

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The magical nature of the apple is recorded in folk tales and fairy tales (for example, Snow White was persuaded to take a bite of the beautiful, bright red, poisoned apple, and the Hesperides, the three nymphs in Greek mythology, guarded the golden apples). Also, you can cut an apple across the middle to reveal even more magic – a neat arrangement of five little pips that outline the shape of a five-pointed star, which as everyone knows, is the symbol of witches and sorcerers and which extrapolates most elegantly in nature as the Golden Spiral or the Golden Mean.

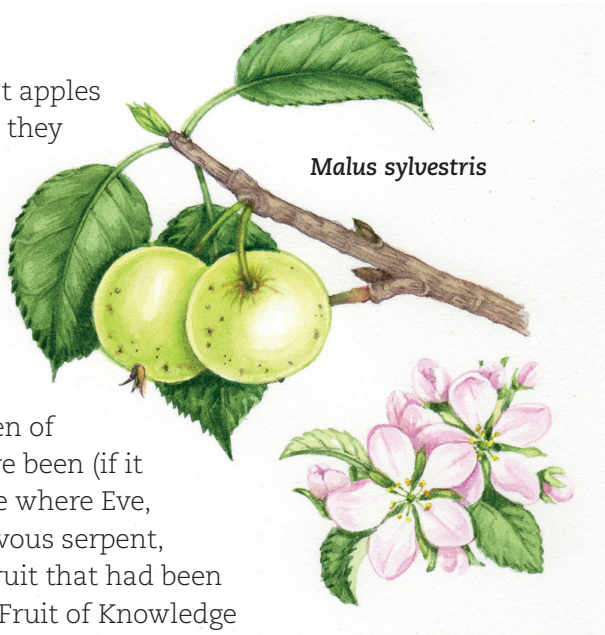
The names of old apple varieties read rather like a poem, especially if you say them out loud:

Worcester Pearmain, Beauty of Bath, King of the Pippins, Bloody Ploughman, Cornish Gilliflower, Egremont Russet, Keswick Codlin, Peasegood Nonsuch and Laxtons Superb, to name but a few.

What does it look like?

***Malus sylvestris*, also known as the crab apple or the forest apple, has a bushy appearance and can be found at the edges of forests or woodland. It grows to a height of 10m (33ft) with a similar spread. The true crab apple has thorns, a reminder that it belongs to the Rosaceae family that includes hawthorn, rowan and, of course, roses. These original wild crab apples are something of a rarity. The greyish, purply brown of the bark starts to flake as the tree grows older. Leaves are alternately spaced and oval-shaped, with pretty five-petalled blossoms, white, with a pink blush. After the blossoms have fallen, the small, rounded fruits grow to take their place. *Malus domestica* – the cultivated apple tree – grows up to 12m (39ft) tall, with fruits that are considerably larger than those of the crab apple.**

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Malus sylvestris

But where did the first apples come from, and how did they spread throughout almost all temperate parts of the globe?

The first apple trees came from Kazakhstan, near the Caucasus Mountains, at a place close to where the Garden of Eden is purported to have been (if it existed). This is the place where Eve, egged on by the mischievous serpent, offered Adam the only fruit that had been forbidden to them – the Fruit of Knowledge (often referred to as an apple). Things went very rapidly downhill from then on, as the pair realized they were naked, covered their embarrassment with the handy leaves of the fig tree (see page 65) and were exiled from the garden. It's an intriguing story, whether we choose to believe it or not. The apple that caused all the bother may well have been an ancient variety, *Malus sieversii*, the first apple to be cultivated, which still grows there. The name of the old capital of Kazakhstan, Almaty, means "full of apples" (*alma* means "apple").

The difference between a cultivated apple and a wild one is simply a matter of size. A crab apple can be up to 5cm (2in) across, whereas a cultivated one is generally bigger. Apples hybridize freely, hence there are more than 6,000 named varieties, and the seed of an apple is often very different from its parents. A naturally hybridized apple, often seen in the wild, is called a "wilding". We have developed a system called "grafting", which involves combining the lower part of a rootstock of one tree to the budding branch or "scion" of another tree, to maximize the qualities we desire in the apple fruit.

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Malus domestica
"Kentish Fillbasket"

Apples arrived in the USA in the 18th century, where one particular character had a huge influence on their spread. John Chapman, known as Johnny Appleseed, was born in Leominster, Massachusetts, in 1774. Often portrayed as a tall, lanky man flinging apple pips from a bag, in truth his approach was far more methodical. An American pioneer, Chapman set up nursery orchards, then found people to tend them in return for a share of the apples. Essentially, he set up a franchise. Chapman was a born naturalist with an empathy for wild animals; one contemporary account states that, for a time, his travelling companion was a wolf whose leg he had healed. He was also thrifty, preferring to find ways of using things that would otherwise have been discarded. John Chapman died in 1845, and the street in which he was born was named after him.

Wildlife

Apples of all kinds are valuable to wildlife. You might not want bruised windfalls, but thrushes and other birds, as well as mammals such as squirrels, mice and voles, love them. Birds often nest in apple trees – look out for abandoned nests in the winter months after the leaves have fallen.

Medicinal Uses

There's truth in the saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." Eating a fresh, raw apple is good exercise for your gums and teeth, and the malic and citric acids in the fruits clean your teeth, too. These same acids stimulate your digestive system and help keep you "regular".

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DEHYDRATED APPLE SLICES

Dehydrated apple slices are delicious, chewy and satisfying, a perfect snack when you fancy something sweet, but with the bonus of no added sugar. If you have your own crop of apples, that's great, but making the slices works just as well with apples that might have slightly passed their sell-by date. If you have a dehydrator, you'll know that it's useful for all sorts of things, but it's not essential. As the apple slices dry, their colour darkens and they shrink slightly. However you wish to dry them, slice as many as you can and spread them in a single layer to save on fuel.

Slice the apple as thinly as you can across its middle, starting at the stalk end (which can be discarded, as can the blossom end).

If using an oven, set to the lowest heat and leave the oven door open slightly to let moisture escape. Check after the first couple of hours. If using a dehydrator, set to a high temperature and cook for approximately 6 hours. Store in clean glass jars.

EASY APPLE BIRD FEEDER

Trees and birds are inextricably linked and encouraging birds into the garden means that you'll see lots more than usual, especially if you consistently put out food for them.

This is possibly the simplest feeder ever. All you need is a 20cm (8in) length of sturdy garden wire and an apple. Push the wire through the top of the apple and out of the bottom, then loop it up and twist. Next, loop the rest of the wire around a low-hanging branch that's close enough to watch the birds, but not close enough to scare them. After the birds have feasted on the apple, re-use the wire as often as you like.

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CRAB APPLE VERJUICE

Also made with unripe grapes, verjuice is handy in cooking – or in cocktails – when you want a sharp flavour. Lemon juice works fine too, but this is a good way of using crab apples. Johnny Appleseed would be proud of you.

Makes about 400ml (14fl oz)

You will need:

1kg (2lbs 2oz) ripe crab apples
1 tbsp gin or vodka, as a preservative
A 400ml (14oz) glass bottle with a top

1. Wash the apples, pop them into a pan and cover them with water. Remove the apples and bring the water to the boil.
2. Then, put the apples in the boiling water, bring to the boil and cook for 1 minute.
3. Remove the fruit from the hot water, place in a sieve and run them under a cold tap.
4. When cool, extract the juice with a juice extractor or mash them and pass through a jelly bag (a bag made from fine but strong material, which you can hang over a tripod suspended over a bowl and let the liquid drip through).
5. Add the spirit, then funnel into the clean glass bottle. Store in the fridge.

Crab apples (and other apples that have a sharp, lemony taste) contain pectin, the substance that makes jams and jellies set. Rather than use shop-bought pectin, simply use de-pipped and mashed crab apples or use a juice extractor. Store in bags in the freezer.

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