

Blossom Watch

Trees are vital because as the biggest plants on earth they give us oxygen, store carbon and provide shelter and food for the Island's wildlife. But when you are out on your daily exercise, have you ever wondered why some trees in your park or garden are covered with blossom and others are covered with nothing at all?

As nature awakens, most of us love the eruption in spring when splashes of colour liven up the view from our windows. Blossom is a lifesaver for bees just coming out of hibernation, and fruiting blossoms provide food for birds. But why do trees produce blossom?

Trees produce showy flowers to attract pollinators (mostly insects) so that seeds and fruit can be produced. Some trees such as oak and ash are pollinated by the wind, so they do not need such large showy flowers as their pollen is spread on the wind. Others such as cherry are pollinated by insects – mainly honeybees, but also bumblebees and solitary bees – so they need extra special flowers to attract the bees to their nectar.

If you live in the countryside, you might be lucky enough to take your daily walk or bike ride along the green lanes and discover blossom in the hedgerows. One of the earliest plants to blossom here in Jersey is the blackthorn tree, which has billowing clouds of snow-white flowers in early spring, which form into rich, inky, dark fruits called sloes.

An eagerly expected sight at the National Trust's headquarters in St Mary is the blossoming of the cider apple orchard, which bursts into bloom at the beginning of May. Did you know that 300 years ago, a quarter of all arable land in Jersey was occupied by cider orchards? Imagine how much blossom there must have been back then!

When you are taking your daily exercise – and remembering to keep a two metre distance – see how many blossom trees you can spot in your neighbourhood. Why don't you capture a photo of your favourite tree and create a finger-printed blossom card to send to a family member who you are unable to visit? What a lovely way to show them you care.

How to make a finger-printed blossom card

- 1 Paint the background of your card and leave it to dry.**
- 2 Paint the trunk of your tree, giving it lots of tentacle-like branches and leave it to dry.**
- 3 Dab the tip of your finger into some white or pink paint and create lots of individual blossoms on your card. Use two or three different shades for a really special effect.**
- 4 Leave the card to dry and then write your message inside. For ideas and inspiration, search for 'finger-printed cherry blossom card' on the internet.**

Below: This image of a blue tit resting on a twig of cherry blossom was taken by John Ovenden, the Trust's carpenter, in the Walled Garden at The Elms in St Mary.



Image credit John Ovenden