

## A Day in the life of Rachel an apprentice fruit and vegetable grower

Hello, my name is Rachel, I'm an apprentice fruit and vegetable grower at a farm called Low Stanger near Cockermouth in Cumbria.

At Low Stanger farm we grow over 80 varieties of apples (there are 6000 varieties in the world!). I help to look after the apple trees, so that they grow healthily and produce tasty apples to eat.



It is autumn as I am writing this, and this is what I do in a day...

I get up and eat a healthy breakfast which will give me lots of nutrition and energy for the day ahead. I put my wellies on and go outside...



We have already harvested the apples in the late summer and autumn. Here they are, stored in boxes inside one of our farm buildings. We store each variety in a separate box. Some of the names you might recognise, like Granny Smith and Bramley.



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We also have local varieties of apples which you can't usually buy in the supermarket. Such as Cockermouth Codling, Egremont Russet, Keswick Codling, Carlisle Codling and Galloway Pippin. These apples grow well in the climate of Cumbria. It is good to have a big diversity of apple varieties, because different varieties will do better than others in different years, depending on the weather. This way the risk of have a poor harvest is spread.



The different apples that we grow are all different shapes, sizes and colours. More importantly they all taste very different.



People come to the farm to buy the apples. I weigh the variety and amount of apples that people have requested. The people who buy apples from us all like different sorts of apples, some like sweet and some like sour. It is good to sell the apples to people locally, so that people know where their food comes from and know that they are contributing to the local economy. This also helps to reduce carbon emissions, and is a sustainable way of producing food

After this, I prune the apple trees. We use a tool called "secateurs" to do this. By pruning the trees we can encourage them to grow into a shape that we want, which will give all the apples on the tree plenty of space and light to grow.



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I then cut the grass around the trees, this makes it easier to walk in the orchard and helps to keep it healthy. I put straw around the base of the trees, to stop any weeds from growing near the tree, because these would use up water and nutrients that we want to give to the tree.



We don't use any artificial pesticides and herbicides, because we want the soil to be full of worms, small insects and micro-organisms which all keep the soil and trees healthy. This is also better for birds who like to eat the insects, and we love to have birds and other wildlife on the farm.

The apple trees will live for several years, but they won't live forever. So I now think about growing some new apple trees, which will replace any old ones.



To grow a new apple tree, I take a twig from the apple tree variety that I want to grow, and a „root stock“ from another tree that will determine what size the tree will be.

I then „graft“ them together, by cutting each of them with a sharp knife so that they will fit together. Then I wrap tape around to make sure the twig stays attached to the root stock. This will allow them to grow together and become a complete tree.



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After I have grafted several trees, I plant them into pots. These will grow into new trees and we will plant them into the field next year.

Now I plant some trees that we grafted last year. These will take about 5 years to grow big enough to produce some apples.

It is wonderful to plant a tree and think of the new life and of course the tasty apples it will produce! So it is a great way to end my day.

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## **A Day in the life of Rachel an apprentice fruit and vegetable grower**

**Using the information from the 'Day in the life of Rachel an apprentice fruit and vegetable grower', think about the following questions:**

1. Where is the farm – can you find it on Google maps?
2. How many varieties of apple are grown at Low Stanger farm?
3. What is an apprentice?
4. Can you name three or more LOCAL varieties of apple
5. Why does Rachel put straw around the base of the the apple trees?
6. Why doesn't Rachel use any artificial pesticides and herbicides?
7. Why does Rachel need to replant trees?
8. Why is it good for local people to buy locally produced apples?
9. What would happen to Rachel if people didn't buy the apples she produces at Low Stanger farm ?
10. How does growing apples help rural communities to be sustainable?