

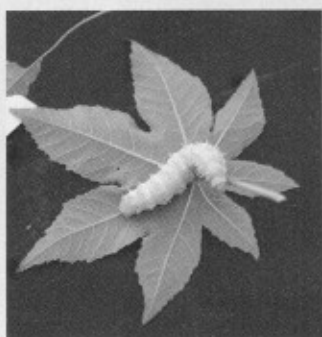


Living stage

The Living Stage provided a visual (and edible!) backdrop for the weekend's speakers. Bowls of cut-and-come-again salad leaves, fiery-hot chilli peppers and cheery sunflowers vied for attention, all hemmed in by a ring of fruit trees and vines.

Silk cut

The 'Naturally Inspired Silk Farm' was a bit of fun but with a serious purpose (well, to me at least as a textile artist). Finding a use for hawthorn and privet clippings was nothing to the potential 'silk paper' I will be able to make from the silk cocoons of the domesticated silk moths. The plump worms (inset) are not harmed in the process. I succumbed to an information pack and even bought some of the silk worms, which are now feeding voraciously on my kitchen windowsill. Naturally Inspired offers educational talks and workshops, plus silk-production rearing kits for home and school – an ideal introduction to this fascinating and ancient craft. (Contact: 01584 831116, www.silkfarm.co.uk)



Pear crop

The Festival of Perry was especially important this year. Not only does the showground hold the National Collection of perry pears, but two tonnes of this year's bumper crop have been sold by The Three Counties Agricultural Society to local perry cider producers. The money raised will be ploughed back into the care and maintenance of the collection.

This autumn's wonderful display of traditional perry pear varieties drew visitors' attention to this often forgotten fruit, with tutored tastings and advice on how to make perry. Readers who would like to discover more about making perry, or cider, could take advantage of one-day and longer courses offered by exhibitor Mitchell F&D, who run the Cider Academy at The Orchard Centre in Hartpury, near Gloucester. (Contact: 01386 552324, www.cider-academy.co.uk)



Love apple

It was love at first sight for visitors walking past the intriguing display organised by Suttons Seeds. This time it wasn't their seeds on show but an intriguing new apple being sold in Britain exclusively by the Devon-based company. 'Redlove' is unique – the first truly red-fleshed apple that tastes as good as it looks, whether eaten raw or cooked. It can also be juiced and has none of the sickly-cloying taste of so many apple juices. Representing the culmination of one man's 20 years of research and breeding (Swiss grower Markus Kobelt), the apple is resistant to scab and is ideal for small gardens. It has the most stunning deep cerise-pink blossom. The red flesh colouring is retained even when cooked and the flesh itself is higher in antioxidants than any other apple. (Contact: 0844 9222899, www.suttons.co.uk)