

April 2008

SPRING STARTS 26th APRIL SAY BLOSSOM SCIENTISTS

Scientists at the Pershore College believe that spring will start in earnest on the 26th April this year. This date is when Britain's only blossom trail - the forty-five miles of stunning apple, pear, plum, damson and cherry blossom - will be at their pink and white peak.

Commenting on nature's barometer, John Edgeley from the college said:

'The blossom is at its peak when the spring weather is at its best - in other words, when the worst of the frost and storms have passed, when temperatures have warmed up and when nature announces that winter has succumbed to spring'.

Worcestershire 's Vale of Evesham - often referred to as the Garden of England - has been famous for its fruit since Medieval times. Its beautiful, blossom-filled hedgerows were supposedly the inspiration for Shakespeare's famous "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows" speech given by Oberon in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

The trail began 25 years ago almost by chance. Countryman Geoff Perks had worked on the fruit farms all his life. He died at 84 after seeing the blossom come into flower one last time - his final wish was to have his coffin drawn eight miles along the blossom trail. It became a local tradition to walk the trail in his memory. Today, the trail extends to 45 miles taking in the Cotswold village of Broadway at its most southern point, Pershore to the west and charmingly named places such as Wyre Piddle en route.

As well as AA signposts for those that wish to drive the trail, there are Blossom Walks and it is also popular with cyclists.

Steeped in tradition, and despite its delicate appearance, blossom is regarded as a sign of strength, hope and renewal. People from across the UK visit in their droves and many are

following the tradition of Japanese Hanami parties - picnics under the spreading blossom branches to celebrate the start of spring.

The rich scent of the Blossom Trail is also thought to spring clean the mind and resolutions made along the Blossom Trail are meant to have more chance of succeeding than those made around new year. To find out more, visit www.blossom-trail.org.uk

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For further information, images or to arrange a tour of the Blossom Trail, please contact Sara Stewart on 07789 374174 or Sara Lawrance on 07970 658532.