

# Orchard Days highlight the harvest at Filoli Gardens

By Allyson Aleksey

Filoli Historic House and Gardens celebrates the arrival of fall with Orchard Days every weekend now through October 29. Included with regular admission is entry to Filoli's Gentleman's Orchard, where guests can enjoy picking and tasting fruit from the trees – plus live music and spiced cider made from the Filoli apple trees.

The Gentleman's Orchard preserves more than 600 apple, pear, plum, apricot, walnut, fig, and quince trees. Many species are rare and steeped in history.

The nearly 7-acre orchard is located just on the other side of the parking lot from the main gardens. Guests can settle into the walnut grove with a cup of



Numerous varieties of pears in the orchard have been cultivated on the land for over 100 years.

cider from the bar or an autumn treat from the pop-up cafe, while kids play in the hay maze or build a scarecrow.

Fall brings much to see and feel on the regular grounds of Filoli too.

"A lot of the summer display beds are still in full color and our camelia collection starts to bloom in the fall," said Filoli's Lead Horticulturist Jim Salyards.

While Filoli is world-renowned for its flower beds, flora and fauna, the orchard has only been open to the public since 2021. California boasts some of the best weather for apple orchards, from Baldwin apples to the widely popular red and Golden Delicious. The orchards at Filoli are home to these species and more.

Salyards has worked at Filoli for 28 years, and has been involved in the rehabilitation of the orchard that started in the 90's. At that point there were 150 fruit tree varieties. Many of the trees are now over 100 years old. Salyards explained that Filoli's team of horticulturists preserve the remaining ones by propagating, or growing new trees from



Filoli apples are donated to food banks, made into hard cider, and are available for guests to pick or purchase on site.



Guests can relax on a haystack couch in the orchard.



A self-guided orchard walk will teach guests about the historic orchard and a range of cultural harvest celebrations.



Charming pools in an impeccably maintained garden are breathtaking.



Admission to the historic gardens at Filoli is included for all guests.

Photos by Jay Russell

original groves, using seeds, cuttings and other plant parts.

"This orchard is about preserving this landscape feature of this estate. But we're also trying to preserve some of the more rare heirloom varieties of fruit trees," Salyards explained.

Much of the bounty will be gone by the end of autumn. Guests will be invited to pick and taste fruit off the trees and enjoy table grapes from the harvest. Other apples, pears, plums and apricots will be churned into butters or liquified into ciders, which guests can enjoy under the shade of the trees in the walnut grove.

Every Saturday through October 28, resident beekeepers will

take guests to Filoli's beehives where they can sample honey straight from the source.

Filoli's team expects one of their its biggest harvests this year, and nothing will go to waste. Village Harvest, a non-profit volunteer organization that harvests fruit from backyards and orchards, will pick up the excess and bring it to food banks in the Bay Area.

This year, Filoli will donate upwards of two tons of fruit toward the end of the season, Salyards stated.

### Orchard Days

Orchard days offer a new locale at Filoli and new topics to

discover such as the history of the estate started by William Bowers Bourn II. Family storytime starts at 11:00 a.m. on the weekend to learn about farming and cultural harvest celebrations.

Admission comes with access to the 54,000 square-foot Georgian mansion, and 16 acres of English Renaissance gardens.

Orchard Days take place on Saturdays & Sundays through October 29, as well as on Monday, October 9, as an extra feature for general admission to celebrate the fall. Filoli is located at 86 Cañada Road in Woodside, and is open every day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. See <https://filoli.org/> for tickets.

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