

COMMUNITY FRUIT TREES

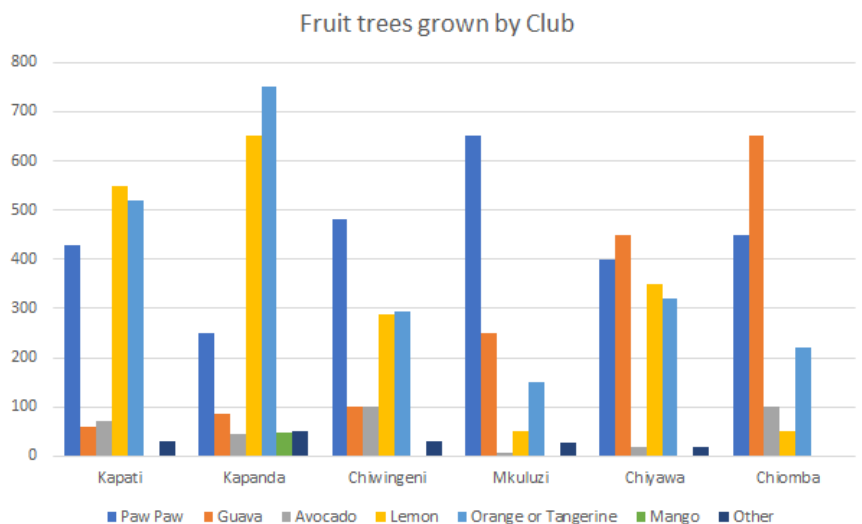


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Maston, our Fruit Tree Project Manager, is developing a community fruit tree project. He is working with community groups to successfully grow a variety of fruit trees including paw paw, guava, lemon, orange, tangerine and avocado.

Once the seeds have been sown, he continues to visit the groups regularly to teach them how to prune and care for the seedlings, how to make manure, how to identify pests, and how to protect the seedlings from livestock once planted out.

This past year these community groups have raised and planted out 9,000 fruit trees. They will not only benefit from the fruit to eat but will be able to sell any surplus and raise an income.



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In order to test the best growing conditions for the trees, one of our community fruit tree planting groups is helping us trial different methods of planting to see which gives the best results.

Biochar is a charcoal-like residue which is produced by the efficient burning of crop waste with limited access to oxygen. It is an excellent soil conditioner and we are currently working with farmers to trial its use with a variety of crops in the Mwaya area.

The team here have planted four papaya trees. One has been planted in a pit with biochar mixed with pig manure, another with just biochar, another with just pig manure and another with just soil. Our plan is to measure the growth of each plant to identify the best method of planting the trees. The results of this trial will help other groups get the best out of their fruit trees.



Maston has also been helping community members who already have fruit trees planted to care for them properly so that they grow and bear fruit.

James is one such community member who was struggling to care for his fruit trees. He said, "We were wondering why the fruit trees were growing very slowly but after learning how to care for the fruit trees once planted out, we have tended to them and seen the trees grow. They are now bearing fruit, it is great."



The Clubs not only raise the seedlings for themselves but donate a percentage of their fruit trees to local schools and vulnerable people.

Each school now has a Fruit Tree Club, and Maston works with the students and teachers to teach them how to plant and care for their fruit trees – and the children are sharing this knowledge with their parents.

Every school received around 40 fruit trees and the students are excited that in the future they will have fruit to eat as well as shade when they are outside. They even gave up some of their precious holiday time to plant out the fruit trees.

Maston said, “Learners are able to do their orchard activities of caring for the fruit trees. They are good at pruning trees which allows the tree to grow.”



The fruit tree team have also been working with Matilda who runs our Disabilities and Rehabilitation project to identify vulnerable people within the community.

Philip has been supported by our Disabilities and Rehabilitation project since he was a baby and is cared for by his grandmother.

The community fruit tree group gifted 25 fruit trees to his relatives so that not only do they have a source of food but they can generate an income too, the idea being to enable these families to become self-sufficient.

Maston said, “We have worked closely with Matilda to know which families would benefit. We have then helped community groups to distribute the fruit trees.”

Philip’s family received papaya, guava, tangerine, orange and avocado trees.

