



*About Harvest
The local choice*

Harvest represents a group of like minded individuals who are totally committed to providing real healthy produce grown locally. A typical Harvest grower would be a small family business who are totally dedicated to the products they produce. The emphasis is always on locally produced to ensure top quality, freshness and support for the local community. Working in conjunction with the specialists at Sharrocks Fresh Produce the Harvest growers are constantly on the lookout for new and interesting products to grow, diversification being the key to their survival. If you are aware of any products that you wish to buy but cannot currently purchase from local suppliers then why not drop a line to the team at Sharrocks and we'll see what can be done.

freshproduce@sharrocks.com

Westmorland Damsons



Cumbria's Damson Valleys

Damsons have been grown in the Lyth and Windsor valleys for generations. It is thought they were originally imported from Damascus (now part of Syria) during the Crusades and given the name 'damascene' - later shortened to damson. Damson trees grow so prolifically in this area because they are suited to the thin calcareous soils and relatively mild climate of the area. Damsons were not only eaten as fruit, but were used in the textile industry as a source of dye.

Damsons are typically found in small orchards adjacent to farms or planted in hedgerows and along boundary walls. They were regarded as an important local commodity and traded every year on Damson Saturday in Kendal. Much demand came from the jam factories of Lancashire and Yorkshire, with around 300 tons of damsons being sent away annually for jam making during the 1930s and 1940s. The income from damsons was often used to pay the annual rent of a farm.

Damson trees produce a profusion of white blossom in early spring that attracts visitors to the area. Every April, the Westmorland Damson Association holds a special Damson Day to promote the damson and to raise awareness of the importance of regenerating the old orchards. You can purchase damson products, enjoy a guided walk around the local area to see the trees in blossom, and learn more about the fruit, its history and its uses.

The fruit is produced late August to early October and are picked by hand. Many local farms put signs on the roadside enabling you to buy damsons directly from the producers.

Damsons can be eaten when fully ripe, but are more suited to preserving and cooking. They can easily be made into jam or chutney, preserved as bottled damsons or steeped in gin to make a delicious liqueur. Their distinctive flavour makes them an ideal accompaniment for chicken, game, ham and fish dishes. Apart from being used as an ingredient in fruit pies, they can also be added to meat pies, ice cream, chocolates and even bread!

The Westmorland Damson Association has been campaigning for many years to promote the use of local damsons, thereby ensuring the continued survival of existing orchards. The Association offers free help, advice and access to grant aid for anyone wishing to restore or create new orchards. For more information, **telephone 015395 68246 or email: enquires@lythdamsons.org.uk**. Further information can be found on the website at **www.lythdamsons.org.uk**.

Extract from www.explore-cumbria.co.uk

