

# Press release: Newton's Space Saplings; can you give them space to grow?

The apple pips were taken to the International Space Station on the British ESA astronaut's Principia mission, where they spent six months floating in micro gravity as part of the 'Pips in Space' project.

[Newton's space saplings: can you give them space to grow?](#)

Now the UK Space Agency, the National Trust and Kew, who worked together on the project, have teamed up with South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) in Lincolnshire to launch a competition to find partners that share a commitment to inspire future Newtons to host the trees.

The bidding was launched today (12 September) at Newton's birthplace, Woolsthorpe Manor, during the media launch of this month's SKDC-backed Gravity Fields Festival, the only event in the UK combining the discoveries of Newton with interpretations of his legacy. Organisations can bid for one of the 8 remarkable saplings, explaining how they will give them space to grow, engage new audiences and promote curiosity.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

From gravity to Granny Smiths, Sir Isaac Newton has captured our imagination for more than 300 years.

Inspiring the next generation of scientists is at the core of our modern Industrial Strategy and now partners across the country have the chance to do just that by getting their green fingers on these special space saplings.

The pips were taken from the iconic Flower of Kent tree at Woolsthorpe Manor, Isaac Newton's family home near Grantham, Lincolnshire, which is cared for by the National Trust.

The tree, which still bears fruit every year was said to have prompted Newton to question why the apple fell, leading to his world-changing work around gravity. His landmark work, called Principia Mathematica, was chosen as the name of Tim Peake's mission to acknowledge the debt of all space travellers to Newton's work.

Jeremy Curtis, Head of Education and Skills at the UK Space Agency, said:

We are thrilled that our friends at Kew have managed to nurture these precious young trees to the point where they can begin

independent lives.

Now we need to find good homes for them across the UK to help as many people as possible find out about the intertwined stories of Newton, gravity, physics, space travel and horticulture. Maybe one of the trees will one day inspire the next Newton!

From left, Jannette Warrener, Joanna Walmisley, Jeremy Curtis, Eliana Van Der Schraft, Anne Visscher, Cristina Blandino, David Cleeve, Hugh Pritchard.

Jannette Warrener, Partnerships Manager, Woolsthorpe Manor, said:

As partners of the UK Space Agency and The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the National Trust is looking forward to seeing how the space saplings might inspire the next generation of future Newtons.

Newton's passion for scientific endeavour and study never waned. At Woolsthorpe Manor we want to keep that passion for scientific discovery alive and we would like these saplings, as they mature and grow, to light a fire of discovery in the next generation of scientists.

On their return from space in 2016, the well-travelled pips went to Wakehurst Place, part of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, where they spent 90 days sitting on a bed of agar jelly at 5 C to simulate the winter cold needed to trigger germination. Spring arrived for them in May 2017 when they were warmed to 15 C and the young seedlings started to emerge. They have now been nurtured into 'space saplings'.

Dr Anne Visscher, Career Development Fellow, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, said:

We are delighted to be part of such an important project. The seeds taken from the apple tree that inspired Newton have been on an amazing journey. Since their return they have been grown and monitored at Kew's Wakehurst site in Sussex where we will continue to care for them until they find new homes around the country to tell the story of Newton, space travel and seed science.

Gravity Fields Festival (26-30 September) takes place in and around Grantham, including events at Woolsthorpe Manor. The story of the 'Pips in Space' will be told during Gravity Fields Festival on Sunday, 30 September, at 2.45 at Woolsthorpe Manor.

Cllr Matthew Lee, the Leader of South Kesteven District Council, whose portfolio includes culture and arts, said:

As a district we are extremely proud of our connections with Sir

Isaac Newton, born and educated here, and, as a council we are equally proud to be delivering our fourth Gravity Fields Festival.

Our festival build up is the perfect launch pad for the space saplings project, with its ability to captivate young minds and encourage the scientists of the future.

The UK Space Agency, National Trust, and Kew will be undertaking a rigorous selection process from bidders, and are looking for national partners who share their commitment to inspire future Newtons, attract the most visitors and offer a legacy route for maximum impact.

The winners will be announced in early 2019 with a handover of trees at Woolsthorpe Manor.