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# **BRITAIN COULD FACE CHRISTMAS WITHOUT MISTLETOE**

## ***NEGLECT OF ORCHARDS PUTS CHRISTMAS KISSES AT RISK***

Britain could soon find itself facing a mistletoe shortage, a West Midlands-based mistletoe expert warns. Jonathan Briggs, Britain's leading mistletologist and owner of the Mistletoe Matters Consultancy, puts it down to the unintentional neglect of the country's orchards.

Although there will be plenty of the white-berried, female mistletoe at this year's annual UK Mistletoe Auctions, the future of the plant could be at risk if people don't start to take responsibility for managing it like you would any crop.

The auctions are held every year in the town of Tenbury Wells which is Europe's mistletoe Mecca, The first one takes place on 29<sup>th</sup> November this year and is part of [www.tenbury-mistletoe-festival.co.uk](http://www.tenbury-mistletoe-festival.co.uk) - a month-long celebration of this most festive of plants.

Jonathan Briggs explains:

"Mistletoe grows best on apple trees and we've lost 75% of our traditional orchards in the last 50 years anyway. If an apple tree has to sustain too much mistletoe growing on it, it just gives up and dies. So it needs to be managed to ensure it doesn't swamp the tree. A tree should have 50% male/female plants but really good management reduces that to about 25% male to 75% female. With neglect, these are all too often the other way round – 90% male to 10% female.

Just because there is plenty of mistletoe to buy this year, it won't always be the case unless we take action now. We don't want to rely upon buying the imported French variety in the future. "

Jonathan will be discussing his concerns with traders when he attends the first mistletoe auction which sees buyers from across the country and Europe descending on Worcestershire to furiously bid over three days for prime mistletoe 'wraps'.

He is also launching a new national survey and information website encouraging people to file information on mistletoe growing in their gardens. As well as getting a better understanding of the state of the nation's mistletoe, this will also provide people with tips on how to manage their crops for themselves.

## **ENDS**

For further information about all the Christmas activities across Worcestershire, please visit [www.visitworcestershire.org](http://www.visitworcestershire.org) or contact Sara Stewart at Mad As A March Hare on 01684 575207 or 07833 467774

For further information on mistletoe management and the survey visit **at** [www.british.mistletoe.org.uk](http://www.british.mistletoe.org.uk)

The Festival is supported by RDPE and Destination Worcestershire.