
[TBD: NAME OF TOOL]

TBD: A tool to study microclimates in an orchard

By

Adam Sidnell

Supervised by Professor Ruzanna Chitchyan



Department of Computer Science
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in
accordance with the requirements of the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE in the Faculty of Engineering

September 2025

Word count: TBD

Executive summary

Dedication and acknowledgments

Author's declaration

Table of contents

Executive summary	i
Dedication and acknowledgments	ii
Author’s declaration	iii
1 Introduction	1
 I Background	 2
2 Microclimates	3
2.1 Microclimates in agriculture	3
2.2 Microclimates in apple orchards	3
3 <i>Internet of Things</i>	4
3.1 LoRa and LoRaWAN	4
References	4

1 Introduction

In this report I give details of an online tool called [TBD: NAME OF TOOL], an interactive website that collects real time data from Small Brook Farm in Devon. The tool aims to give farmers accessible, specific climate data to help reveal the existence of microclimates over a small area and inform their decision making.

Three sensor clusters were distributed at three points in the farm. Each cluster was powered by an ESP32 microcontroller and then a variety of sensors were added to these. Data is then sent in real time back to a backend server which processes the information and allowed for real time data to be presented to farm workers via a website.

Part I

Background

2 Microclimates

2.1 Microclimates in agriculture

A microclimate is generally understood as a set of distinct climatic conditions within a small, localised area [1]. The maximum size of a microclimate is debated, but the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) regards it as occupying an area of anywhere from less than one metre across to several hundred metres [2]. In practice, microclimates can occur in spaces such as gardens, valleys, caves, or fields. Even human-made structures can generate their own microclimates; for example, tall buildings can create *street valleys* that reduce wind flow and lead to the formation of localised pockets of warmer air, which can also trap higher concentrations of pollution from vehicle emissions [3]. Vegetation plays a critical role in influencing microclimates. The addition of trees to an urban environment can reduce air temperature by as much as 2.8 °C [4].

This localised climatic variation, characteristic of microclimates, is therefore significant in agriculture. The climate that crops are exposed has an enormous impact on overall agricultural yields. Indeed, farmers have modified the microclimate of crop fields for millennia, a clear example of this being the use of fencing to reduce soil erosion and damage to edible plants [5]. Therefore, the relationship between microclimates and agriculture has been the subject of extensive research - particularly as climate change introduces new threats to food security.

2.2 Microclimates in apple orchards

3 *Internet of Things*

3.1 LoRa and LoRaWAN

Long range systems are a way of transmitting data over much longer distances than Wi-Fi allows. LoRa has a range 4000 times greater than Wi-Fi.

References

- [1] Met Office, “Factsheet 14: Microclimates,” Met Office, Tech. Rep., 2023, Accessed: 16 June 2025. [Online]. Available: https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/binaries/content/assets/metofficegovuk/pdf/research/library-and-archive/library/publications/factsheets/factsheet_14-microclimates_2023.pdf.
- [2] World Meteorological Organization (WMO), *Guide to Instruments and Methods of Observation: Volume III – Observing Systems*, 2024 edition. Geneva: World Meteorological Organization (WMO), 2025, ISBN: 978-92-63-10008-5. DOI: 10.59327/WMO/CIMO/3. [Online]. Available: <https://library.wmo.int/idurl/4/68661>.
- [3] S. Yang, L. L. Wang, T. Stathopoulos, and A. M. Marey, “Urban microclimate and its impact on built environment—a review,” *Building and Environment*, vol. 238, p. 110334, 2023.
- [4] D. Lai, W. Liu, T. Gan, K. Liu, and Q. Chen, “A review of mitigating strategies to improve the thermal environment and thermal comfort in urban outdoor spaces,” *Science of The Total Environment*, vol. 661, pp. 337–353, 2019, ISSN: 0048-9697. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2019.01.062>. [Online]. Available: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969719300683>.
- [5] H. A. Cleugh, “Effects of windbreaks on airflow, microclimates and crop yields,” *Agroforestry Systems*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 55–84, 1998, ISSN: 1572-9680. DOI: 10.1023/A:1006019805109. [Online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006019805109>.