

ADVICE AND INFORMATION

SMALL WOODS ASSOCIATION

01952 432769 www.smallwoods.org.uk

THE TREE COUNCIL

020 7407 9992 www.treecouncil.org.uk

THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

A number of useful publications are available by contacting your local Forestry Commission office or at www.forestry.gov.uk/publications

RECOMMENDED PUBLICATIONS

Create a farm woodland - H. Williams, The National Forest Company, 2003

Getting to know your own wood and looking after it - Forestry Commission, 2003

Tree Planting & Aftercare - Elizabeth Agate, BTCV

BTCV handbooks are also available online at: www.bit.ly/btcvhandbooks

MORE FROM THE MERSEY FOREST

For more free guides or information, visit www.merseyforest.org.uk, call 01925 816 217 or e-mail mail@merseyforest.org.uk.

 facebook.com/merseyforest  twitter.com/merseyforest

ALSO AVAILABLE IN LARGE PRINT. CONTACT
THE MERSEY FOREST TEAM: 01925 816 217.

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HOW TO PLANT AND CARE FOR TREES

The Mersey Forest guide



ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY OF YOUR SITE

Firstly it is important to find out whether your site is suitable for tree planting, and if so, what species would be appropriate to plant. Consider things like:

GROUND CONDITION What is beneath the ground surface? Rock, rubble, compacted or heavy clay soil may restrict tree growth.

SHADE/EXPOSURE Is your site particularly shaded or exposed? Excessive levels may reduce the success of tree planting.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE Does your site have existing ecological value (such as species rich grassland, wetland or heathland) which may be damaged by tree planting?

CHOOSING WHERE TO PLANT YOUR TREE

Think about where to plant the trees within your site. Are there any restrictions on the size of trees once they mature? Consider the proximity to buildings, underground services such as drains, site boundaries, overhead wires and how large different tree species will become.

Also think about whether leaf litter will cause any problems. Species which drop large amounts of leaves may be inappropriate next to ponds or housing.



SPECIES SELECTION

Your choice of species will largely be dependent on the conditions of the site. Look to see which species are growing well in your local area to guide your choice of tree species.

Your decision may also be affected by the specific characteristics you require, for example if you are planting for wildlife, shade, timber production, fruit or crops for woodland products/crafts. You may also want seasonal colour or year-round leaf coverage for screening.

If you need advice to select appropriate species for your site, contact The Mersey Forest Team on 01925 816 217.

SELECTING THE TYPE OF PLANTING STOCK

It is best to plant bare-rooted trees of up to 60cm height as they have the best chance of survival and are inexpensive, although you need to be aware that they are delicate and roots will dry out easily.

If you need an instant high visual impact and only intend to plant a small number of trees, you might consider planting trees of 90cm (whips and feathered whips), or trees up to 3m high (standards). 'Standards' are more expensive and generally the larger the size, the lower the chances of survival. These trees will also initially be slow growing as they take longer to establish. Containerised trees can be planted all year round but are expensive and will need more watering.

GROUND PREPARATION

The ground must be prepared prior to planting. The amount of ground preparation required varies depending on site characteristics but you should aim to ensure the ground is broken up and cleared of any existing vegetation that would compete with new plants.



WHEN TO PLANT

It is best to plant trees between November and March, while the tree is dormant (before it starts to bud) and avoiding periods of heavy frost.

HOW TO PLANT YOUR TREES



When planting, dig a hole deep enough for the plant to be covered up to the root collar* and for the roots to sit in the hole without bending back on themselves. Replace the soil and gently firm in the plant to prevent air gaps remaining around the roots.

Notch planting is a quicker option but requires more expertise to ensure the roots are properly covered. This is not recommended if you are planting with school children. It will also only be successful if the ground is soft or has been previously cultivated.

To notch plant use a spade to cut a 'T' or 'L' shaped slot at the depth required to cover the roots up to the root collar*. Using the spade, open up the slot so that the roots can be inserted. Once the tree has been positioned in the slot, the spade can be removed and the soil firmed gently around the tree to prevent air gaps remaining around the roots. If the root system is too big to be notch planted it should be pit planted as described above.

* To identify the level of the root collar rub the stem at the top of the roots – the root collar is where the colour changes.

PLANT HANDLING

Tree roots are delicate and must be handled carefully. It is important to plant transplants as soon as possible after getting them. Prior to planting, roots must be kept in bags in a cool, damp location to prevent frost damage or drying out. Even a slight breeze during the planting process can dry the roots.

PEST PROTECTION

If you are planting in rural areas where there may be predation from rabbits, hares or voles, plants can be protected by using:

CLEAR SPIRAL GUARDS

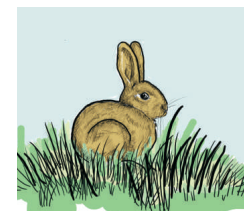
- used with most species and will expand with growth of the plant.

PLASTIC MESH GUARDS

- useful for branching species such as holly.

STOCK PROOF FENCING

- used if the area is grazed.



If you are using tubes to protect the trees, make sure that the tubes are straight, are pushed into the soil and that the stakes or canes are strong enough to support the tubes and trees.

Remember - guards should be removed once plants have become established (e.g. after three to five years)

WEED CONTROL

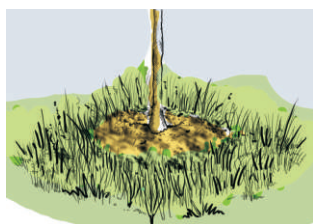
Weed control is recommended to increase the success of a planting scheme. Grasses and weeds compete with trees for moisture and will dramatically reduce the survival rate of new planting. This is less of an issue in well managed areas such as school grounds.

Weed control should aim to maintain a weed-free area of at least 1 metre diameter around each tree, either for the first three to five years of growth or until plants are successfully established.

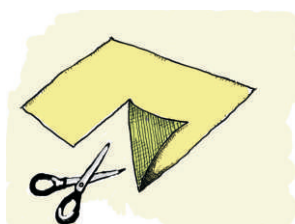
The following methods of weed control can be used:

MULCH Organic mulch such as well rotted woodchip, bark, coconut fibre, grass cuttings, horse manure or farmyard manure can be laid around the base of the tree. This should be applied in early summer (by May at the latest) and will need topping up in subsequent years.

Hessian backed carpet squares flipped over with a slit cut in to place it around the tree can also be used.



Organic mulch



Carpet squares used as an alternative to organic mulch

MECHANICAL CONTROL Although cutting will control nettles and brambles, it will increase the growth of grasses and rosette forming herbs. Be aware that trees can be seriously damaged by strimming operations. Take care to keep strimmer blades away from tree stems.

CHEMICAL CONTROL Application of foliar herbicide such as Glyphosate is often the most cost-effective method of control, but will require specialist knowledge and equipment. Herbicide control should be carried out during the spring of each year and subsequent applications may also be required later in the year.

MAINTENANCE

Proper handling and maintenance of your trees will dramatically improve the chances that they will live and grow. All trees like a good supply of water, particularly in the first couple of years after planting. Water the tree regularly and slowly in dry weather, allowing the water to soak in.

Remove any broken branches with sharp clean pruning tools. To maintain a good shape, remove any shoots that compete with the main central stem. Cut off snapped trees close to the break to allow for re-growth.



During the first year, regularly check that the tree is still firm in the ground. Wind-sway can create a hollow around the base of the tree trunk, leaving it poorly supported. Frost action or moles can also disturb the ground, loosening the roots. Tread around the loose stems to firm the tree into the ground and re-stake the tree if required.

After three to four years the trees may need thinning or branches removing.

The Mersey Forest Team can help advise how to look after your trees in the long term.