

TREE PLANTING GUIDE

FREE TREES
AVAILABLE THROUGH THE WESTCOUNTRY RIVERS TRUST!

WHEN?

We recommend planting trees between **November – March**. This is when trees are dormant and are less likely to get damaged. Your saplings will also be rooted and ready to maximize growth come spring time.



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Whether you Choose to create **woodlands, shelter belts, wildlife corridors or hedges** with your trees you can provide a number of ecosystem benefits, including:

- sequestering carbon,
- attenuating water
- providing habitats and corridors for wildlife,
- offering protection for livestock
- reducing ammonia emissions.

SPECIES PREFERENCES

MOST HABITATS

Hawthorn Most soils, hedgerow shrub
Holly Most soils, can tolerate deep shade
Sweet Chestnut Tolerates most conditions
Hazel Grows well in most conditions, except waterlogged or poor soils
Field maple Most conditions, dislikes acidic soil
English Oak Most conditions, except marshy, very light or chalky soils

ACIDIC SOILS

Silver Birch Likes sandy or acidic soil
Rowan Likes light acidic soils

WET AREAS

Downy Birch Prefers damper soils than Silver birch can tolerate waterlogged or peaty soils
Alder Wet areas
Goat Willow Likes wet conditions. Suited to reedbeds, scrub and wet woodland and hedges

OTHER SOILS

Sessile oak Does not like heavy or alkaline soils
Hornbeam Rich and clay soils

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1168/twigged.pdf>

WHERE?

Different species like different soils and climates. WRT have a **mix of native tree species available with canes and guards**. Your advisor will be happy to identify appropriate species for your land

To maximize the benefit to wildlife, think about joining up habitats across your farm as well as the wider landscape

HOW?

There are a few ways of planting trees, these include the **'Pit', 'Split' and 'T notch'** methods.

Whichever method is chosen ensure the roots are fully inserted in the ground with the root collar at ground level - **the tree must be firmed in without damaging the stem.**

SITE SUITABILITY

To prevent any unwanted consequences, assessing the suitability and potential impact of any tree planting on your land is essential. It is important to consider the following:

- **Interference** – trees can effect above and below ground services (electricity cables, water pipes, building structures etc)
- **Avoidance of special sites**
 - Archeologically sensitive areas
 - Rare or protected sites
 - Un-ploughed grasslands
 - Wetlands or heathlands
- **Planning permission** – none needed under 2Ha and in a low risk area (in England)
- **Fencing** – essential if livestock are near or have access to planting areas.
- **Access** – creating a footpath through a new woodland helps with any ongoing management as well as providing easy access to enjoy the trees.



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To maximize the benefit of your trees think about **joining up habitats** across your farm as well as the wider landscape and **using trees to intercept over land water flow**



PLANNING PERMISSION

To identify if your land sits within a low risk area, use the Forestry Commission land information online search

<https://www.forestergis.com/Apps/MapBrowser/>

If your tree planting area is over 2Ha or in a sensitive area, you will need to conduct an **Environmental Impact Assessment**.

To do this contact the **Forestry Commission**. Regulations can differ across the UK, it is best to contact the Forestry Commission or equivalent to check if you are unsure

SITE SUITABILITY

- **Glades** – creating open spaces within an area of tree planting is incredibly beneficial to wildlife. Open spaces and the edges between woodland and open space create additional habitats, supporting a wider array of biodiversity. Planting shrubs around the edge of a woodland or establishing wildflowers within a glade can further enhance the wildlife benefit.
- **Landscape impacts** - Consider the landscape impacts of any tree planting. Visually it is better not to plant woodland using straight lines, but to use wavy lines which create a more natural appearance.



HOW TO...

STORING TREES

Trees must be stored upright and sheltered from wind and frost. Roots should remain moist, if they look like they are drying out, spray them with some water or heel them in.

SITE PREPARATION

To reduce competition for water, cut grass short and remove weeds (either by using herbicide or scarifying).

Mark out where the trees will go with canes, stones, spray paint etc

SPACING

Single hedge: 30cm spacing

Double hedge: 40-45cm spacing, rows 50cm apart, in a zig zag pattern

Individual trees: 2m spacing recommended, but depending on your space and plan 1 – 5m is acceptable

PLANTING POSITION

To enable your new trees to flourish consider the following

- Reduce competition for light and water, by avoiding planting under existing trees or too close to existing hedges.
- Although some trees can grow in wet areas (alder willow etc), no trees like permanently wet ground.
- Planting near a main river may need consent from the Environment Agency



PLANTING METHODS

There are a few ways of planting trees, these include the 'Pit', 'Split' and 'T notch' methods.

Whichever method is chosen ensure the roots are fully inserted in the ground with the root collar at ground level - the tree must be firmed in without damaging the stem.

PROTECTION AND MAINTENANCE

Protect young trees by attaching a tree guard secured with a cane

Maintain guards until the trees are big enough to no longer need protection

Stop livestock and other grazing animals from damaging the trees - use protective fencing or individual guards as needed

Keep trees weed free - trees must be protected from competing weeds for 3 years, or until they are big enough not to be threatened by competition from weeds. This can be done by using suitable mulch, an appropriate herbicide or weeding by hand. Follow relevant laws and codes of practice if spraying.

PIT PLANTING

We recommend pit planting because it's more thorough and ensures your trees have better contact with the soil. It is suitable for all ground types, especially areas prone to drought, but it can be difficult if you have stony soil.

Step 1

Use a spade to take some turf out of the ground, turn it over and chop into smaller pieces

Step 2

Dig a hole slightly wider and deeper than the roots of your tree. Loosen the soil around the edges. The turf you have cut up can be placed into the bottom of the pit to provide the tree with extra nutrients.

Step 3

Put the tree in the hole and check the depth. Look for the collar – the mark on the tree where it originally started to grow above the ground. This should be level with the top of the soil. If your tree is planted too deep, the stem may rot; too shallow and the roots above the ground will die.

Step 4

Hold your tree upright and gently push back the soil, pressing it down onto the roots. Don't compact the soil as this will stop water and air circulation, but make sure your tree is secure.

Step 5

Now push the cane into the ground next to the tree, making sure it's stable.

Step 6

If using tree guards or spirals to protect your saplings, this is the stage to add these. Press the protection firmly into the soil.



SLIT PLANTING

This is a simple method that is suitable for bare soil and grass. It can be easier than pit planting if you've got stony soil.

Step 1

Press your spade all the way into the ground, then push it forwards to create a slit. Make sure it's deep enough for the tree roots.

Step 2

Keep the slit open with your spade and place your tree inside with the root plug about 2cm below ground level.

Step 3

Remove the spade and push the soil back around the tree.

Step 4

If using tree guards or spirals to protect your saplings, this is the stage to add these. Press the protection firmly into the soil.



'T NOTCH' PLANTING

T-notch planting is another quick method suitable for grass-covered ground but not bare soil. This method is an alternative to pit planting in areas susceptible to drought, but is not recommended for sites with clay soils.

Step 1

Push the spade fully into the ground.

Step 2

At a right angle to the first cut, repeat step 1 to create a T-shape.

Step 3

Take the spade to the original cut and lever it upwards, parting the turf.

Step 4

Place the tree carefully in between the sections of turf.

Step 5

Lever the spade back out and the turf will fall into place. Ensure all roots are taken into the hole.

Step 6

Adjust the tree to ensure it is at ground level, and thoroughly firm

