

Tree and hedge planting policy and information for Acle

Reasons for planting trees

A simple reason might be because it's a nice thing to do – a gesture, perhaps, to mark an occasion. But in these times when nature is under threat as never before, there are deeper reasons to be taken into account.

To create, restore or enhance biodiversity.

To counter the recent (and continuing) huge declines of insects, birds etc. dependant on trees.

To replace trees lost through diseases, storms and fire (climate change), building and infrastructure developments (on-going), for safety measures, or indeed from thoughtless felling.

Considerations for tree species

Global warming and climate change, the increase in pathogens affecting many species, notably the loss of Ash trees due to ash dieback disease, and the recent decline in oaks (acute oak decline) are major factors affecting our tree population. New trees lock up carbon and help limit flooding expected with global warming. Climate change allows tree species from warmer climates to thrive where they previously would have struggled and non-native species from southern Europe may be more able to adapt to these changes. A greater diversity of species offers the best chance of coping with the inevitable arrival of new diseases.

Ashes may be replaced with trees that offer similar value for dependant wildlife. Oak, Beech, Alder and Walnut are good alternatives. In areas regularly used by walkers, ensuring seasonal interest with a diversity of flowering, fruiting and seeding trees is advantageous. See table of recommended trees below.

Where to plant individual or groups of trees

It is generally better to plant trees at sites where they are absent rather than in existing woodlands which do not need additional trees unless they are expanding. New woodlands, such as Roman Wood and Jubilee Wood in Acle, already have a carefully planned mix of trees. Furthermore, as they mature trees need to be thinned by removal of up to one third. Exceptionally, there might be a case for planting a tree of a missing, but suitable, species - a Wild Service Tree in Roman Wood for example.

There are plenty of appropriate sites in Acle such as open areas in housing developments, sport and recreation facilities, school grounds and public open spaces. Carefully choose a species most appropriate to the site when fully grown, taking account of appearance, density, shape and height. Be sure you are planting the right tree in the right place. Also remember that permission will usually be required.

Planting methods and sources

It is generally unwise to try to translocate existing trees. If they survive moving, their roots will take a long time to recover and consequently growth is very slow. New smaller specimens with contained root bowls will quickly outgrow their translocated counterparts. Trees will require tree shelters of minimum 1.2m and durable stakes. Remember that trees are for the long term – for future generations rather than for instant results (Roman Wood is now 27 years old).

Genuine native trees are best obtained from specialist nurseries with good biosecurity and sound provenance. The Woodland Trust is a good place to start looking. They supply a wide range of native trees, some free to communities and schools. Suppliers in our area include: Blackrow Nurseries of Felthorpe, Norwich (tel. 01603 754878): Felthorpe Forest Nursery of Felthorpe, Norwich (tel. 07710 479845): Barcham Trees of Ely, Cambs. (tel. 01353 720950): Aveland Trees of Dunsby, Lincs (tel. 01778 440716).

Choosing the site, an appropriate tree, establishing a supplier and obtaining a specimen will require some effort to get the desired result. Selecting the best time of year to plant (e.g. October after which watering may not be necessary) will aid any after-care needed.

Planting hedgerows

Hedgerows provide numerous benefits including wildlife corridors, valuable sources of nectar, pollen, berries and bird nesting habitat. They play an important role in preventing loss of soil from fields (through reducing wind erosion or obstructing water run-off), create a barrier or screen and play an important role in carbon sequestration.

Hedging should be planted at either 3 (economical) or 4 (better) plants per metre using bare root whips 60-90cm tall depending on species. Standard trees within the hedge to be planted, say, every 15m using standards 8-12cm, bare root or container grown depending on availability and position of existing mature trees. Trees will occupy the space of 3 hedge plants.

Whips may be supplied free from some local authorities and charities. See table of recommended plants below.

Protection and mulching

Canes and biodegradable guards will be required for all hedging plants and trees will require tree shelters of minimum 1.2m and durable stakes. A minimum of 75mm of woodchip to be placed around the hedging plants (minimum radius of 20cm). A mulch mat to be placed around each tree (minimum 50cm x 50cm), covered with woodchip.

Maintenance and aftercare

Depending on site conditions it may be necessary to undertake watering and weed control during the summer for a minimum of 2 years. Annual pruning of hedging is advisable to ensure dense growth and a beneficial profile - an 'A' shape is ideal. Pruning on the trees may be needed to avoid obstructing pedestrians and vehicles.

Table of recommended trees

		Max. ht	Characteristics
Pendunculate Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	38m	Native, acorns <i>The typically English Oak</i>
Sessile Oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>	42m	Native, acorns
Holm Oak	<i>Quercus ilex</i>	30m	Non-native (S Europe), evergreen, climate change option
Sweet Chestnut	<i>Castanea sativa</i>	36m	Naturalised, climate change option, flowers & nuts
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	28m	Native, catkins & cones <i>Damper ground</i>
Grey Alder	<i>Alnus incana</i>	24m	Non-native (S Europe), catkins & cones, drought tolerant
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>	30m	Dappled shade <i>Dryer ground</i>
Downy Birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>	28m	Dappled shade <i>Damper ground</i>
Small-leaved Lime	<i>Tilia cordata</i>	38m	Flowers (Jun-Jul), climate change tolerant
Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	30m	Catkins (Apr-May), nuts
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	40m	Tassle flowers (May), nuts
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	18m	Flowers, berries
Wild Service Tree	<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>	28m	Flowers (May-Jun) berries
Crab Apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	10m	Flowers (Apr-May), fruit <i>Be sure to avoid domestic varieties</i>
Wild Pear	<i>Pyrus pyraeaster</i>	15m	Flowers (Apr-May), fruit
Wild Cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	30m	Flowers (Mar-May), fruit
Bird Cherry	<i>Prunus padus</i>	17m	Flowers (May-Jun), berries
Black Poplar	<i>Populus nigra</i>	33m	Catkins (Apr)
Bay Willow	<i>Salix pentandra</i>	10m	Catkins (May-Jun)
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	23m	Evergreen, berries
Scot's Pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	35m	Evergreen conifer, cones
Yew	<i>Taxus accata</i>	20m	Evergreen conifer, berries
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	25m	Flowers (May-Jun), keys
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	10m	Flowers (May-Aug), berries
Wych Elm	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>	40m	Dense shade, winged seed
Common Walnut	<i>Juglans regia</i>	30m	Non-native (S Europe), nuts, climate change option

Table of recommended hedging plants

		Mix %	Characteristics
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	30	Flowers (Apr-Jun), haws
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	20	Flowers (Mar-May), sloes
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	15	Flowers (May-Jun), keys
Purging Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>	5	Flowers (May-Jun), berries
Alder Buckthorn	<i>Frangula alnus</i>	5	Berries
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	5	Flowers (Jun-Jul), berries
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	5	Early catkins, nuts
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	5	Flowers (May-Aug), berries
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>	3	Flowers (May-Jun), berries
Guelder-rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	3	Flowers (May-Jul), berries
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	3	Evergreen screen, berries
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>	1	Flowers (Jun-Jul), hips

Nigel Robson, on behalf of Acle Lands Trust

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