



Planting out Young Trees

DECIDING WHAT TO PLANT

If you are obtaining a grant for your tree planting, you may have a liaison officer who can advise you about what will grow well on your land. Otherwise, seek advice from your local nursery, and then draw up a planting scheme if you are planting more than a few trees. Some trees have a preference for certain soil types or moisture conditions etc, so this will need to be taken into account at the planning stage. Planting schemes are normally planted at 3m spacing, and the trees are then thinned out at a later stage. This close spacing means they will grow up straight and tall and close the canopy quickly which will keep down the weed competition.

SOURCING YOUR TREES

Where possible, use trees sourced from 'local provenance' stock. This means trees grown from seed collected from parent trees in Wales. You will have better success rates with trees that are good quality and from a reputable nursery. However, it is a great experience to collect acorns (for example) yourself in the autumn and watch them grow on.

If you are only planting a few trees, you can use trees grown in containers. Otherwise, buy 'bare-rooted' trees and plant out during the dormant season (November to February is best)

PLANTING NEW TREES

If you have carried out a woodland planting scheme, expect losses of around 20%. You will need to re-stock any gaps where trees have died for the first 2 – 3 years during the winter.

WHEN TO PLANT

Nov - Feb	Deciduous bare-rooted
Early Spring	Very wet areas (lessen risk of uprooting in gales)
Spring/early autumn	Evergreens
Anytime when moist	Container-grown trees*

*Container grown trees have been grown in the containers, as distinct from *containerised* trees that have just been put in the container to sell them on – these would need to be planted in dormant season

WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR PLANTING

Spade (narrow is good, tree planting spade is ideal), sack, mulch, water, tree guards and canes.

If planting standards (bigger trees), may need stakes and rubber tree ties.

If planting lots of trees, you may find it worth obtaining a special tree planting spade.

Tree guards – as part of your planning, find out what wildlife you will need to take into consideration. Trees will need to be protected from rabbits, deer and any grazing animals. They will require the appropriate guards. Guards also protect the tree against voles which live deep in the grass. Voles eat the bark right at the base of the tree, often causing it to die. The guard should therefore be pushed a little way into the soil when you put it on. In areas of grazing, trees need fencing in.

PLANTING CONSIDERATIONS

Once they have been dug up, bare-rooted trees must be kept cool and moist. If they are supplied in a sack, then keep them in that in a cool dark place until you are ready to plant. Best to buy them no more than a few days prior to planting, as they can't be out of the ground for very long.

On the day of planting, keep most of the trees in the shade until you need them. A moist day is best for planting. Avoid sunny days if possible. Keep just a few trees with you in a sack while you are planting, keeping the sack closed all the time to prevent the roots from drying out.

TYPES OF MULCH

A thick layer of mulch will suppress weeds and maintain moisture. It should cover a metre square round the tree to be effective. Suitable materials include:

- ◆ Bark chip (usually available in large quantities from local arboriculturalists)
- ◆ Newspaper with a thick layer of straw on top
- ◆ Carpet (hessian backed, not synthetic). Cut a slit to the centre and a little hole to go round tree.

TREE REQUIREMENTS FOR GROWTH

- ◆ Suitable Temperature – 25 degrees Celsius
- ◆ Sufficient water
- ◆ Appropriate nutrients
- ◆ Oxygen for roots
- ◆ Light/shade depending on tolerance

AFTERCARE OF YOUNG TREES

Young trees will need aftercare for the first 2 -3 years after planting. This may involve watering and possibly re-mulching. Weed control is very important for young trees, as is watering during spring and summer drought periods. Most losses are due to lack of aftercare.

During winter while they are dormant, young trees don't need much attention, apart from after strong winds you may need to firm down soil round base of tree, especially if the soil has been waterlogged. However, there are regular checks to be made during Spring and Summer:

- Watering - In Spring many newly planted trees die from drought during unexpected dry spells. So check on trees and water them at the base if they show any signs of wilting during dry spells, from spring onwards right through summer. This may be necessary for 2 or 3 years after planting. Set up a couple of simple rainwater collection systems if there are no water sources nearby.
- Check for pests and diseases – any signs of insects or insect damage to leaves, wilting or discolouration. Try to catch problems early by making regular checks throughout the summer.
- Check any stakes, ties or guards are secure and are not rubbing the bark.
- Weeding - Weeds surrounding a young tree will compete for water and nutrients. If the grass is very long it may also obscure the tree and overwhelm it. Try to weed round them periodically during the summer to keep down the competition.
- Mulching – The mulched area is your main weed control barrier. It may be necessary to re-mulch all the trees in the second or third year after planting, depending on how well they were done to begin with.
- Strimming - With woodland plantings, may need to trim paths and may be necessary to trim around the mulched area of trees as the long grass can bend in and obscure trees when they are small. Keep trimmers away from tree stems – trimmer damage to bark causes serious damage/death to the tree.
- Pruning - If you notice damaged branches, prune them off carefully while they are young.

Also, look out for natural regeneration – self-seeded trees. These should be included in your planting scheme, and cared for the same as your other trees – give them tree guards and mulch them etc. They usually should not need watering as they will normally have well established root systems.