



Treestrees.....trees

What's all this about trees?

People who are concerned about climate change and biodiversity talk quite a bit about trees, but why are trees important? Trees can be described as the lungs of our planet. They have several very important functions. First, they capture and store carbon. They 'breathe in' the carbon that we emit. Trees, and other plants, take carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air and water from the ground. They then, through the process of photosynthesis and using the energy of sunlight, convert it into wood, and release oxygen into the air.

In one year, an acre of mature trees (equivalent to an area just over half of a football pitch) absorbs the same amount of CO₂ that is produced when you drive your car 26,000 miles. That's once around the globe!

There are also other benefits of trees, including:

- Preventing the risk of flooding, especially if they are planted uphill
- Providing a canopy and habitat for wildlife and thus promoting biodiversity
- Cooling streets and towns in hot weather
- Helping to prevent soil erosion.

For the first five years of a tree's life, its uptake of carbon is quite small. Its most efficient years in locking up additional carbon are from five to 50 years, with the carbon remaining stored after that. A mature tree absorbs CO₂ at a rate of approximately 22 kilos per year. So, as well as planting new trees, we need to maintain and protect our mature trees. This could include having tree preservation orders on our older trees so that they should not be felled, and if they are felled, they must be replaced.

Despite these benefits, the Woodland Trust suggests that England may now have tipped into deforestation, with more trees being cut down than planted for the first time in 40 years. The UK sits in the bottom 10% of all countries globally in terms of the natural biodiversity it has left.

What is happening in Devon?

Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT), on behalf of the Devon Ash Dieback Resilience Forum, has secured funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund as well as other funders to enable the planting of a large number of mixed native trees over the coming months and years. The project, called Saving Devon's Treescapes (SDT), will run for five years and aims 'to provide hope and action in the face of the alarming changes that are already affecting our precious treescapes'. Some of the funds have been given to counter the effects of ash dieback across the county (DWT estimates that at least 90% of ash trees will die over the next few years and also notes that ashes represent a significant proportion of our native trees). One aim is to plant three native trees for each large ash which must be felled, two for a medium sized one, and one for a small ash. Mostly the replacements will be oak, field maple, lime, aspen, beech, birch, hazel and fruit trees. Such trees vary in mature size. An oak can grow to 45 metres over a long period, but a field maple or hazel can be mature after 20 years and only reach 12 metres high. A hazel tree can also be coppiced so that it grows more like a bush.

DWT's philosophy is 'right tree, right place, right maintenance' and it is committed to working with Bovey Tracey Town Council (the Council) to pursue these aims.

So what are we doing in Bovey Tracey?

- The draft Neighbourhood Plan has several aims related to tree planting, including the objective: to protect and enhance the natural environment to ensure no net loss of priority habitat and species.
- The parish of Bovey Tracey and Heathfield is a pilot site for the SDT scheme and there are several main strands to the project here.
 - The Council is keen to plant trees on its own and other public land and to this end is considering planting native and orchard trees in several locations. There have been recent consultations with local people about two potential sites and it is hoped there may be further sites in the future.
 - There will also be opportunities for any owners of larger plots of land who are interested in planting five or 500 trees (and any number in between) to work with the Council and DWT. If you are interested in this or know someone who may be interested, please do get in touch with the Council.
 - The Council is holding a tree give-away of 250 native saplings to the people of Bovey Tracey and Heathfield with guidance on how to plant and nurture them. October and November are the best months in which to plant such saplings. The saplings will be given away from just outside the Riverside Community Centre on a first come first served basis from 9:30am on

Saturday 17th October and Saturday 7th November (please bring a face mask to collect, and observe social distancing and other national/local guidelines). If you haven't got space for one of these trees in the ground in your garden, you could grow it in a very large pot.

Our deputy mayor has suggested that in 12 months' time we could have another 1000 trees within the parish.

So we can all do our bit! We hope many of you will take a tree and give it a good home. We'd love to see your photos in 6 or 12 months' time as that sapling starts to grow, and hope you will send them in to cabh@boveytracey.gov.uk.

Together we can make a difference.