

New Trees and Woods - Ten Steps to Success

It is important to get the **Right Tree in the Right Place for the Right Purpose**. If you are not sure how to follow the steps below seek further advice. Sources of further information are provided at the end of the guide. Trees and woodland can be introduced through planting and natural regeneration. Following the ten steps will help you get the best result from both.

Step 1: Objectives

Be clear why you want to plant trees or create new woodland. Trees bring many benefits. They are also a long-term commitment. Thinking clearly about the benefits you hope to see in the future will inform your decisions now.

Step 2: Ownership

Who owns the land which is being considered as a location for trees? Does the owner agree to have trees on their land and understand the long-term legal responsibilities that come with owning trees?

Are there opportunities to involve local people in the scheme? The strong connections this creates between trees and people are extremely valuable.

Step 3: Existing Site Value

Is there existing environmental value that could be harmed by new trees. For example, species diverse grasslands are rare in Oxfordshire and should not be converted to woodland or planted with trees. Are there protected species of plants or animals? Could the new trees be located to enhance the environment for example by reducing local air pollution, flooding or linking existing habitats? Check with Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre and other local sources. Check the site at different times of the year to see what already grows there.

Are new trees appropriate to the landscape and historic character of the area? Could new trees and woodland have an undesirable landscape and visual effect? The landscape in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) can be particularly sensitive to harm. Are there archaeological and heritage features both above and below ground that might be harmed by trees in that location? Check and seek further advice where necessary.

For large planting and creation schemes or smaller schemes in sensitive areas such as AONBs you may need permission from the Forestry Commission and to undertake further, detailed assessments.

Step 4: Soils and Site Factors

What is the soil type on the proposed site? This will influence species choice and inform whether special measures need to be taken particularly for tree planting. As a general guide, large-scale woodland creation on better quality agricultural land of importance for food production should be avoided.

Is the location susceptible to frosts, drought or waterlogging? Are there potential tree disease issues specific to the site?

Step 5: Available Space

Is there enough space to accommodate the trees when fully grown, for example how close are buildings and overhead cables? Can more space be made to allow the trees to reach their full potential if need be. Is there a future risk to roads and public rights of way? Will tree roots be a risk to building foundations on shrinkable clay soils? Are there underground services that could be damaged?

Step 6: Species Choice

Taking into account the information above, select and encourage species that are suitable for the location. Native species are of a particular benefit to wildlife. Non-native and ornamental species can be useful in some locations and may be more productive for some end uses. Think about how long your trees are likely to live and how big they will grow. Large growing trees are of particular value if there is enough space. Low-growing scrub has benefits too. Consider what the effect of a changing climate may be. Choose species that are likely to be suited to the climate when they are mature, as far as current evidence allows. Natural regeneration will self-select trees that are suited to the site now but may not be best suited in the future; how will the mix be modified in the future if need be?

Step 7: Funding

Consider how to fund the tree planting or woodland creation and the cost of maintenance during the establishment phase. There are a wide range of grants and support available. Some organisations provide free trees for certain types of schemes. If you need external funding allow time to research available schemes, make applications and receive grants.

Step 8: Planting and Protection

Generally, smaller trees are easier and cheaper to establish than larger trees. Consider whether trees need support from stakes and protection from rabbits and deer (and people!). Natural regeneration lets nature do the hard work but can take longer to establish. Reduce the risk of spreading tree diseases by sourcing trees that are from *Plant Healthy Certification Scheme* certified suppliers.

Step 9: Aftercare

Make sure that the maintenance of the trees is planned for at the outset. Who will do it, how will it be paid for? Maintenance may include control of competing vegetation; watering in times of drought; checking and removal of stakes and ties; removal of tree protection, maintenance of fencing and long-term control of animals such as grey squirrels that can damage growing trees. In the longer-term individual trees may benefit from formative pruning to create a strong structure and woodlands are likely to require thinning to promote good tree growth.

Step 10: Enjoy

With careful planning and after-care you will have created a resource that will benefit you and future generations.

Sources of Further Advice and Information (web-linked)

The Forestry Commission

The Institute of Chartered Foresters

The Royal Forestry Society

The Tree Council

The Arboricultural Association

Oxfordshire County Council - *Common Questions About Trees*

Oxfordshire County Council - *Guidance on Archaeology and Heritage*

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre

Cotswolds AONB

Chilterns AONB

North Wessex Downs AONB

Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust

The Sylva Foundation

Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment

Wild Oxfordshire

The Woodland Trust

Useful References

The UK government's approach to sustainable forestry *The UK Forestry Standard*

Where to target nature conservation in Oxfordshire: *Oxfordshire Conservation Target Areas*

Government web-map with environmental information: *MAGIC*
(note: not a replacement for local knowledge e.g. TVERC)

Forestry Commission web-tool to guide tree species choice: *FC Ecological Site Classification tool*

Government guidance on forestry and Environmental Impact Assessments: *Woodland EIA Overview*

Guidance on managing the risk from trees: *National Tree Safety Group*

Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Map: *Oxfordshire HLC*
(note: switch data layers to show appropriateness of woodland planting)

Oxfordshire map of Sensitivity to Environmental Change: *Oxfordshire Environmental Sensitivity*

Forest Research guide to tree planting: *The Urban Tree Manual*

Information on the Plant Healthy Certification Scheme: *Plant Healthy*

© Oxfordshire County Council 2021.

Oxfordshire County Council, County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND. www.oxfordshire.gov.uk