



Community Tree Planting Guide

This document serves as a reference for those contemplating a new tree planting initiative in their local community. Although obtaining the necessary advice and permissions for tree planting can be daunting, this guide aims to providing guidance and information on the process, including recommendations on how, where, and what to plant.

We suggest exploring the following links for a solid starting point:

[Tree Planting Advice - Plant Trees - Woodland Trust](#)

[Guidance Hub - The Tree Council](#)

Introduction to Tree Planting- Ensuring the right tree in the right place for the right reason

It is important to identify the main objectives for your tree planting initiative. Common reasons for planting trees include:

- **to attract wildlife:** native trees with nuts and berries such as rowan, hazel and beech provide food throughout the year.
- **to provide shade:** native species provide a good source of shade in summer and shelter from the elements over winter.
- **to prevent soil erosion:** trees can hold soils firm and improve stability to protect against wind and water erosion.
- **to reduce flooding:** trees suitable for riparian planting or in a damp corner include alder and willow.

By aligning your tree planting objectives with specific desired outcomes, you can maximise the benefits of your efforts and contribute positively to the environment and community well-being.

Where to plant?

Before anything else you need to consider where you are intending to plant the trees, who owns the land, and what the constraints to any planting will be. It is critical that you have permission from the landowner before you start planning a tree planting project.

In towns and villages, many parks, recreation grounds and greenspaces are owned by Perth and Kinross Council (PKC), who should be the first point of contact for any project (communitygreenspace@pkc.gov.uk). We may accept offers from community groups to carry out tree planting with consent and instructions.

Other planting options include private gardens, which can make a big difference if everyone plants a tree or two in their own garden and encourages their neighbourhood to do the same. You could also ask local businesses if they have land they could allow for tree planting.

Consider partnering with community garden initiatives or allotment associations to incorporate tree planting into existing gardening projects, enhancing greenspaces and biodiversity. There may also be opportunity to engage with homeowner associations to identify suitable locations within residential areas for tree planting, such as along streets or in communal green spaces.



We encourage all schools to consider their school grounds tree planting potential in our dedicated guidance for [School Tree Planting](#). Native trees are available free for schools from the [Woodland Trust](#) and [Carbon Footprint Ltd.](#)

Choosing the right location for tree planting is crucial, as it could potentially harm habitats in certain areas. Certain lands are safeguarded due to their rich wildlife or archaeological significance, thus planting trees in such areas can violate legal regulations. In certain instances, your project might necessitate involvement from PKC, particularly concerning matters like [Tree Preservation Orders](#). Avoid sites with rare or protected species, wetlands, and heathland. In considering planting areas, make sure to avoid planting on or near any underground pipes or overhead cables.

It is also important to avoid planting trees in shaded areas such as beside larger older trees, existing hedges, or next to buildings. Trees should be planted a maximum distance from buildings depending on the tree species. Ensure that the planting site has adequate drainage to prevent water accumulation around tree roots, which can lead to root rot.

The most successful projects are community led. Your new trees will impact the local landscape, so consider how it may affect other people. Talk to the local community about your planting design to encourage support and recruit budding volunteers. Additionally, if you're exploring the possibility of accessing grants from Scottish Forestry, it's advisable to seek guidance from Scottish Forestry as well as the landowners involved.

Choosing Suitable Species

Ensuring the right trees are in the right place for the right reason is essential for achieving success. It's crucial to dedicate time to careful planning in this regard. We recommend planting native trees sourced locally from reputable Scottish nurseries to maximise the chances of success.

Think about the type of woodland you want to achieve. The Woodland Trust offers packs of trees including:

- Hedgerow - create pathways for wildlife to move along and live within.
- Plant for pollinators - provide nectar and nesting sites for pollinators.
- Urban - for urban gardens and community areas.
- Wildlife - give local wildlife a source of food and shelter.
- Copse - create a mini forest.
- Wild harvest - for fruits and nuts
- Year round colour - blossoms, bright berries and stunning autumn displays.
- Working wood - carve or weave willow.
- Wild wood - hardy species can tolerate exposed sites and help dry up wet areas.

If you're planting a group of trees, a copse or woodland then small planting stock is best (30cm to 60cm whips / saplings). For small trees like whips, tree tubes are effective at protecting against rabbit and deer grazing and the stake or cane used to secure the tube also provides support for the tree. If livestock are near your planting areas, fencing is essential to prevent tree damage.



Decide the density (number of trees per meter) you wish to plant. Think position, final size and spread. We recommend planting with 2 meters space between each tree. Planting in wavy lines with varied spacing across the site will create a more natural aesthetic. Planting small groups of the same species together can also effectively minimise competition between different species as they grow.

Include open spaces within your woodland area to promote diverse habitats and increase biodiversity. Creating a glade provides an excellent environment for wildflowers to thrive, while planting shrubs along the perimeter will support various species of butterflies, bats, and birds.

When to Plant

The tree planting season runs from November to March, so make sure you leave time to source your trees and plant them at the right time.

Organising a tree planting event

Organising a tree planting event involves several important considerations to ensure its success and effectiveness. Here are key factors to consider:

- Provide training and instructions on proper planting techniques, safety protocols, and the importance of the project's goals and objectives. Make everyone aware of the qualified first aider. Make sure you have carried out a risk assessment and are covered by appropriate insurance.
- Arrange for the necessary supplies and equipment, including trees, shovels, gloves, mulch, water, and first aid kits. Advise on appropriate clothing and footwear.
- Ensure logistical arrangements such as transportation, parking, and toilet facilities are in place.
- Make sure the planting target is met and that people feel they have achieved the day's objective. An adult could probably plant between 12 and 20 trees in one hour.
- Think about safeguarding if planting with children or vulnerable adults.

Planting Techniques

When your trees arrive, store them upright, sheltered from frost and wind. If the roots look like they're drying out, lightly spray them with water to keep them moist. If the planting area has become overgrown, cut long grass and remove brambles etc.

There are different methods of planting and in areas susceptible to drought, T-notch planting is recommended for grass-covered ground. In all other cases, pit planting is preferred as it is appropriate for all ground types and ensures soil is properly broken up. Information on how to plant trees via these methods are available from the [Tree Council](#). Alternatively, a video on how to plant a tree is available [here](#).

Maintenance and Care

After planting your trees, it's crucial to provide care to support their growth, especially during the first 3 years. These actions will require commitment from volunteers.



In planning your tree planting project, you will need to consider how to deliver the aftercare and fund the ongoing maintenance costs. [The Woodland Trust provides advice](#) to split the phases of tree care as follows:

Years 1-3:

- Tell people where they are to avoid mowing and damage. Regular grass cutting is not advised as it fastens grass growth.
- Keeping a 1 metre diameter around the tree clear of weeds and grass. Mulching materials to reduce need for weeding can be used including bark chips or Ecomatt weed control fabric mats made from recycled jute.
- Young trees should get all the water they need from the soil, but watering is required during sustained periods of drought.
- Check on guards, canes, or stakes, ensuring they are firmly planted into the soil and standing upright. Remove any grass growing inside the guard and securely reposition it.

Years 3-10:

- Remove tree guards and dispose of the plastics responsibly to protect local wildlife.
- Pruning, though not essential, will encourage trees to grow upwards rather than outwards once established and help to create a diverse canopy structure.
- Coppice trees by cutting a tree at its base to encourage new growth, after seven to 10 years.
- Thinning at year 10 by removing approximately one out of every five trees will decrease competition for light, water, and nutrients. This action provides the remaining trees with greater space, enabling them to develop improved shape and strength, ultimately becoming more resilient.

Years 10+: Advice on long term woodland management is advised through [Forestry and Land Scotland](#).

Trees and Funding

Here are some suggestions for funding and free trees:

- [The Woodland Trust](#) offers schools and community groups free trees. Public access to the land is necessary for eligibility. They provide packs of trees of 30 trees or 100 saplings.
- [The Tree Council's Branching Out Fund](#) is a grants fund to get communities and young people involved in tree planting. Award grants from £250 to an upper limit of £2500.
- [Carbon Footprint](#) offers tree planting opportunities to its clients as part of their sustainability programmes and they are always looking for planting sites. The trees are paid for by their clients. Projects can be woodland creation, enrichment planting or restocking.
- [The Conservation Volunteers - I Dig Trees](#) have 12,000 packs of 50 trees to distribute to community groups. All the tree varieties are native UK species and available in packs of 50. Trees must be planted on publicly accessible land and not on private domestic property.
- [PKC Nature Restoration Fund](#) supports community tree planting projects, particularly those that connect existing woodlands together and enhance biodiversity. Projects can be funded from £1,000 upwards but cannot fund any maintenance costs.
- [Community Environment Challenge Fund](#) can provide support and funding for community-lead environmental projects. The minimum grant request is £2,500 up to a maximum of £10,000. 50% match funding is required.
- [Forestry Grant Scheme](#) offers financial support for the creation of new woodland and the sustainable management of existing woodland. 9 different models of woodland creation grants can be combined to generate diverse woodlands.