

Dates for the Diary

- Churchyard Task Team Programme** Various dates until December 6th 2016
www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk
Tel: 01588 673041
Email: info@cfga.org.uk
Various churchyard maintenance programmes throughout Shropshire including grassland management, hedge laying and scything.
Shropshire
- National Tree Week** 26th November – 3rd December 2016
www.treecouncil.org.uk
Events throughout the UK that celebrate trees and their value including tree planting.
National
- Ancient Trees in Urban Environments** 20th December 2016 (7.30pm)
www.devonwildlifetrust.org
Tel: 01626 834399
Chris Knapman of the Ancient Tree Forum presents on urban ancient trees and their ABC - aesthetic, biological and cultural connections in our lives
Bovey Tracey, Devon
- Trees in Winter Identification** Various dates, December 2016 – February 2017
www.wildlifetrusts.org/events
Courses by regional Wildlife Trusts throughout the country that take a practical look at tree identification at a difficult time of the year using buds and bark as key identification features.
Various locations including Surrey, Essex, Herefordshire, South Wales
- Tree Survey & Inspection Course** 12th January 2017
www.wildlifetrusts.org/events
Tel: 01372 379523
A one day LANTRA-certified course to give you confidence in identifying hazards & risks associated with trees.
Ashtead, Surrey
- Walk in the Woods** May 2017
www.treecouncil.org.uk
The Tree Council's festival to encourage everyone to enjoy trees and woods. Across the UK, walks, talks and other events take place in town and countryside
National
- Cherishing Churchyards Week** 3rd June – 11th June 2017
www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk
Tel: 01588 673041
Email: info@cfga.org.uk
Caring for God's Acre's week celebrating churchyards and burial grounds and to raise awareness of the treasures they contain.
National
- Ancient Tree Forum conference 2017** 13th July – 14th July 2017
www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk
Tel: 01935 873766
enquiries@ancienttreeforum.co.uk
Themes for the event are likely to include ancient beech management and keystone trees, and wood pasture and pollarding restoration and will take place in Epping Forest.
Epping Forest

For further training and other events relevant to churchyard trees visit:

www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk
www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk
www.projectdirt.com
www.treecharter.uk/events-calendar
www.treecouncil.org.uk/About-Us/Diary-Dates

Interpreting your churchyard

Churchyards are valuable to the whole community and their trees offer numerous benefits. Culturally they can offer value as an aesthetic feature, for their utilisation (e.g. fruit foraging), or the consistency they represent. They hold historic value, representing a living link to a community's distant past, may be connected with a person or event, or be a relic of a former landscape. They also support education, offering an exceptional resource within a community to explore both the natural world and a community's heritage.

You can harness this value to get the whole community involved in learning about and caring for your churchyard trees, whilst being respectful to the sanctity of the space. This could include regular activities, such as setting up a volunteer group to help manage the trees or providing access for schools, and ad-hoc activities including an event that brings people together such as a family nature day or a tree planting ceremony.

Volunteer groups

Setting up a volunteer group to help manage or teach people about your churchyard trees not only divides the work, but can also provide a support network to help raise funds or find expertise to deal with issues, and is a good way of introducing people to the wider story and significance of your churchyard.

You should first think about what you need help with and how people can support your churchyard trees. The group could help with maintenance work, run activities, or start a new project such as a community orchard. You can then think about how to get people involved. Speaking to an existing group will help you find advice, share ideas, and promote the opportunities. The Tree Council's Tree Warden Network and Tree Charter campaign's Charter Branches are community groups across the UK for people that want to support and learn about trees in their area. There are also many other community groups who will already be working with trees and could help. This includes park Friends groups, community orchards and local groups of The Conservation Volunteers.

The Charter for Tree's, Woods and People

www.treecharter.uk/charter-branches

Tree Council's Tree Warden Network

www.treecouncil.org.uk/Take-Part/Near-You

The Orchard Project

www.theorchardproject.org.uk

The Conservation Volunteers

www.tcv.org.uk

Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens

www.farmgarden.org.uk/your-area

Project Dirt community group network

www.projectdirt.com

Schools and families

Churchyards offer an opportunity for learning outside, as an outdoor classroom for schools or through activities for families. You can find tree ideas and activity packs suitable for a wide range of ages, including those that link to school curriculums, through the sites listed below.

Trees, particularly mature trees, are a classroom in themselves. From their root system to their canopy, the life cycle of a tree is a tremendous adventure. To a young imagination the bug life and creepy crawlies that inhabit it are a world waiting to be explored.

Where a churchyard has an ancient or veteran tree then the cultural, historical even mythical stories behind its great age could provide the source for stories, essays, poems, paintings and other imaginary and creative topics to do with their immediate environment.

Forest Schools and Eco-Schools will be particularly interested in learning more about the trees growing in their local churchyards, but all local schools can utilise the trees as part of their curriculum. You may be able to liaise with an existing volunteer group who could 'lend' them an expert for a tree session, and who could also introduce them to the insect and bird life that depend on trees for their habitat. You could also involve a school in managing the trees, such as by taking part in a tree planting.

Nature Detectives

www.naturedetectives.org.uk

Wildtime Learning

www.wildtimelearning.com

Woodland Trust: Curriculum linked resources

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/schools/curriculum-linked-resources

Royal Forestry Society: Teaching trees

www.rfs.org.uk/learning/teaching-trees

Events

There are lots of ways to help celebrate your churchyard trees and care for them. A regular group or activity may not be necessary, or there may not be time to coordinate it. Instead, a one-off or infrequent event might be the most practical method of getting support for your churchyard trees and helping people to understand their importance, such as through games and activities, a competition, or a maintenance day. Tying your churchyard tree activities in with an existing summer fair, meeting or anniversary event can help to get more people involved and make it easier and cheaper to organise.

Caring for God's Acre: Involving people

www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/index.php/resources-and-publications/action-pack-for-download/involving-people.html

We Love Yew guide (*pages 5-8*)

www.weloveyew.org/weloveyew_guide.pdf

LiberTeas: Help to run an event (*Magna Carta themed but relevant for general activities*)

www.liberteas.co.uk/supporters/help

Managing your churchyard trees

The value of churchyards to our natural world relies on good stewardship through competent management. For their trees this most often means undertaking minimal intervention, but inspecting often. If a tree is developing well and is healthy, it can continue to do so without work which, however well intentioned, could reduce the vitality of the tree. However when the health of a tree is deteriorating, or an inspection reveals potential problems, maintenance work can prove beneficial. Churchyards often public nature, wide range of uses and faculty laws result in there being particular considerations to be taken into account for their trees.

It is also important to think of the trees management within the context of the wider churchyard. This includes the church building and cemetery, as well as their value to other species. They can enrich the ecosystem by creating a wide variety of micro-habitats suitable for many other organisms. Notable beneficiaries are invertebrates and the species which prey on them, and the epiphytes, including specialist mosses and lichens, which rely on these often-veteran trees. Trees can also have adverse impacts however, pushing out grasses and other plants, along with the wildlife these support, by competing for light, nutrients and water.

Inspections

Regularly inspecting trees can help to reveal potential problems and give adequate time to resolve them or contact an arboricultural consultant for advice. Inspections do not only support the tree, but are also necessary as every tree owner has a duty to take reasonable care to ensure their trees do not pose an unacceptable risk to people, including in adjacent land. Keeping records of these inspections, including notes and photographs, can help you to see changes to the trees overtime, as well as serve as evidence of your diligence in the rare event of an accident. A competent Arboricultural Consultant will be able to provide a report on your trees.

The stability of the tree can be assessed by looking at the structure and features of the crown, limbs and trunk. An uneven **crown** shape or leaning **trunk** can indicate the tree is at risk of collapsing whilst over **extended branches and limbs** can fail. If the **soil around the tree** is cracked or lifting it may be the result of the tree rocking in high winds, which can be caused by a dense or abnormally large crown compared to the trunk, as well as local factors such as the wind being funneled by surrounding buildings.

Cracks in the tree can indicate branches may be unstable and at risk of failing, as can **cavities** (which may be host to nesting birds). **Fungal fruiting** structures on the tree can point to decay within the tree and the potential for failure.

The **number, size, spread and colour of the leaves** can help you assess the vitality of the tree. If the leaves are smaller or curled it may indicate an over abundance or shortage of water or soil nutrients, or the presence of a fungi, virus or pest attacking the tree. **Surrounding trees and vegetation** can also affect the tree, competing for sunlight, water and nutrients, but also reducing the exposure to wind.

Planting trees

Churchyards are often a source of high biodiversity. New tree plantings can contribute to this resource and the churchyards aesthetics, but should be carefully considered.

Considering why you are planting a tree will help guide you to selecting an appropriate species. For example it may be as a memorial, to boost biodiversity, replace a dying tree, to utilise it (e.g.

for foraging) or as an aesthetic feature. You should also consider the different sizes tree species will grow to, the care and maintenance it will need, and if it complements and is appropriate for other species found in the local environment.

The location is also important. An unsuitably located tree can be detrimental to surrounding species including by providing competition for sunlight and nutrients, and lead to problems in the future for the built environment such as by undermining the foundations of the church or by lifting paths.

Permission

Before undertaking any work, including tree planting, you should first check you are able to do so. Your Diocesan office will be able to advise you of relevant Faculty regulations and the permissions you require for tree work, including planting saplings. Your tree(s) may also have a Tree Preservation Order, a Restrictive Covenant or be within a Conservation Area – you can check with your Local Authority if any of these apply.

Finding a professional arborist

A number of organisations can help you find an appropriate and qualified arborist to undertake work. If you are unsure what work needs to take place an Arboricultural Consultant can inspect and report on your tree(s), whilst a Tree Surgeon can carry out required work. They should undertake any work to BS 3998 standards.

Arboricultural Association: www.trees.org.uk

Consulting Arborist Society: www.tree-expert-finder.co.uk

International Society of Arboriculture: www.isa-arbor.com/findanarborist

Your Local Authority's Tree Officer may also be able to recommend a competent arborist.

Tree management resources

Although seeking the skills and experience of a professional arborist is always preferred when managing trees, it is important you have an understanding of this yourself. There are a number of resources available both digital and printed, including specialist advice for veteran and fruit trees.

Web resources:

Ancient Tree Forum management guides

A wide range of topics relevant to managing churchyard trees

www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk/resources/ancient-tree-guides/

Ancient Yew Group articles

A range of informal articles on managing and protecting yew trees.

www.ancient-yew.org/s.php/looking-after-ancient-yew/2/5

Caring for Gods Acre: Managing Churchyards and Burial Grounds

A wide range of guides on good practice in managing a churchyard, including trees.

www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/index.php/resources-and-publications/action-pack-for-download/managing-churchyards-burial-grounds.html

Forestry Commission Publications

A wide range of management guides, aimed at woodland settings but useful for churchyards, including information on assessing hazards and maintenance considerations. The Practice Guides are particularly useful.

www.forestry.gov.uk/publications

Historic England Landscape Advice Notes

A wide range of publications on managing historic sites useful for churchyards. In particular see the Landscape Advice Notes on 'Trees and the Law', 'Commemorative Trees' and 'Treatment of dead wood'.

www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications

myForest

A free tool by the Sylva Foundation to create a sustainable management plan.

www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/woodlandmanagement

Natural England's veteran tree guides

A good introduction to the importance of veteran trees, and management considerations.

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/75035>

Trees and Design Action Group guides

Useful guidance and links to support decision making when managing urban churchyard trees.

www.tdag.org.uk/guides--resources.html

Trees Are Good: Tree Owner Information

Wide range of downloadable guides on planting, risk management, and maintenance.

www.treesaregood.org/treeowner/treeownerinformation.aspx

VETree training videos

Helpful and detailed videos on a range of topics, aimed at veteran trees, but useful for a wide range of tree management scenarios.

www.vetree.eu/en/page/5/Videos

Printed resources:

Wildlife in church and churchyard: Plants, animals and their management

Including information on managing woodland and trees in churchyards, as well as wildlife considerations.

Cooper, N. 2001. Church House Publishing.

The Nature of God's Acre

Examples from the Diocese of Chichester on peoples relationship with the spiritual and natural value of churchyards.

King, M. & Betson, M., 2014. The Nature of God's Acre Project Team.

Written by The Conservation Foundation. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Your support of the Churchyard Trees Conferences with a donation is greatly appreciated at

www.justgiving.com/conservationfoundation

www.conservationfoundation.co.uk/churchyardtrees

