



Tree Planting

The planting, protection and aftercare of young trees needs careful attention if they are to establish successfully. This information aims to provide general guidance on the standard of work required for projects grant aided by the National Park Authority.

Planting

(i) Pre-planting Care

All trees should be 40-60cm transplants of British provenance (preferably local provenance) and should comply to British Standard 3936. Ideally trees should be planted as soon as possible after delivery and should be 'heeled in' if they are not to be planted immediately. This involves placing the roots in a pit or trench and covering with firmed soil to prevent them drying out, being frosted or being exposed to sunlight.

(ii) Timing and Weather Conditions

Planting should be carried out between October and March. Dry areas are best planted in early autumn and wet areas in February and March. No planting should be done in very wet, frosty or snowy conditions.

(iii) Ground Preparation

Aggressive weeds (particularly grasses) should be controlled before planting as they will compete with the new trees which have an incomplete root system in the first growing season. Ideally the vegetation should be cleared for 1m diameter (0.5 m radius) around each planting position either by stripping away the turf or using a suitable herbicide. Note: All herbicides must be applied in accordance with the label recommendations.

Mowing is not an effective method of clearing vegetation as it causes renewed (and usually more vigorous) growth of the vegetation, thereby increasing competition for moisture.

(iv) Planting Methods

When planting it is important to keep the plants in a plastic bag to prevent drying out and exposure to light. It is essential that the roots are kept moist and dark as even a short period of exposure could damage the plants.

There are two main planting techniques - notch planting and pit planting.

- **Notch planting** - this method is suitable for small transplants. A slit or 'L'-shaped notch should be cut in the soil and held open with a spade whilst the roots of the tree are inserted carefully so that they spread downwards. The notch must be well firmed around the tree, while pulling the plant gently upwards so the original soil mark on the stem is at ground level.
- **Pit Planting** - this is generally used when planting larger stock or container trees. The trees should be planted by digging out a pit which must be deep and wide enough to take the roots. The base of the pit should be forked over to improve drainage and the roots should be evenly spread around the pit. The pit can then be back-filled with the soil being firmed in every 10 cm (4 inches) to prevent air pockets.

Fresh farmyard manure or fertiliser should not be used. Trees should be planted no deeper than the soil mark on the stem.

Protection

It is necessary to guard young trees against livestock and wild animals. This can be done by individual tree protection using tree shelters or, for larger areas, fencing against livestock and rabbits.

(i) Tree Shelters

The tree shelter stake should be driven in before planting the tree. The stake should be 8-12 cm (3"-5") from the transplant stem position. Then slide the tube carefully over the tree after bending any branches upward. If there is a curved rim on the shelter, make sure it is at the top and that the base of the tube is pushed 3-5 cm (1-2 inches) into the soil. Attach the tube firmly to the stake with the ties provided.

Shelters will protect individual trees from damage by animals depending on their size:

0.6 m for voles and rabbits

0.75 m for hares

1.2 m for roe deer

1.5 m for sheep (if double staked)

(ii) Protective Fencing

Post and wire fencing is essential to protect the trees from livestock, refer to Specifications for Stockproof Fencing.

Where large areas of trees are to be planted it may be more cost effective to rabbit fence rather than use individual tree shelters, refer to Specifications for Rabbit-proof Fencing.

Aftercare

i) Weeding

The young trees must be kept clear of vegetation for at least a 0.5 m radius around the tree for the first few years after planting, to lessen the competition for light and moisture. Effective weeding removes all vegetation around the tree roots before each season's growth.

Late April onwards is the best time to control vegetation but it may need to be repeated 2 or more times each season. Tree shelters are not a substitute for weeding and tall weeds inside shelters should be removed.

Herbicides may be the most cost-effective and practical way to control weeds by careful spot spraying or using granular forestry herbicide in winter. Note: All herbicides must be applied in accordance with the label recommendations.

Correct weeding is the most effective way to ensure that trees receive enough water. Water retention and weed control can be greatly improved by using sheet mulches, such as plastic, or thick organic mulches, such as wood chips or wet straw.

The importance of weeding cannot be over-emphasised.

ii) Further Planting

Failed trees should be replaced in the following planting season.

iii) Removal of Shelters

Fencing and shelters should be inspected regularly.

Only remove shelters when they have disintegrated or when the stem has almost filled it. Once the shelter has been removed it may be necessary to protect young trees with spiral rabbit guards where rabbits or hares are a particular problem.

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