

Tree Warden Report 2013

The tree warden is a voluntary post appointed by the parish council. The scheme was developed by the tree council in 25 years ago and there are currently about 8000 tree wardens. Tree wardens usually

- Advise on planning applications affecting trees as in removal or opportunities to re-plant trees and or hedges
- In the past the tree warden was extra ‘eyes and ears’ for the SCDC tree officer and landscape officer. These two posts have now been replaced by one appointment of Mr Nick Newton. He has to cover Waveney as well as SCDC so must be very stretched.
- Advise on tree and hedge care and maintenance especially on publicly owned sites –here these include the school, the playing field and Church Field
- In addition many tree wardens are involved with countryside planting schemes for hedges and trees and other projects involving habitat creation such as pond creation and road verge management. In Waldringfield I have been involved in the village verge project (Wildlife Group), school grounds management, playing field management and the Scattered Orchard Project (WALGA).

TPO trees are not the only trees.

It should be emphasised that TPO trees are not the only trees of importance in the village. They may have a TPO because they were thought to be threatened in the past. SCDC are very reluctant to put on new TPOs as it is an expensive process for their overstretched officers. However ALL the trees affected by new developments are important and need to be looked at in connection with their contribution to the environment and the village scene. We have lost several large trees from the centre of this village for one reason or another, none of which was a TPO, but taken together this means a degradation of the environment.

Another aspect of concern is the loss of **large trees such as oaks and limes** and replacement with smaller growing trees. Where possible we need to replace the larger trees, especially our native oak and small leafed lime, which used to form forests in East Anglia. Anyone wishing to plant oaks or small leafed limes on their land is welcome to contact me for advice, help and possibly supply of trees depending on their situation.

SCDC removed the funding for their hedge and tree planting schemes in 2011 under the cuts. Other sources of funding are available, though involving more complicated sourcing through application to different bodies but it seems there is funding for trees and hedges available and anyone with ideas of replacing countryside hedges which have been lost and hedgerow trees should contact me to see what can be done.

Planting for wildlife: At the 'Tree Warden and Volunteer Seminar: Your Parish' (22nd March 2012) the following advice was given for encouraging butterflies and moths : elm hedges –very good for the white letter hairstreak – but do keep elm hedges below 2m high or they will be attacked by the elm bark beetle and die;

Best trees for encouraging moths: oak, willow, birch, aspen and poplar

For butterflies: holly and elm

Also many moths and butterflies have grass as food plants and **areas of long grass** are very valuable for their caterpillars. So please restrict **use of strimmers**.

While on the subject of machinery, those **garden hoovers** which suck up all leaf litter must be greatly damaging to wildlife as they will kill or damage any insects they take up as well as destroying the leaf and bark litter on which they depend, and remove the foraging sources for many songbirds, also making a dreadful noise while doing it.

Hedges: hedges are very valuable as wildlife links and tree wardens are generally encouraged to find places where hedges can usefully be planted to link existing hedges and woodland areas. As most people know hedges have been lost in great numbers throughout the British countryside over the last 60 years or so. Garden hedges are important too and an old field hedge along the end of a garden is also an important **wildlife corridor**. Some animals – dormouse for example – will be restricted to islands of scrubby vegetation if there is no aerial route for them as they will not descend to the ground. When I was doing the hedgerow survey around the agricultural fields I noticed that some of the hedges along garden boundaries are enriched with garden species such as apple trees, damsons and berrying shrubs such as Pyracantha. However unfortunately others had been removed. Generally when development is permitted in the countryside a hedge is stipulated along the rear of the property to preserve the views of the wider countryside (from visual intrusion by the development) as well as providing benefits to wildlife.

The hedgerow survey was completed in the summer of 2011. I will be speaking in detail about this at a wildlife group meeting later in the year. A plan of the parish showing the three grades of hedge was developed: green hedges are species rich – over 8 species in the hedge. Blue have 5, 6 or 7 and red have three or less species described as 'species poor'. The survey was coordinated by Guy Ackers at Greenprint Forum sponsored by SCDC and the SWT among others. Guy amassed the results of many thousands of hedges throughout Suffolk. He has analysed the results which indicate more species rich hedges on the clay lands (60%) than the sandlands (30%). The results for each parish are lodged with the landscape officer at the local District Council so that they have a detailed record of what is growing in each parish to consult when considering planning applications.

The hedgerow survey did not cover garden hedges except where these border on agricultural land. However garden hedges throughout the village and garden trees supply important habitat as well as improving the atmosphere by giving out water and oxygen into the air and alleviating flood risk.

Watering of trees

I am appending advice from the tree council (the body which co-ordinates tree wardens) about watering trees in dry weather. Especially if newly planted, trees need to be watered where there is drought as this can lead to their death or to severe stress where diseases can then take over. Grey water from washing is quite good enough for trees, distributed around where the roots are growing, not directly over the trunk. At least a whole can of water should be given each time – about a gallon- or more. If trees show signs of stress such as drooping leaves, start watering at least once a week – the Tree Council recommends three per week. The Wayfaring Tree in the village hall grounds will need this as it looks severely stressed already. Also the new apple trees planted in spring this year will need it unless we get lots of rain.

Chalara disease of ash

The discovery of Chalara, a fungal disease of ash, has been in the news last autumn and as the trees come into leaf it should be possible to see if there are any in our parish. The advice currently is not to try felling existing trees if the disease is found as the worry is that disposing of the wood will spread the disease around. If anyone would like me to look at their ash trees to identify the disease I will be happy to do so. The forestry commission is monitoring the spread of the disease and require to be informed of suspicious trees. There is a form for this on their website. It is not always easy to distinguish the disease from damage by frost or cold winds. There are many millions of ash trees in the countryside and we will have to wait to see how damaging this disease will be.

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Detailed information and pictures of the disease symptoms are available here:

www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-8w9euv

Forestry Commission website:

‘We are treating *C. fraxinea* as a ‘quarantine’ plant pathogen, which means that we may use emergency powers to contain or eradicate it when it is found. This is being done in the form of Statutory Plant Health Notices which are served on affected owners. In the case of nursery plants and recently planted young trees, we require the owners to contain the site, and we may require that infected plants be destroyed to prevent disease spread. Equivalent measures are being taken on land managed by the Forestry Commission, and this is the only available treatment to get rid of the disease. In the case of trees in established woodland and similar situations, where many of the affected trees are much larger, less accessible and in a mixture with other tree species, we require biosecurity measures to be taken to contain the infection on the site while we work to gain an overall national picture of the extent of the disease, and the likelihood that it will spread. Once we have completed that assessment, we will develop a Chalara control strategy.