

Tree wardens report



What does a tree warden do? The following is a quote from the Suffolk Coastal District Council website:

'Suffolk Coastal co-ordinates a parish tree warden scheme under the umbrella of the Tree Council. The Suffolk Coastal network was set up in 1994 and has tree wardens representing approximately 80% of parishes in the district.'

'Tree wardens are volunteers who keep an eye open for tree problems, instigate tree and hedge planting and may co-ordinate a veteran tree or hedgerow survey in their parish. Further information about tree wardens can be found on the Tree Council website.'

On May 5th I attended a Suffolk Coastal tree warden event at Rendham where we were shown many ash trees of different ages severely affected by ash dieback. It appears that although the disease is serious some trees show resistance and can recover partially or take a lot longer to die than others. No-one knows how this will develop in the future.

From Rendham newsletter The Street:

On 10 May, the Village Hall hosted a forum for Tree Wardens from across Suffolk (including from Rendham) organised by Suffolk Coastal and the Tree Council. The focus of the discussion was on the impact of Chalara Ash dieback and the value of hedges and hedgerow trees. The Tree Council was founded in 1974 to promote tree planting and protection in the wake of Dutch Elm disease and it is tragic to report that exactly 40 years later Ash Dieback presents an even greater threat. It is forecast that in Suffolk (one of the worst affected Counties) by 2018 over 75% of Ash trees will be dead or in terminal decline due to Chalara. Ash trees are far more prevalent than were Elms. In Suffolk, Ash trees are estimated to account for some three-quarters of hedgerow trees; these have a particularly vital role for wildlife, acting as its 'motorway service stations' as it transits from one woodland to another. Hedgerows in general act as vital ecological resources and the assembled Tree Wardens were urged to encourage land-owners to preserve & extend their hedgerows & tag their non-Ash trees to act as vital replacement hedgerow trees for the future.'



LEFT: The Forum Speakers, L-R: Gary Battell Woodland Advisor to SCC; David Mitchell Mid-Suffolk Council Tree Officer (retd); Jon Stokes Director Tree Council



RIGHT: Gary Battell pointing out Ash Dieback on Pound Farm afternoon site visit

End of quote from 'The Street' at <http://rendham.onesuffolk.net/assets/The-Street/The-Street-JuneJuly-2014.pdf> No photo credits given. You may spot a familiar face or two.

In October I attended the East Anglian Tree Warden forum at Braintree. There was a series of talks on subjects such as the value of trees to people especially regarding health and recovery from illness; the current state of the ash dieback disease in Britain and the management of trees on railway land which is a huge area throughout the country. This was followed by some workshops looking at choices of trees for different situations.

In Waldringfield this year we saw a number of trees and hedges removed in the parish for various reasons, including the large Ailanthus (Tree of Heaven) from the Playing Field. It is hoped to plant at least one more suitable tree in this area. The areas of public ownership being limited it would be good to hear from any landowners who would like to plant either some larger growing trees or a length of hedge which would benefit the parish.

Otherwise I would repeat some of the advice and information I included in my report last year:

Activities as tree warden

- Advising on planning applications affecting trees
- Advising on and taking part in tree and hedge care and maintenance on publicly owned sites – the school, the playing field and Church Field.
- Advising residents on problems relating to trees on their land.
- 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, the Scattered Orchard Project (WALGA) and also the hedgerow survey now completed.

Dieback disease of ash(Chalara)

I am not aware of any examples in Waldringfield parish but please let me know if anyone has found it. The forestry commission continue to monitor the situation and are conducting a breeding programme to try to find resistant strains of ash. Advice is not to plant ash at present and if the disease is found to report to the forestry commission but not cut down the tree as it may lead to further distribution of the spores.

Dutch Elm disease

The advice continues to be to keep all hedges down to below 2m as they become infected at 3m or above, depending also on stem thickness. Dead elm should be cut low down near the ground.

Other diseases

There are now more strict controls in place for the importation of plane trees, pines and sweet chestnut to prevent further spread of diseases from other countries.

Another word on hedges.

While hedges require maintenance they can also be a joy to behold, providing flower, fruit and shelter for birds through the seasons. They are also important to hedgehogs. If putting in close board fencing please think about where hedgehogs might find a gap as they need to rove far and wide between gardens and fields, more than was previously thought (see the Suffolk Wildlife Trust hedgehog study). Fencing which supports climbers can however still be of value to wildlife for example spotted flycatchers prefer to nest on a wall or fence among climbing plants. Plant new hedges where possible either of native species or the many ornamentals which make fine hedges and may be more easily managed. Please remember laurel grows extremely fast and the leaves contain cyanide so are no good for your compost heap.

Watering of trees (advice from the Tree Council) Just as important as last year!

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.

Planting times

I am sometimes asked about planting times. Plant deciduous bare rooted trees and hedges in autumn before Christmas to get the best start. However planting can continue through the dormant season to February. More watering may be needed if it is delayed. Evergreens are supposed to be moved in May. Container grown plants can be planted at other times but will then be more liable to dry out as their roots will have to develop during the summer months.