

How to care for your trees



(Photo: J Jennings/WTML)

Once your trees are in the ground they'll need care and maintenance.

Short term management

Weeding

Weed each spring in the first couple of years after planting.

You could use a chemical based weed killer containing glyphosate – this will kill weeds effectively and break down quickly in the soil, causing minimal effect to the environment.

Alternatively use mulch to suppress weeds. Bark chips, squares of old carpet or straw around the base of the tree all help to stop weeds growing.

Watering

You should only need to water your trees after a very long dry spell.

The trees should adapt to the site and shouldn't need additional water in normal conditions.

Tree guards

Make sure that your tree guards are upright and pushed firmly into the soil. Remove any grass growing inside the guard. Once the tree has grown to over 3m, remove the guard. If they remain intact, you can use these guards again to protect any more young trees you plant.

Pests and diseases

If you suspect disease, pull up the tree and dispose of it to prevent spread. Check your trees regularly and keep the area around them weed free.

Fencing

Keep livestock away from your planting area with fencing.

Long term management

Pruning

This is not essential but it will encourage trees to grow upwards rather than outwards.

Invest in a good pruning saw and make a clean cut close to the main trunk of the tree. The cut should be made square to the branch and preserve the bulge at the base of the branch, known as the branch collar. To prevent disease and decay, it is important not to damage the bark of the tree. Never cut the branch flush with the main stem as this creates a larger wound. If unsure, always seek expert advice. Most native trees are best pruned in winter when dormant, except field maple, cherry and walnut which need pruning in summer to reduce risk of disease and sap bleeding.

Coppicing

This involves cutting a tree near to its base to encourage new growth. Your trees could be ready to coppice after 7–10 years, depending on species and growth rate. You can use this management practice to achieve a sustainable supply of wood fuel and other woodland products. The remaining coppice stool will be

vulnerable to animal browsing so make sure you protect the new growth.

Thinning

Thinning wouldn't usually occur until year 10 at the earliest but it depends on how close together the trees were planted. It involves felling some of your planted trees to reduce the competition for light, water and nutrients. By giving the remaining trees more room they develop a better shape, grow stronger and are less likely to blow over in adverse weather.

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