

£5.00 | Free to members

MAGAZINE OF The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum



Westonbirt

AUTUMN/WINTER 2020/21



Reconnect at Westonbirt

The show must go on

**Branching out: Connecting with nature
from afar**

Caring for our new arrivals from Japan



Celebrate Commemorate

A beautiful and meaningful way to remember someone special. Fill the Leaves of Life tree sculptures at Westonbirt Arboretum with your memories.

£280 per leaf

fowa.org.uk/memory

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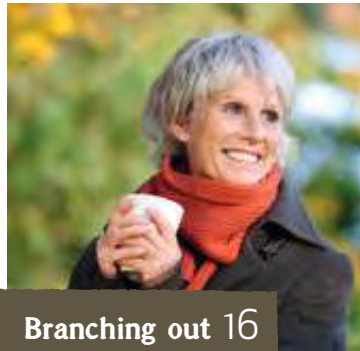
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the friends
of Westonbirt
Arboretum



Westonbirt

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Keeping on course



The last six months have undoubtedly been some of the most challenging in our 35 year history. Instead of welcoming you to celebrate our anniversary and that of the Great Oak Hall through the summer, alongside the opening of the shop

under the charity ownership, we have instead endured a tumultuous period. This has seen our partners, Forestry England, forced to close The National Arboretum for two months for your safety, alongside the charity – remodelling our operation like so many others – to work from home.

Despite this crisis, our eyes are still firmly focused on our 10-year vision and our charitable objectives around conservation, education and participation. We've been overwhelmed by your continued support through renewed membership donations, which has meant that we have been able to continue this vital work at the arboretum. We cannot thank you enough.

From supporting activities including creative wellbeing content, tree planting and the continued delivery of vital development projects like the Quarantine House to improve the arboretum's biosecurity, your donations have been integral in enabling this work to continue.

As we move back towards our normal operations over the course of the year, I would again like to invite you to join us at our revised AGM in the Great Oak Hall on 7 November (see page 14). To maintain distancing there will be a limited number of seats in the Great Oak Hall, with video conferencing available for members to join in from home.

Mike Coe

Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum, Chief Executive

Improving the quality of life



Since the beginning of the century, the arboretum's mission has been 'to connect people with trees, to improve the quality of life'. It's often said that you don't miss something until you can't have it.

The closure of the arboretum for 10 weeks in spring was an unwelcome way to experience the lost value in connecting with our trees. During that period, working here became an even greater privilege as I was able to maintain that connection while others could only do so vicariously through our digital channels.

This year has challenged our resilience. There have been plenty of moments of anxiety and tiredness. For me, in addition to continued visits to the arboretum, the physical act of cycling on a local loop at the beginning of the day, when working from home, was a great tonic. Also, writing a weekly message to our volunteers and furloughed staff was a helpful tool in getting my thoughts in order.

We've been forced to do things differently and some of this has brought about positive changes. A series of once-a-day online wellbeing 'creativitree' activities demonstrated we can broaden our reach beyond the boundaries of the arboretum. We'll need all these tools along with your continued support as we rebuild and reinvent the arboretum.

The relevance of connecting people with trees to improve the quality of life has never been greater.

Andrew Smith

Forestry England, Arboretum Director



▲ Credit: Paul Box

Reflections and thanks

For those of us who observed the passing of spring largely through our windows, the importance of nature for wellbeing had perhaps never been more apparent. Whether you were an avid explorer of woodland or more accustomed to an occasional outdoor saunter, reduced access to the natural world had a profound impact for many of us.

As we continue to adjust to the new normal, Westonbirt remains a reassuring presence. A cool breeze, a bird's song, the crunch of an autumn leaf underfoot – calm moments in nature can bring immense solace against a background of turmoil.

Reflecting on the past months, all of us at the arboretum would like to express our heartfelt thanks to our members. Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum exists as a charity to champion The National Arboretum and everything that it has to offer. Whether we're supporting the care of the natural environment or funding work that gives disadvantaged groups access to woodland activities, it's your membership donation that makes so much of this important work possible.

Your continued support through a difficult period of closure in the spring means so much. Although we offer a variety of benefits in return for your membership donation, we appreciate that year-round access to the arboretum is a significant one. Thank you for all your messages of support, for being a Westonbirt advocate and for ensuring that we're able to continue supporting the arboretum to secure its long term sustainable future.

The show must go on

Painting the Forth Bridge is an expression that comes to mind when considering tasks that can never be completed, but, as they say, the show must go on! Both expressions seem very apt for Westonbirt at the time of writing, due to a global pandemic.

By Mark Ballard, Curator, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum



Penny Jones, our expert Propagator, tending to the next generation of Westonbirt specimens, in one of our plant friendly green polytunnels.



While much of our daily lives has changed, I find it very reassuring that the essential care and maintenance of the arboretum has continued. We've naturally had to adapt and change the way we do certain things and slowed some progress, in line with government guidelines and in the interests of keeping everybody safe, but we always take our duty of care in managing the living 'green elements' of the arboretum very seriously.

When the site was closed to the public, our dedicated team were hard at work. As I'm often heard to say; we are dealing with a dynamic and ever-changing environment that waits for nobody. Everything keeps growing, thankfully!



Perhaps most importantly, our seeds and young plants continued to receive constant attention in the Propagation Unit, ensuring that the next batch of young specimens are ready for our annual planting programme over the coming autumns and winters. A steady stream of carefully identified and selected new plant material, usually in the form of seed collected in the wild, is the lifeblood of the living collection. There are so many technical considerations when it comes to propagation. It's a full-time commitment which can never cease, whatever life throws at us.



Cairn Hurst and Richard Townsend, Technical Arborists, about to leave the Tree Management Centre to undertake ongoing sward management on specialist mowers.

Sward management (improving the health and biodiversity of the grass and soil) is something that we have worked hard to continually improve over the years. Cutting the grass for visitor access and aesthetics is obviously important, but it's also vital in establishing and encouraging a varied range of natural habitats for our flora and fauna. We have a complex management plan that stipulates exactly when and how often the sward within each area of the arboretum is cut, reflected on the intricate patchwork map on the wall of the Tree Team mess-room. Operating one of our ride-on 'bat-wing' mowers takes a great deal of skill, awareness and concentration. They now need to run continually for eight months of the year with a seemingly longer and longer growing season.

An ever more essential function of the living tree collection at the arboretum is provision of a well-documented resource for scientific study. An exciting part of this is the accurate identification and verification of each of the specimen plants that we hold. The science that is taxonomy is apparently never able to stay still or stop evolving! Our phenology work is a particular project that simply had to continue, as we study the seasonal changes in certain individual plants from year to year. The aim is to build a picture of trends over time, in close collaboration with other collections and arboreta.



Michal Dvorak, our resident Dendrologist, studying a *Thuja koraiensis* (Korean Arbor vitae) near Savill Glade, which has a conservation status listed as 'vulnerable' due to a decreasing population in the wild.

We are very fortunate to have a great team working behind the scenes, tasked with looking after all aspects of our living collection and historic landscape. They are deeply aware of the importance of the arboretum's past, its value for the present day, and its undoubted significance for the future.



Credit: Alan Connor

Preparing to scale up our new Community Shelter

Progress towards our participant-inclusive Community Shelter build is well under way. Throughout the year we've been working with architect Piers Taylor to host hands-on workshops to engage and skill-up our community groups. Find out how they've been getting on.

Tom Elliot, Gloucestershire Health & Care NHS Foundation Trust (Mental Health Community Team)

“ Together with four participants and three members of staff, we took part in a design workshop last winter. Our team works with people who have long enduring mental health issues.

The day kicked off with some relaxation and mindfulness exercises, accompanied by some very welcome tea and biscuits. This really helped to relax everyone and allowed them to settle into their surroundings. We then got to work building the new Community Shelter model using everyday items such as coffee stirrers and elastic bands. Although we were given a brief, we were also encouraged to use our imaginations and create our own designs.

Whilst working on the activities, the participants were noticeably less anxious; six months later everyone is still talking about how great it was. I think one of the biggest things was being able to work on different activities without the pressure of having to get it right or the fear of doing it wrong. ”

“ Whilst working on the activities the participants were noticeably less anxious; six months later everyone is still talking about how great it was. ”

Cathy Bradshaw, The Apperley Centre

“ The Apperley Centre works with young people aged 16–19, who all have severe learning difficulties. We teach our students the skills they'll need for adult life, to help them engage with their community and in some cases to undertake college or work placements. The project opened up an opportunity to involve and engage young people with the most profound needs.

Nine students were involved in the workshops, all with varying needs, from autism, anxiety linked with learning difficulties and mental health challenges. During a series of workshops, the students were asked to design a prototype for the shelter, either in pairs or by themselves with guidance. These prototypes were then taken away by the architect's team and ideas from several groups were incorporated into the final design. The group then got involved in the building of a larger model.

Through these activities, the students learnt some important work skills and behaviours; having to follow verbal instructions, how to safely use tools, being aware of safety hazards, and working with people they didn't necessarily know that well. These are all transferable skills that they can carry forward into their later lives.

The project also gave them the opportunity to discover new ways of spending leisure time, and the skills and confidence to take advantage of this. Outdoor leisure is great for mental health and accessible to everyone. Spending time at places like Westonbirt Arboretum teaches our students important skills such as how to put on wellies, accessing paths that aren't tarmacked, avoiding trip hazards etc. These may seem like small things, but for our students they can be a real barrier to accessing the outdoors.

Active community involvement is such an important part of this build. From learning hands-on woodworking skills to contributing to the final design, spending time in the woods and participating towards this shared goal actively supports physical and mental wellbeing. ”

We can't wait to see the arboretum's new Community Shelter come to fruition!

Find out more at fowa.org.uk/community

With thanks to Greenfix (greenfix.co.uk) for providing free ground protection materials to support our new Community Shelter.



▲ Credit: Alan Connor



▲ Credit: Tony Lucas



Membership benefits

The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum charity works in partnership with Forestry England to support conservation, education and participation programmes at Westonbirt Arboretum, for all to enjoy.

As a member, your subscription supports this incredible work. Your membership also gives you some great benefits:



Entry into Westonbirt Arboretum to enjoy every season



Bring up to 4 of your own children or grandchildren free of charge (aged 18 and under)



Half-price Fridays for Enchanted Christmas illuminated light trail



Forest Live pre-sale notifications



Westonbirt Magazine and our regular eNews

Member Tuesdays return!



Bring a friend for free to Westonbirt Arboretum on Tuesdays between 24 November 2020 and 30 March 2021 inclusive. You may be required to pre-book a timeslot to visit for both yourself and your friend. If so, this will be stated on our website.

Simply enter your membership number to book a timeslot for yourself and the booking code 'MemberTuesday' to book for your accompanying friend.

For more details visit fowa.org.uk/member-benefits.
Valid for one friend per member per visit only.*

*Member Tuesdays offer does not include access to events

Partner gardens

As a Friend of Westonbirt Arboretum, you can also receive discounted entry into selected partner gardens.

Present your membership card for free entry into:

Batsford Arboretum
Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos batsarb.co.uk

Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Glasshouse, Edgbaston, Birmingham
birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk

The Yorkshire Arboretum, Castle Howard, York yorkshirearboretum.org

National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire
botanicgarden.wales

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (including Dawyck, Benmore and Logan), Edinburgh rbge.org.uk

Present your membership card for 50% off admission into:

Bedgebury National Pinetum, Goudhurst, Kent
bedgeburypinetum.org.uk

Receive 2 for 1 entry with your membership card at:

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Richmond, Surrey kew.org

Royal Botanic Gardens Wakehurst Place Ardingly, Nr Haywards Heath, West Sussex kew.org/wakehurst

Please always call the partner garden ahead of visiting to check your membership card is valid for the date you are planning to visit. You may be required to pre-book a timeslot to visit.

Local partner discounts



15% off Cotswold Outdoor



Buy online at [cotswoldoutdoor.com](https://www.cotswoldoutdoor.com) or present your membership card in-store with discount code **AF-FOWA-22**. Valid for selected lines only until 28 Feb 2021.



15% off Snow + Rock

Buy online at [snowandrock.com](https://www.snowandrock.com) or present your membership card in-store with discount code **AF-FOWA-22**. Valid for selected lines only until 28 Feb 2021.



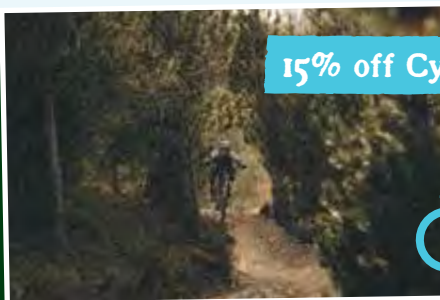
15% off Runners Need

Buy online at [runnersneed.com](https://www.runnersneed.com) or present your membership card in-store with discount code **AF-FOWA-22**. Valid for selected lines only until 28 Feb 2021.



10% discount off Forest Holidays

Book online at [forestholidays.co.uk](https://www.forestholidays.co.uk) using discount code **FOWA** for breaks booked before 28 Feb 2021.



15% off Cycle Surgery



For parts, accessories & clothing; and 10% off bikes. Buy online at [cyclesurgery.com](https://www.cyclesurgery.com) or present your membership card in-store with discount code **AF-FOWA-22**. Valid for selected lines only until 28 Feb 2021.

For up-to-date details on your membership benefits please refer to [fowa.org.uk/member-benefits](https://www.fowa.org.uk/member-benefits)

Coming up

No matter the season, there's always an exciting array of events taking place at the arboretum!



Exhibitions

All exhibitons are in the Great Oak Hall
10am-4pm

Free admission after entry to the arboretum

30% of sales supports the Friends of
Westonbirt Arboretum charity



Foursight "Step into Nature"

Four artists with four different mediums use nature as a common theme to bring you a stunning collection of pictures.

Wed 7 - Mon 12 Oct
drawingonreality.co.uk

Ashleigh Proud "Handcrafted Nature"

Specialising in enamelling, Ashleigh creates 3-dimensional objects combining copper and glass, inspired by the natural world.

Wed 21 - Mon 26 Oct
ashleighproud.com



Work in Glass "New Pleasures"

A group of work by the West Country artists celebrates the delight of emerging from their silent studios into the world including stained glass, ceramics and jewellery.

Wed 28 Oct -
Mon 2 Nov
sarahdavisglass.co.uk



Cotswold Craftsmen "Out of the Woods"

The many skills of the group bring you a variety of high quality traditional crafts, sympathetic with the glorious woodlands.

Wed 14 - Sun 18 Oct
cotswold-craftsmen.org



Please check fowa.org.uk/exhibitions for more information on events as details are subject to change.



Workshops and courses

Windsor Chair Making Course

Create your very own Windsor chair, using traditional skills in the beautiful surroundings of Westonbirt.

7 – 12 Sept, 28 Sept – 3 Oct, 12 – 17 Oct, 9am – 5pm

Price: £425

Willow Sculpture Workshop at Westonbirt

Come and create a wonderful willow sculpture at Westonbirt Arboretum in a fun, relaxed and friendly environment.

Sat 12 Sept, 31 Oct, 14 Nov, 12 Dec, 10am – 4pm

Price: £85

Foraged Colour Workshop

Sustainable designer, Linda Row will teach eco-friendly dyeing techniques using a variety of natural fibres and plant materials foraged from Westonbirt Arboretum.

Sat 3 Oct, 10am – 4pm

Price: £75

Beginners Digital Landscape Photography Course

This is a day workshop spent at this fabulous location developing your skills both in camera technique and understanding of digital technology.

Mon 5 Oct, 10.30am – 3.30pm

Price: £65

Autumn Flower Posy Workshop

Using rich autumn flowers, come and spend a relaxing morning learning how to make a beautiful hand tied posy.

Sat 10 Oct, 10.30am – 1pm

Price: £65

Two Day Willow Sculpture Workshop

A two day workshop at Westonbirt Arboretum. In two days you will create something magnificent.

Sat 17 & Sun 18 Oct, 10am – 4pm

Price: £160

Intermediate Digital Photography Course

The perfect workshop for intermediate photographers who want to increase their understanding of photography techniques and skills to take their photographs to the next level.

Wed 21 Oct, 10.30am – 3.30pm

Price: £120



Credit: Paul Box

Printing with Natural Dyes

Explore techniques for printing with natural dyes used in the Indus valley.

Sat 24 Oct, 10am – 4pm

Price: £75

Christmas Wreath Workshop

Take some time out and enjoy a mince pie while you create your own Christmas wreath.

Sat 5, Wed 9, Tue 15, Thu 17 Dec, 10.30am – 1pm

Price: £65



Active events

Hot Air Balloon Flights

Take a hot air balloon flight and soar over the tips of the treetops, enjoy a breath-taking spectacle at your feet.

Sun 20 Sept pm, Sat 10 Oct am

Price: Package prices vary

Find out more

Visit forestryengland.uk/westonbirt or call **Westonbirt Arboretum on 0300 067 4890** to find out more information about any of our events.

Enchanted Christmas

Discover the trees at Westonbirt Arboretum in a whole new light with a brand new illuminated Christmas trail.

Sat 28 & Sun 29 November

Fri 4 – Sun 6 December

Fri 11 – Sun 13 December

Fri 18 – Mon 21 December

Prices* – Adult: £16, Student: £14, Child (5-18 years, under 5s go free): £8

Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum receive half price tickets and £3 children's tickets for Friday bookings.

*Prices include £1 non refundable booking fee



Annual General Meeting

Save the date: Saturday 7 November, 11am for our rescheduled AGM

Join us via video conference to attend the AGM from the safety of your own home. There will also be a limited number of seats in the Great Oak Hall, which must be pre-booked online.

Can't make it? Fill out a proxy voting form and return it to us.

Find out more and sign up to attend at fowa.org.uk/agm

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the 33rd Annual General Meeting to be received and adopted
3. Matters Arising from the Minutes
4. 2019 Review of the Charity and Future Plans
5. 2019 Report and Accounts
6. Election to the Board
New trustees elected to the Board in accordance with the Articles of Association
7. Invite Continuation in Office
President – Christopher Brickell CBE
Vice President – Roger Busby CBE
8. 2019 Review of the Arboretum
9. Closing Statements

A rare wildlife sighting

What: Polecat (*Mustela putorius*) – a member of the Mustelid Family

Sighted: April 2020

Where: Close to the coach park, near the entrance to the arboretum

Protections: Protected under the UK's 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act

The European Polecat (*Mustela putorius*) gives off a foul smell when frightened, to deter potential predators. The Latin “putorius” is the origin of the English word ‘putrid’, in this case referring to the Polecat’s ability to emit this significant stench!



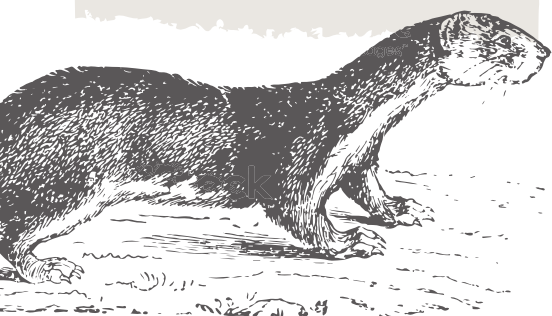
During lockdown earlier this year, you may have seen various stories of wildlife ‘reclaiming’ the landscape, with deer spotted on East London streets and birdsong echoing from the treetops.

A combination of factors were at play, including animals becoming bolder in urban areas due to the absence of people and traffic, not to mention people spending more time at home, giving us all the chance to slow down and really notice the nation’s wildlife.

In some cases the COVID-19 lockdown gave wildlife the chance to thrive. Untrimmed roadside verges gave rise to new wildflower habitats for bees, while a reduction in road traffic no doubt benefited hedgehogs and insects as dangers from vehicles decreased. The absence of people and noise in previously busy areas gave birds the option of more nest-building locations and the drop in insect-harming pesticides may have provided a boon for our feathered friends.

While Westonbirt is already a wildlife haven in many regards, we too witnessed some exciting animal encounters amongst the trees. Most thrilling was the arboretum’s first ever recorded polecat sighting. In the last century, this native carnivore was all but wiped out in Britain, but it has since made a remarkable recovery. From their retreat to remote areas of Scotland and Wales a century ago, Polecat distribution has since spread rapidly. The sighting at Westonbirt Arboretum is truly heartening and highlights a real conservation success story for this marvellous mustelid.

Visit fowa.org.uk/polecat to discover more and to see Westonbirt’s Polecat visitor.



Branching out

connecting with nature from afar

The restrictions put in place due to COVID-19 have been difficult and challenging for many people. During times when we were unable to connect with our families and loved ones or access the green spaces that are so beneficial to our wellbeing, it is never more important to take care of our mental health.





Some of the people most affected were those living in care homes. Through our Branching Out programme, Westonbirt's Community Team has been working with care homes in the local community over the last six years.

We help bring the arboretum experience into care homes, enabling residents to take part in a range of activities designed to boost wellbeing and mental health. Normally, following six weeks of activities, residents would have then enjoyed a visit to the arboretum. However, when lockdown was introduced in March, our team faced new challenges – how to deliver meaningful sessions to connect people with nature from afar?

The team rose magnificently to the challenge and immediately started work on adapting activities online, where they could not only be enjoyed by the local care homes, but shared much further afield.

On the next page you'll find an example of some of our activities that helps connect people with nature. Why not have a go?



▲ Credit: Gina Mills

Staying connected

Connecting with friends and loved ones is so important for our wellbeing, but for many older people in particular, lockdown exacerbated feelings of isolation and loneliness. We were determined to continue delivering our Branching Out activities at a time when they were needed most.

For older people living with dementia in care homes, engaging in regular social interaction is hugely important to their wellbeing. Studies have shown that

while someone living with dementia may not always remember people or events, they do remember the positive emotions that come from participating in programmes like Branching Out.

Nature for wellbeing

Spending time in nature is tremendously beneficial to our mental health and wellbeing, especially when we are feeling stressed or anxious. Even just looking at nature through a window has been shown to reduce stress and lower anxiety.

For much of this year, many care home residents were unable to enjoy a direct connection with nature. Our online activities enabled us to continue providing some of the benefits of feeling connected with the natural world, establishing those vital feelings of wellbeing during a particularly difficult time.



Have a go at these activities for yourself

These are based on some of the activities we run with groups, but using basic craft materials and things you'll have at home. Have a go! You deserve a bit of *you time*.

▲ Credit: Alison Cobb

Time for tea?

There's nothing like a good cuppa! It plays an important role in many different cultures around the world, in tea ceremonies, tea parties, tea dances and, of course, our much loved tea breaks.

Tea comes from the plant *Camellia sinensis*, a small tree related to the decorative camellias you may have in your garden.

Settle in with your cup of tea and take a look at the pictures on this page of some of Westonbirt's colourful camellias.

What memories, emotions or thoughts do they conjure up? Growing up, did you have a camellia in your garden, or maybe you've paused to admire their beautiful pinks and reds on a walk? Have you ever visited Westonbirt to see the camellias?



▲ Credit: Susanna Byers



▲ Credit: Susanna Byers

▲ *Camellia japonica* 'tricolor'



Natural patterns



The natural world is full of amazing trees and we're very lucky to have a great collection of these at Westonbirt Arboretum. Get up close and you'll start to notice the natural world is full of fascinating patterns – have a look for these while you're out and about or in your gardens:

- Random • Symmetry • Spiral • Stripes • Wavy lines
- Tessellation • Cracked • Spots and dots • Circles

Try taking a photo of all the different patterns you find and make an eye-catching pattern collage.



Share your mindful
creations with us at
magazine@fowa.org.uk

Botanical bunting

For this activity you will need:

- Tissue paper or baking paper
- A piece of thin cardboard
- Selection of leaves/flowers etc. (flat items work best)
- Pencil
- Hole punch
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- String

Step 1: Draw a triangle onto card to make a template and cut out.

Step 2: Use the templates to make an equal number of triangles from the tissue or baking paper.

Step 3: Collect your natural objects.

Step 4: Cover a triangle with glue, position a natural object on the triangle, then place a second triangle on top and press down.

Step 5: Make a hole in the top of each corner and thread the string through the holes. Repeat with each paper triangle until you have the desired length of bunting. Hang up to display!

Clay pattern decorations

For this activity you will need:

- Air drying clay
- Rolling pin
- Cookie cutter
- Natural objects with a raised pattern or texture
- Cocktail stick
- Yarn
- Paint (optional)



Step 1: Roll out the clay to about 5mm thick.

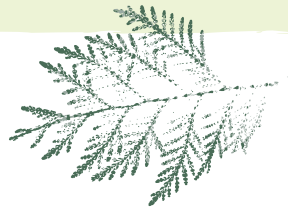
Step 2: Place the natural object onto the clay and either press down or roll over with the rolling pin to make an imprint in the clay. Cut out a shape with the cookie cutter.

Step 3: Repeat with each natural object.

Step 4: Use the cocktail stick to make a small hole near the top of each shape.

Step 5: Leave to dry in the sun for around 24 hours.

Step 6: Once hard, paint the decorations or leave them plain. Thread the yarn through the hole and tie to make a loop and hang up to display!



You can find these activities and more at: forestryengland.uk/westonbirt/community-wellbeing-activities

Find out more about how your membership helps to connect people with nature through our community programme. forestryengland.uk/westonbirt/community-programmes



Go green

using just your bare hands

Hygiene has been a hot topic this year. Following the COVID-19 outbreak, hand washing has been highlighted as one of the easiest ways to protect yourself and others from illness. However, the products and chemicals we choose can have a direct effect on the environment.



Down the plug hole

Hand soaps and cleaning products can be hugely damaging to the natural world. It all depends on the ingredients used and how products are manufactured. While images of plastic littering our landscapes have spurred action against single-use, many may not immediately realise the link between our everyday cleaning products and the decline of wildlife habitats. Next time you're replenishing your cleaning products, take a moment to consider the environmental impact.

At Westonbirt we use synthetic-free, plant-based hand wash and cleaning products for visitor and staff facilities. This ensures high hygiene standards are maintained without placing the environment at risk. These biodegradable products are eaten by tiny microbes in the water system and decompose into CO₂, water, minerals and biomass.

Not only this, but our cleaning products and all the soap in our visitor facilities is manufactured locally, just 19 miles from Westonbirt Arboretum, helping to keep transportation and the associated CO₂ emissions to a minimum.

'Green' hygiene products go beyond hand washing too! The Green Team have been testing out environmentally-friendly products at home to see how they fair. We really love Soap Folk, which you can buy in the Westonbirt Gift Shop. Their soap is made from all organic ingredients and the wrapping is made from FSC-certified paper.



Make the switch

Be on the lookout for plant-based hygiene and cleaning products

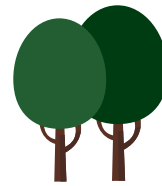
Buy refills from local stores to reduce plastic waste



80%

of our global wastewater enters the environment untreated.

Chemical pollutants pose a serious threat, impacting natural landscapes and contributing to habitat destruction.



Save paper: do your bit for the trees

Whether you're an avid reader of the Westonbirt Magazine or prefer to skim the highlights, don't forget that it's now all available online for you to view at your leisure. Head to fowa.org.uk/magazine, pop in your name and membership number and get ready to delve into current and past issues.

If you're ready for the online switch and want to up your paper-saving efforts then let us know. To opt-out of receiving the printed version of the magazine simply email membership@fowa.org.uk with your name and membership number and we'll do the rest.



Arborist Joe working at height to remove ash tree.

Silk Wood Chalara Project Update

Our project to safeguard Silk Wood and create a more resilient woodland is well under way. By removing ash trees infected by Chalara ash dieback and replanting with a wide variety of species, we are safeguarding this ancient natural woodland.

By Andy Bryce, Collections Manager, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum



▲ Credit: Tom Dewey

When it comes to tree health, the threat posed by pests and disease is a very real concern and we're working hard to share knowledge and understanding.

In our previous issue, we updated you on the measures being taken to remove infected trees and survey specimens showing signs of natural resistance. Read on to discover what's next.

The Chalara Project has required a lot of surveying and planning in order to create the foundations for the next phase. Next, we require professionals to undertake tasks such as tariffing, to truly understand the size and cost of the works and how much timber will need to be removed. Inevitably, plans have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and this stage is unlikely to be completed in time for the work to be finished in 2020 as initially planned.

The woodlands that make up Westonbirt are ecologically important and great care must be taken to prevent or at least reduce ground damage caused by the felling and extraction of infected ash trees, which will require large, heavy machinery to carry out the operation safely and efficiently.

Working through the winter would require a greater amount of felling by hand, creating brush mats for equipment to drive over. Ideally we don't want to work through the winter as this will have a significant and negative impact on the ground, pushing the project into 2021.

What we are doing however, is continuing to monitor those ash trees that are healthy. Trees that are showing a high level of resistance against Chalara can be identified around June/July and preserved from felling to maintain a small but healthy ash population. It will also give us time to work with our experts and the wider community to plan our replanting and obtain the volume of trees required.

We plan to keep Silk Wood open until felling operations commence, though this may require some more intervention if trees close to paths are deemed unsafe. This also extends to larger specimen ash throughout the arboretum, with the Tree Team performing vital work to remove clearly infected trees before they become hazardous.

Keep an eye out for updates at fowa.org.uk/blog and when you visit. Plus, see page 45 to learn more about our Quarantine House project to further protect against pests and disease.



This year, we've been working to highlight ash dieback to our visitors through trails and interpretation. 1,750 of you shared your thoughts on what trees and nature mean to you.



Leaf of an ash tree showing symptoms of Chalara ash dieback.



Autumn & winter tree highlights

Westonbirt is famous for its autumn colours. With our world renowned Acers taking centre stage, it's sometimes easy to miss out on some lesser known gems. In winter, take advantage of the relative quiet to notice the stunning shapes, textures and silhouettes of our trees. Bring this map along on your next visit to locate these autumn and winter wonders.

▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

A woman with dark skin and braided hair is smiling and looking upwards. She is wearing a dark jacket and a patterned scarf. The background is a dense forest of trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of red, orange, and yellow. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Seasonal map

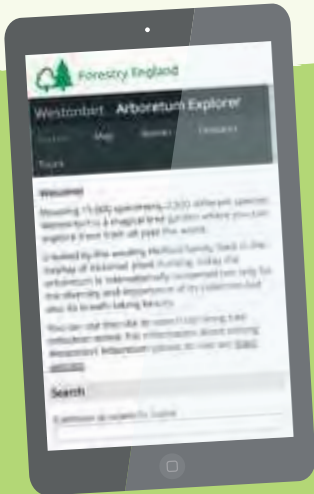
You can use this pull-out map to identify and locate where each of the trees in the highlights article can be found in the arboretum.

Each tree has a coloured dot next to it. You will find the same coloured dot placed on the map to show its location. You may wish to take the full article on your next visit.

The map is a simplified version of our main map. We've done this to make finding the tree easier. If you would like a copy of the full map, pick one up on your next visit.

Pull out map

● The coloured dots mark some of the spectacular trees worth seeking out on your next visit...



Use our Arboretum Explorer

Arboretum Explorer is a web based search facility that enables you to locate specific trees at Westonbirt. You can use as much or as little information as you have and the website will show you a map with the location of the tree.

To use the Arboretum Explorer facility visit westonbirt.arboretumexplorer.org



▲ Credit: Michal Dvorak

Tree guide

Autumn

- **Winged spindle**
(*Eunonymus alatus*)
- **Smoke bush**
(*Cotinus coggygria*)
- **Persian ironwood**
(*Parrotia persica*)
- **North American black tupelo**
(*Nyssa sylvatica*)

Winter

- **Paperbark maple**
(*Acer griseum*)
- **Dogwood**
(*Cornus alba*)
- **Patagonian cypress**
(*Fitzroya cupressoides*)



Smoke bush

Smoke trees are members of the cashew family (*Anacardiaceae*) that includes the pistachio nut and mango.



0 100 200 300m



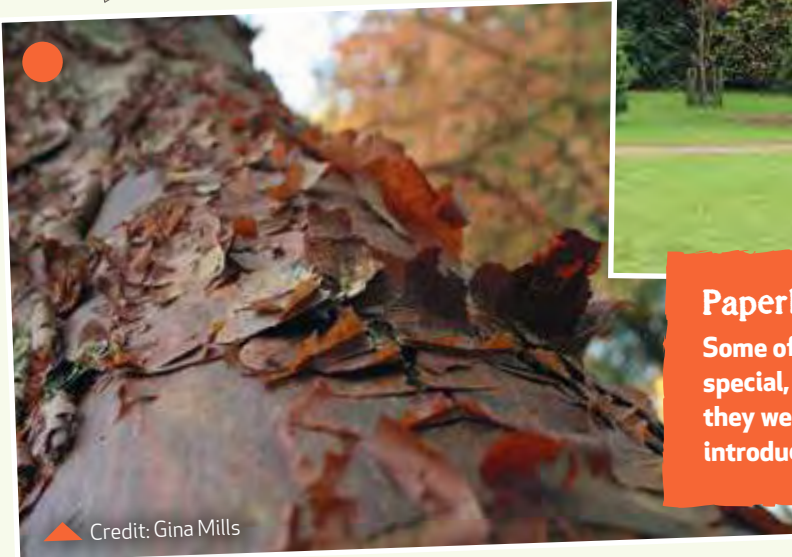
Persian ironwood

This plant is particularly special to the arboretum as it was a firm favourite of our founder, Robert Holford.



Paperbark maple

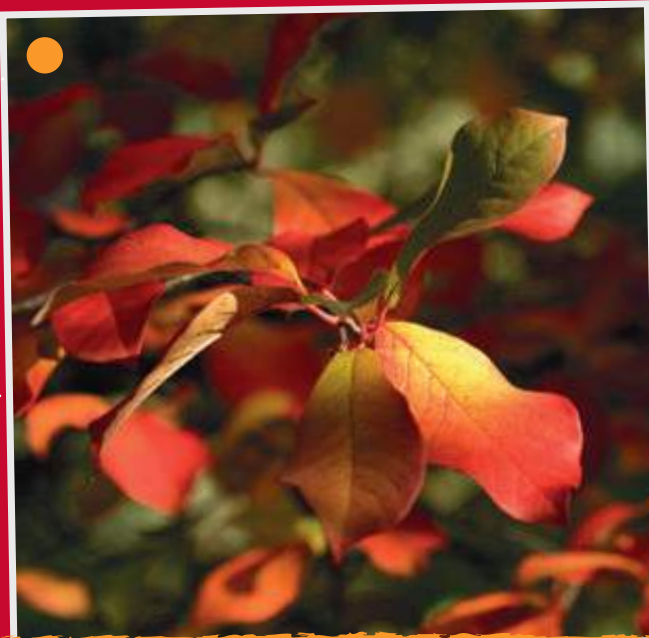
Some of our specimens are particularly special, as genetic tests have shown that they were probably grown from original seed introduced by Ernest Wilson in 1901.



Credit: Gina Mills

Winged spindle

Spindle wood was once used to spin raw wool; but twigs were also used for skewers and toothpicks, hence another common name for the tree 'prickwood'.



North American black tupelo

This tree is also called 'bee-gum' because hollow trees were once used as beehives; indeed the tree is highly sought after by bee keepers because of the special tasting honey they help create.



Dogwood

As with many plants a variety of cultivated forms of dogwood are available. Two of the most popular are 'Winter Flame' which has a mass of tiny stems in shades of yellow, red and orange that resemble flickering flames, and 'Midwinter Flame' which has orange stems tipped with pink.





Autumn highlights

● **Winged spindle** *(Euonymus alatus)*

For much of the year you could easily walk straight past this winged spindle (*Euonymus alatus*) without even a cursory glance; not so in autumn! In the autumn months, its crimson foliage gives the plant another of its common names, 'the burning bush'. Its compact size makes it a great addition to most gardens. It is best planted in direct sun to illuminate the brilliant colour. The local bird population will thank you also; they love the attractive lobed fruits!

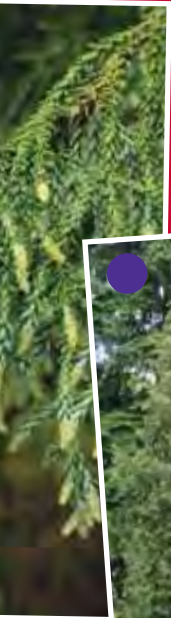
● **Smoke bush** *(Cotinus coggygria)*

For sheer variety of colour, the smoke bush (*Cotinus coggygria*) is hard to beat. The plant gets its name from the finely divided plumes of flowers that create a smoke-like haze for much of the summer, which eventually fade to smoky grey and is joined in the autumn by a visual feast of colour, including fiery yellows, reds, peaches and purples.

Cotinus coggygria has a large natural range, from southern Europe to the Himalayas. It has given rise to a number of cultivated forms that provide gardeners with a wide choice of leaf colour.

● **Persian ironwood** *(Parrotia persica)*

You can't miss the Persian ironwood (*Parrotia persica*) in autumn as its leaves turn crimson and gold! This plant is particularly special to the arboretum as it was a firm favourite of our founder, Robert Holford, and is one of our 'signature trees'. Holford planted Westonbirt using a set of landscaping design principles known as the Picturesque. This style valued contrast and variety as key elements, and we still use these Picturesque principles when landscaping and planting in the arboretum today.



Patagonian cypress

Sadly, the popularity of this tree's timber in the past has meant that it is now endangered in the wild. Its plight is exacerbated by its exceptionally slow growth.

● North American black tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*)

The North American black tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*) is one of the most colourful autumnal trees, with its vibrant hues of yellow-orange, fiery reds, and even purple! While some trees display a uniform colour, others exhibit a wide range of shades all at once!

This tree prefers wet conditions, as indicated by its name. 'Nyssa' comes from the name of the Greek water nymph 'Nysseides', and 'Tupelo' from the Native American 'ito opilwa', meaning swamp tree.

This tree is sometimes also called 'pioneer's toothbrush'. When a twig is broken off sharply at right angles, it produces a bundle of woody fibres on the end, which are apparently suitable for cleaning teeth!

Winter highlights

● Paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*)

Winter is a fantastic time to enjoy the wonderful variety of barks across Westonbirt, and this endangered maple from China has a particularly stunning bark.

Collections such as Westonbirt provide living databases that are vital to the conservation of plants. A few years ago, our paperbark maples were part of a research project looking into the genetic diversity of paperbark maples within plant collections around the world; sadly, this project confirmed that there is actually very little genetic diversity in cultivation, probably because the species has only been collected from the wild on a handful of occasions. Currently efforts are being made to collect more seed to support conservation.

● Dogwood (*Cornus alba*)

During the winter months, dogwoods (*Cornus*), such as the red barked dogwood (*Cornus alba*) brighten the arboretum. In order to ensure that the dogwoods have a dramatic effect, we plant them in large groups in sunny spots, where their stems can glow to full effect. In order to ensure that the stems remain colourful, we cut them back to within 6 inches of the ground every other March to ensure a fresh supply of colourful new stems.

● Patagonian cypress (*Fitzroya cupressoides*)

Don't miss this rare Patagonian cypress, *Fitzroya cupressoides*, also known as Alerce (the Spanish for larch). In its native Chile it is designated as a national treasure, and it is one of the tallest and longest lived tree species in South America, with some specimens believed to be over 3,000 years old! Historically its durable timber was extremely valuable for roof shingles, furniture and ships masts. In fact the wood was so valuable the shingles were once used as currency!

Don't forget to pull out the map and take it with you. Discover our seasonal picks on your next visit!

Volunteering during COVID-19



As we all discovered, there were a lot of restrictions and changes to our daily lives during the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. Sadly, this meant that we had to stand down our dedicated team of 280 volunteers. Our volunteers are very much at the heart of Westonbirt, they give so much passion to everything they do, and we know they missed Westonbirt as much as our members and visitors.

The challenge: To find ways to keep our volunteers in touch with life at the arboretum during one of the most beautiful times of year.

The solution: Our main communication was through an extended weekly newsletter, which included some of the most striking Westonbirt highlights shown through photos and videos. We included plenty of tips, quizzes and stories from staff to help relieve the lockdown monotony.

Many of the volunteer teams took to Zoom and WhatsApp to socialise and discuss all things Westonbirt. This year's new intake of guides used the opportunity to continue their unfinished training, including a discussion on how many pencils can be made from an incense cedar!

Gardening proved to be popular with our volunteers during lockdown. Margaret Headen, one of our Welcome Building volunteers, even shared her own mini arboretum with us.

“ I have 10 Acers in pots in my garden and one in the ground (it escaped a few years ago). I've also got a dwarf ginkgo and a tiny dawn redwood - also in pots. It's quite a potty garden with a potty gardener! ”



If you're interested in becoming a volunteer at Westonbirt visit forestryengland.uk/westonbirt/volunteering

Celebrating a milestone year

In 1985, the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum charity was established and, as they say, the rest is history. This year, the charity celebrates its 35th year and in some ways we've gone full circle.

What started as the brainchild of a small group of enthusiasts making plans around a kitchen table, has grown to a community of over 33,000 members all supporting Westonbirt so that it can be enjoyed well into the future. Earlier this year, we were once again back at our kitchen tables, as we set up homeworking stations as a result of COVID-19.

Our Mum and Dad Eleanor and Len Clare visited Westonbirt from Ledbury for over 40 years and was one of their favourite places.



After they retired, they visited on a weekly basis and particularly enjoyed Silk Wood. In later life they were very grateful to be able to hire the mobility scooters. It enabled them to still see and explore the beautiful Arboretum. Their love of Westonbirt was passed on to us and our sons who are now members.

This is one of our favourite photos of mum. The joy of independence!

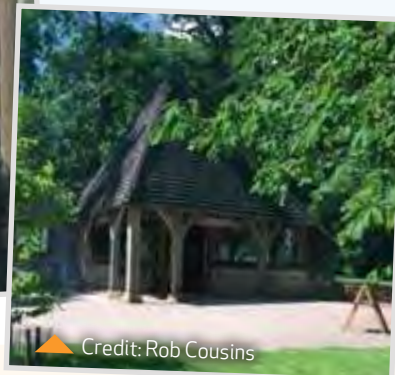
From The Clare family

Over the last 35 years, together we've achieved so much, from driving forward exciting projects like the STIHL Treetop Walkway, to commencing programmes that support the most vulnerable members of our community and opening up new glades for vital climate change research.

Meanwhile, the Great Oak Hall, built in 2000, stands tall at the centre of the arboretum, providing a home for the charity and a hub for community events. Today, 20 years on, the Great Oak Hall is a much-loved landmark in the arboretum's landscape.

To celebrate these milestones we'll be hosting an exhibition of your Westonbirt memories next year. We know that the arboretum means so much to so many, so please share your memories via email to celebration@fowa.org.uk or by post. We look forward to receiving your contributions!

Here are just a couple of the memories we've received so far.



Credit: Rob Cousins

We got married on the 2nd April 2011. When we heard that the Great Oak Hall hosted wedding ceremonies we knew we wanted to get married there. We have some wonderful memories of our special day, the sun was shining through the windows, the wonderful oak aroma and seeing all the flowers had bloomed outside. Walking down the aisle of the Great Oak Hall is a memory I will never forget.

Natalie and Dan

Although we no longer host weddings, come and see our autumn exhibitions listed on page 12

Unfortunately, we had to cancel our celebration events this year, but we plan on bringing them to you next summer – look out for future announcements!

Reflecting on 2019

the highlights

The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum charity had so much to celebrate in 2019, not least providing funds to support Forestry England's purchase of Silk Wood House and expand the arboretum, while also launching an exciting new 10-year vision for the future. With your support we've been able to ensure that Westonbirt will thrive well into the future and that conservation, participation and education sit at the heart of everything we do. We're thrilled to share these figures, which provide a glimpse of some of the amazing things we've achieved together.

Developments

The charity contributed significantly to the purchase of Silk Wood House, helping to expand the arboretum for the first time in almost **200 years**. This achievement, alongside supporting our partners in Forestry England to deliver new projects, prioritising conservation and community programmes at the arboretum, made 2019 a bumper year.

- Completed Westonbirt Woodworks project
- Expanded the arboretum by **29** acres
- Funded **2** student arborists
- Purchased a new timber trailer to support tree management
- Launched a 10-year vision for Westonbirt

Community

Westonbirt Arboretum's community programmes give vulnerable groups the chance to access the outdoors. Activities such as campfire cookouts, woodland crafts and mindfulness workshops provide independence, new skills and a chance to experience the wellbeing benefits of the natural world.

- **1,186** community participant visits
- **18** John Muir Awards

An environmental award scheme run by the John Muir Trust, that encourages people to connect with, enjoy, and care for wild places.



Volunteering

Westonbirt Arboretum simply wouldn't be the incredible site it is without our volunteers. The charity is proud to fund the arboretum's dedicated team of volunteers, who do so much in so many ways!

- **27,507** volunteer hours in total
- Funded Westonbirt's **280** volunteers in 21 different roles
- **4,629** people took part in volunteer-led guided walks



Learning and discovery

The charity funds 95 per cent of education and learning activities onsite. With Westonbirt's popular seasonal trails and family events, we're delighted to be furthering people's knowledge and enjoyment of trees.

- **10,250** people participated in family events
- **65** family events and discovery days
- **33** school programmes



Mobility

Limited mobility should never be a barrier to enjoying the great outdoors. Your membership and donations help us provide free mobility equipment to all visitors.

- **2,287** mobility scooters issued
- **2,843** people used the shuttle

Membership

Our members are so essential to these achievements. You make all the wonderful work we support possible.

- **+5%** membership growth
- **4,522** new members
- **£1.2m** income from membership

For a detailed financial report and to find out more about what your membership is helping to fund, visit fowa.org.uk/annual-report

FAMILY FUN!

On your walks around the arboretum this autumn you may notice some of these fellows on the woodland floor. Though they look tiny at the moment, acorns have the ability to grow into the huge oak trees you see around you!

Lots of acorns don't get the chance to become oak trees as they are also the favourite food of many of the animals living in the arboretum, including mice, badgers and squirrels!

You will need

- **Brightly coloured wool** (available from craft shops). It must be animal wool, not synthetic.
- **Acorn cups** – collect them from underneath an oak tree on your next visit to the arboretum.
- **Liquid hand soap, warm water and some PVA glue.**

Why not try making your own colourful acorn display this autumn?



How to make them

- Mix a little bit of liquid soap with some warm water.
- Pull a small handful of wool apart, to fluff up the fibres.
- Dip the wool into the soapy water and roll it between the palms of your hands. Keep dipping and rolling until the wool fuses together to make a solid ball – you will have very clean hands!
- Do this with the rest of the wool until you have lots of colourful little balls, then put them somewhere safe to dry out.
- When they've dried, glue the colourful 'acorns' into the acorn cups to finish your decorations.



We've taken on the gift shop

When the Westonbirt Gift Shop was looking for new management, the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum jumped at the opportunity. We took over the shop in February, raring to go, but it was a tumultuous beginning! Despite unprecedented rainfall at the start of the year and the arboretum's closure during the spring, things thankfully seem back on track.

Our sustainable vision

The Friends running the Westonbirt Gift Shop means that all the profits will go directly to supporting the arboretum, so those precious pennies you spend will support conservation, learning and engagement with trees.

We're also planning to tell the story of Westonbirt Arboretum through the products we stock. From championing local suppliers to increasing our wooden and naturally-sourced products, we are working towards a range that truly reflects our ethos. Products grown from the arboretum's trees and crafted onsite will highlight the lifecycle of a tree and demonstrate our commitment to low impact retail.

Next time you're at the arboretum, do pop into the gift shop and say hello. Whether you're browsing for a gift, looking for something for the home or a book to brush up on your botanical knowledge, you'll know that your purchase is supporting Westonbirt Arboretum.



Welcome to the team

We're delighted to have 7 new dedicated staff members joining the Friends' team. With their retail nous, they'll be engaging with shoppers, preparing displays and helping to shape our new stock lines.

A journey of discovery

The gift shop will grow and evolve over time. We look forward to sharing this journey with you as we trial new products and phase out others. As we get to know you, our customers, please bear with us as we work to create a retail environment that responds to both your needs and reflects the arboretum.

news

Time to get organised



In August, we asked you to choose your favourite Westonbirt view for the front cover of our 2021 calendar. This stunning image

of Lime Avenue was the stand-out winner.

Keep an eye out in the Westonbirt Shop to buy your calendar filled with stunning scenes.



Congratulations to our preminent puzzlers who correctly solved every clue in last issue's crossword – Darren Galpin, Linda Tillotson, Pat Parsons, Pauline Thomas and Sean Magee



Social media mentions

@friendsofwestonbirt



@jules_perry81

My 6 year old asked about where we were going today and I replied with genuine delight "somewhere magical".

@clarejoanneyoung

@iandknight and I had wonderful day at @westonbirtarb this week. What's not to like about Forest bathing and a Prosecco Cream Tea picnic with the one you love in your very favourite place?

A new hybrid cultivar

Strolling down Specimen Avenue in early spring, you can't fail to notice the stunning *Magnolia* hybrid *Magnolia sprengeri* x *campbellii*.

In June we asked you to help us choose a unique cultivar name for our new *Magnolia* hybrid *Magnolia sprengeri* x *campbellii*.

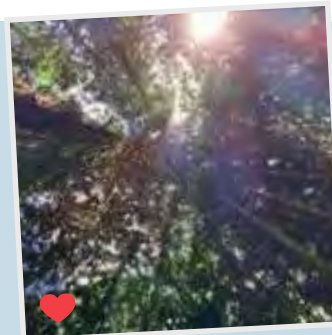
Hundreds of you took part in the vote, and the name 'Westonbirt Hope' won by a landslide.

This impressive tree has been growing for nearly 45 years and is a Champion tree of the British Isles.

You'll have to wait until next year to see the magnolia in its full glory though, as this magnolia doesn't flower until early spring.



If there's a story you'd like us to feature why not drop a line to our Editorial Team at magazine@fowa.org.uk



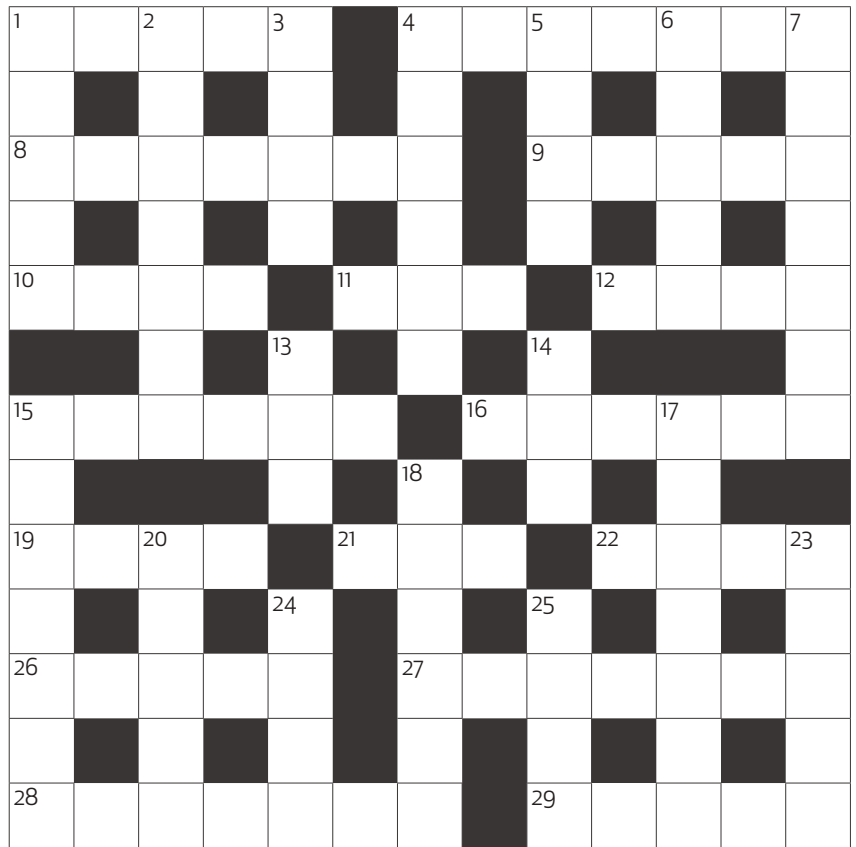
Crossword

As always, our thanks to Roger Gorst for providing these cryptic clues, which certainly got all of us at the charity testing our tree knowledge.

Are you up for the challenge? Get your thinking cap on and email a photo of your completed crossword to magazine@fowa.org.uk to get your name featured in our next magazine!

Across

1. Latin word for tree. (5)
4. Trees first grown in Britain in the 17 hundreds, often misspelt. (7)
8. Adjective describing shape of leaves of Holm Oak, Magnolia etc. but mixture of above to find. (7)
9. Large tree but small bulb. (5)
10. Built by an orangutan in a large tree or by a dormouse in a small tree. (4)
11. Tree that has suffered 'dieback' since 2012. (3)
12. US state where the *Aesculus glabra* tree is significant. (4)
15. Wood, shout by lumberjack. (6)
16. Edible seed of *Prunus dulcis*. (6)
19. With 4 metre ash shaft, carried by a foot soldier at Flodden. (4)
21. Tree suffering attack by *Agrilus biguttatus*. (3)
22. A Westonbirt National Collection tree. (4)
26. Harmful constituent of smog absorbed by trees. (5)
27. Tree from southern Mexico with edible single seed fruit. (7)
28. Another word for Lucerne. (7)
29. Birds that may have helped save Calvaria trees. (5)



Down

1. Seed of an Oak tree. (5)
2. "-- shall I live now under the ----- that hangs on the bough!" Shakespeare. (7)
3. If lined with trees this may be called an avenue. (4)
4. Type of band - performs in orchards. (6)
5. Fruit of *Corylus avellana*. (4)
6. Bird seen amongst Eucalyptus trees or in a gala held in Australia. (5)
7. Material of a tree between heartwood and the bark. (7)
13. Tree, source of paclitoxel, used in some cancer treatments. (3)
14. Tree species that has suffered from *Ophiostoma*. (3)
15. Growing as a shrub to 5 metres, its roots can be used to make a pudding. (7)
17. While the chaffinch sings on the ----- bough, In England ~ ~ ~ now" Browning. (7)
18. Edible berry from *Musa acuminata*. (6)
20. A steep wooded ravine found back in SA, any tomfool knows that! (5)
23. They absorb moisture and minerals from the ground to pass upwards. (5)
24. Sawn softwood - red or white. (4)
25. 'Baffling spoon' or small forest. (4)



Caring for our new arrivals from Japan

In September last year, Cairn Hurst, one of our Technical Arborists, accompanied staff from Bedgebury Pinetum and Oxford Botanical Garden and Arboretum on a seed collecting trip. Their goal was to collect seed from conifer species assessed as either Critically Endangered or Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. After a long journey, some of the seed collected from this trip has now arrived at Westonbirt, The National Arboretum's Propagation Centre.

By Penny Jones, Propagator and Cairn Hurst, Arborist, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum



On arriving in the UK, the seeds took a detour before coming to Westonbirt; first travelling to Forest Research to be x-rayed for any potential contamination of pests and disease, while also being assessed for viability.

Although February is generally a little late to begin processing seeds, our team got to work quickly, preparing the seeds for propagation.

In February, seeds from 14 species collected on the trip arrived at the arboretum. There are three species of special interest to Westonbirt:

Albizia julibrissin Persian silk tree

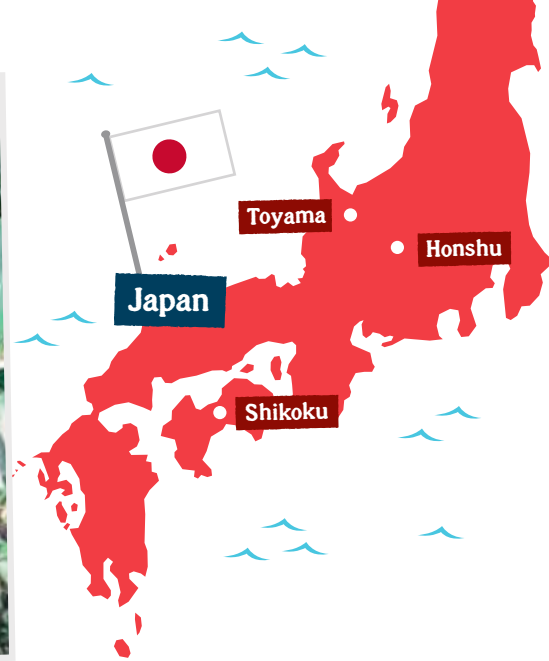
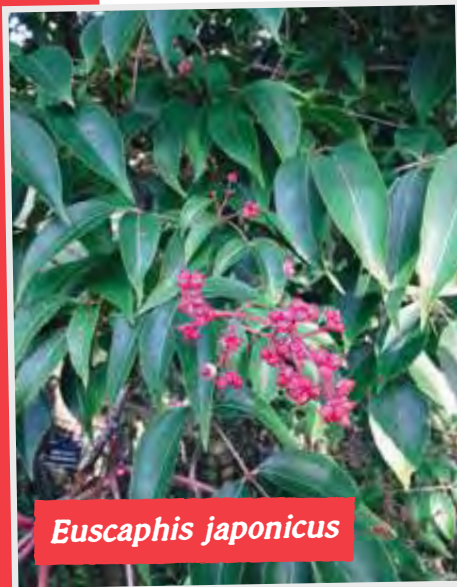
This stunningly beautiful tree is borderline hardiness, and so is one to watch in terms of what trees we should be planting for a future climate, with hotter summers and colder winters. This was collected on the way from Onomioshino/Kure to Kochi on Shikoku in the South of Honshu where it grows in a semi-tropical climate.

Symplocos coreana Korean sweetleaf

Another newcomer to the collection! Like its relative *Symplocos paniculata*, it has beautiful blue berries. Most *Symplocos* species need to be planted in groups to enable a good fertilisation. This species was collected on our first day of collecting in Japan, in Tosayamadachoochira on Shikoku to the south of Honshu.

Euscaphis japonicus Sweetheart tree

A member of the *Staphyleaceae* family, this tree has amazing bright pink to blood red bladders that contain shiny black seeds. We do already have two in the collection, one a champion, which was wild-collected from China, but this tree is sadly in very poor health. However, our other specimen on Palmer Ride is flourishing. Like the *Symplocos*, this was also collected on our first collecting day in Tosayamadachoochira.



First, the seeds needed to undergo a process known as stratification. This is the process of treating seeds to stimulate the natural conditions that seeds must experience in order to germinate. Different trees will germinate under different conditions, and so our Propagator treated them according to their needs.

- **Conifers:** These were given one month of cold moist stratification in the fridge.
- **Deciduous plants:** These were given three months of cold moist stratification in the fridge.
- ***Symplocos coreana*:** This one was treated a little differently, being given three months warm stratification on a warm shelf. This is because *Symplocos* need warmth to aid development of the embryo (after-ripening).

After stratification, the seeds are sown and we then wait for them to germinate. Once germinated and after growing their first set of true leaves, we prick them out into smaller pots, and they stay in our greenhouses until they have rooted down. We then re-pot them into larger air-pots and they're rehoused in our tunnels.

Our Propagator then does monthly checks of the plants to see whether the roots can be seen from the base of the pot; once this happens they move into the Shade House where they stay until they are planted out into the collection. From germination, this process usually takes around 18 months, so it could be a little while before you see these species out in the wider collection.

Discover more about the work that goes on to care for our new arrivals and young plants by visiting the Propagation Centre on your next visit.

All art is but an imitation of nature

Nature and trees have been the inspiration for famous artists throughout the ages, and this year Westonbirt's wonderful landscape will be the focus for two arts projects.



A new artist in residence

In March 2020, Art Shape, a Gloucestershire charity whose work encourages social inclusion within the arts, received the exciting news that they have been awarded Arts Council England funding for a new project: Art Bridge Emergents. The project offers emerging artists who face disabling barriers opportunities for professional development, mentoring, networking and exhibition experience.

As part of this project, Westonbirt Arboretum will host an Artist in Residence, Deb Hoy. With extensive experience in creating public art installations, socially engaged arts and arts education, Deb will work alongside the artists, visitors, staff and volunteers to use our wonderful tree collection as inspiration for a site specific piece at Westonbirt, aimed at deepening people's connection to trees. The concept will focus on trees as the lungs of the earth.

The installation and an exhibition of the artist's work will be at the arboretum in November.



'The Forest' by artist Julie Green

▲ Credit: Art Shape



Zoe Partington

▲ Credit: Sarah Lever

Re-storying landscape for social inclusion

Led by Dr Sarah Bell at the University of Exeter, Westonbirt will be taking part in part in a multi-partner project which aims to develop and inspire creative practice, putting social inclusion at the heart of landscape decision-making. The arboretum will host Zoe Partington of Dis/Ordinary Architecture, drawing on her experience as a contemporary artist, creative consultant and advocate for disabled people within the cultural sector.

Alongside Art Shape, Zoe will lead creative workshops with disabled artists, looking to re-imagine the landscape through creative interpretation that moves away from traditional emphasis on the visual style towards more sensory experience. An exhibition of their work will allow visitors to explore Westonbirt in new ways.

Keep an eye on our website and social media channels for more information on these exciting projects.

Forest Bathing

Immerse yourself in nature



▲ Credit: Ian Lisham

Over the past months, the vital role nature can play in supporting our wellbeing, resilience and positive mental health has been apparent across the globe. As populations have been forced to slow down and stay in, gardens, balconies and even window views have become sanctuaries of peace and calm. For many of us, all of a sudden there was so much time, yet so little to do. So we started to notice the natural world around us and re-connect with it.

Forest Bathing is the art of connecting with nature through our senses. Although usually practiced in a forest setting – Westonbirt Arboretum being an ideal location – the techniques can be used in any natural environment.



Put away your phone and camera – these will become distractions.



Find a spot to bathe in – somewhere you won't be disturbed is best. If you cannot access a forest, use your garden or sit by an open window.



Take two or three deep breaths to calm your mind and ground yourself – then spend a few minutes focusing on each of the following senses. This is not a quick shower, but a long, luxurious soak.



Listen – what can you hear? Bird song, the wind in the trees, buzzing insects?



Smell – do you notice different scents? Are they pleasant or not so?



Touch – feel the breeze on your skin, the warmth of the sun on your face.



Taste – open your mouth, what does the air taste like?



Look – what can you see? Notice the different colours or the sudden movement of a raindrop hitting a leaf.

Enjoy your forest bathe!

New discoveries

The conservation of newly discovered and described maple, *Acer binzayedii* from Mexico

GULF OF MEXICO

MEXICO

Guadalajara
JALISCO

Mexico City

Mérida

YUCATAN

BELIZE

GUATEMALA

The arboretum's founders liked to push the limits and experiment with what they could grow. We are no different! Our Dendrologist has been in talks with colleagues at the University of Guadalajara in West Mexico, and Westonbirt will shortly be helping to protect a newly described maple, discovered in sunny Mexico.

By Michal Dvorak, Dendrologist, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum



This critically endangered maple, *Acer binzayedii*, was newly described to science in 2017 by Yalma Vargas-Rodriguez from the University of Guadalajara in West Mexico. Yalma has been studying Mexican populations of critically endangered maples for some years now.

Until now, *Acer binzayedii* was thought to be another critically endangered maple, *Acer skutchii* (Mexican sugar maple), to which it is closely related. Yalma has now noticed some differences in the two populations: the two can be distinguished by the different size and shape of parts of the flowers, seeds and seed wing veins and the shape and structure (or morphology) of their bark. It is believed that these two species have evolved from the same ancestor, from which they split up and evolved independently more than 5.5 million years ago.



▲ Credit: Yalma Vargas-Rodriguez from University of Guadalajara, West Mexico.



Acer binzayedii

Where: The mountains of Jalisco State in West Mexico

Height: 20-30m

Trunk diameter: 60-90cm

Growing conditions: Hot and wet

Status: Critically endangered. Only a few hundred trees can be found in two separate locations, and the number of mature trees is declining

Sadly, the *Acer binzayedii* is critically endangered. There are only a few hundred trees left in two separate locations and the number of mature trees are declining. They are threatened by low genetic diversity, cattle grazing, logging and human visitors.

Thanks to Yalma and her colleagues, the specimens' native habitat has been given protected status as a State Park, and Westonbirt now has a critical role to play in their recovery. We are in contact with Yalma thanks to the Maple Society, and this autumn she'll be sending us a collection of wild collected seeds, along with her detailed field notes.

This will be a very exciting addition for our National Collection of *Acer* (maple) species and will be a great help for ex situ safeguarding of this maple. We'll be collaborating with Yalma and sharing our observations. There is no *Acer binzayedii* conservation outside Mexico, so Westonbirt is uniquely placed to help safeguard the future of this tree.

In the mountains of Jalisco State in West Mexico, *Acer binzayedii* reaches considerable heights of 20-30m, and its trunk can attain 60-90cm in diameter. It's used to hotter and wetter conditions (in its natural habitat annual precipitation is up to 1,300mm) than it will get at Westonbirt (where we get on average a mere 900mm of rainfall a year), so our team will be keeping a close eye on it to see how it fairs.

Our observations will add to the collective knowledge of this species and further the understanding of its needs and adaptability. This is important and in the future will be essential for all plant species, so we can understand how best to protect them in a more challenging future climate.

**Why not discover more maples on your next visit?
Head to westonbirt.arboretumexplorer.org to uncover the locations of these autumn marvels.**



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Advancing biosecurity with quarantine!

Although isolating from others has been a new concept for many of us this year, not so for our newly accessioned plants. Pests and disease such as ash dieback pose a threat to our trees and natural landscape, making quarantining plants and seeds that enter the collection a necessity.

The COVID-19 outbreak slightly delayed a few of our projects, but we're now back on track and moving forward with a bespoke Quarantine House that meets the specific requirements of The National Arboretum.

Over the past months, we've been finalising our plans and coming up with a tailor-made waste water disposal system. This will ensure that potentially contaminated water can be treated and disposed of in a safe and environmentally-friendly way.

Bringing new plants into the arboretum is especially important for our climate change research. Seed collecting trips to warmer climates give us the opportunity to harvest specimens better adapted to extreme weather conditions, allowing Westonbirt to propagate hardy trees that can hold up in the face of a changing environment.

We will be working with our sister site, the National Pinetum at Bedgebury in Kent, to share our learnings and ensure that both sites can benefit from improved biosecurity measures.

This essential project would not have been possible without your valued support!

To learn more or support Westonbirt's biosecurity work, visit fowa.org.uk/protectourtrees

With special thanks to the following for their kind donations

Alan Garner
Alan Kempton
Banister Charitable Trust
Carol Clarke
Deborah Clogg
Foxley Road Nurseries
James Scott
Janice Eades
Jenny Barnett
Jenny Flake
Keith Cuthbert
Margaret Headen
Margaret Lloyd
Patricia Davies
Pippa Smith
Richard Shaw
Richard Waldram
Roy Carey
Shirley Elder
Stanley Smith
Horticultural Trust
Stephen Montgomery
Sue Symonds



The arborists of the future

When it comes to trees, we think it's fair to say that we know our stuff. With decades of tree surgery, landscape management and propagation under our belts, our Tree Team is overflowing with knowledge on how to best care for the UK's trees. Rolling out this knowledge is a key part of our mission, so this past year, thanks to your membership donations, Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum funded placements for two up-and-coming student arborists.

For budding tree specialists, nothing compares to real world experience. From seeing up close how each specimen changes through the seasons, to appreciating the physical properties of wood, and getting to know the intricacies of the landscape, there's nowhere quite like Westonbirt for getting to grips with the breadths and depths of tree management.

Immersive experience

Not only did this year's trainees immerse themselves in learning wide-ranging skills, but they were able to tailor their experiences to their career specialisms.

Billy, whose father is a tree surgeon, studied arboriculture at Cannington College. He was able to hit the ground running with tree felling, grass cutting and working at height, growing and consolidating his skills as an arborist. Billy's pre-existing knowledge of tree climbing and clipping branches has now led to a keen understanding of conducting tree health checks, pruning techniques and identifying signs of pests and disease. He now has the skills to pinpoint the issues and discern what work is required.

Matt is studying at Harper Adams University with ambitions to work in the countryside management field. During his time at Westonbirt, Matt has grown his knowledge of propagation techniques and landscape planning, becoming familiar with the forecasting required to maintain long-term tree coverage. He has also explored the behaviours of various flora and fauna, improving understanding of the interconnectedness of the ecosystem and how wildlife must play a part in landscape planning.

A holistic view

Tree health diagnostics, frontline pest and disease management, landscape curation – Westonbirt gives young arborists a first-hand look into the extent of the work required to maintain a significant tree collection. Supporting students to gain a holistic view of tree care broadens plant knowledge within the arborist community and helps to best prepare the nation's tree specialists in the face of an uncertain environmental future.

Hosting students at Westonbirt each year also supports the continual review of knowledge within the arboretum's very own Tree Team. Each year, the students bring a new dynamic to the team.

“ It's important that the status quo is challenged sometimes. It forces everyone to consider why we do what we do and whether it's still the best way. Training students requires us to explain processes we may otherwise do without thinking – it's great revision! Students' questions, thoughts and ideas keep the team on their toes, helping to maintain our high standards of work. ”

Westonbirt's Collections Manager, Andy Bryce

This focus on education at the arboretum means that the way we look after the landscape is shared as widely as possible, not just throughout the arboriculture community but to enthuse the wider public with tree conservation.



Forestry and young people

The younger generation are going to play a vital role in protecting the UK's trees into the future. Trees face ever increasing threats from pests and disease, deforestation and climate change to name a few.

At Westonbirt, not only are we doing what we can to ensure young arborists are developing the vital knowledge and skills they need to secure trees' health, but we're working to enthuse young people with trees and championing forestry career paths.

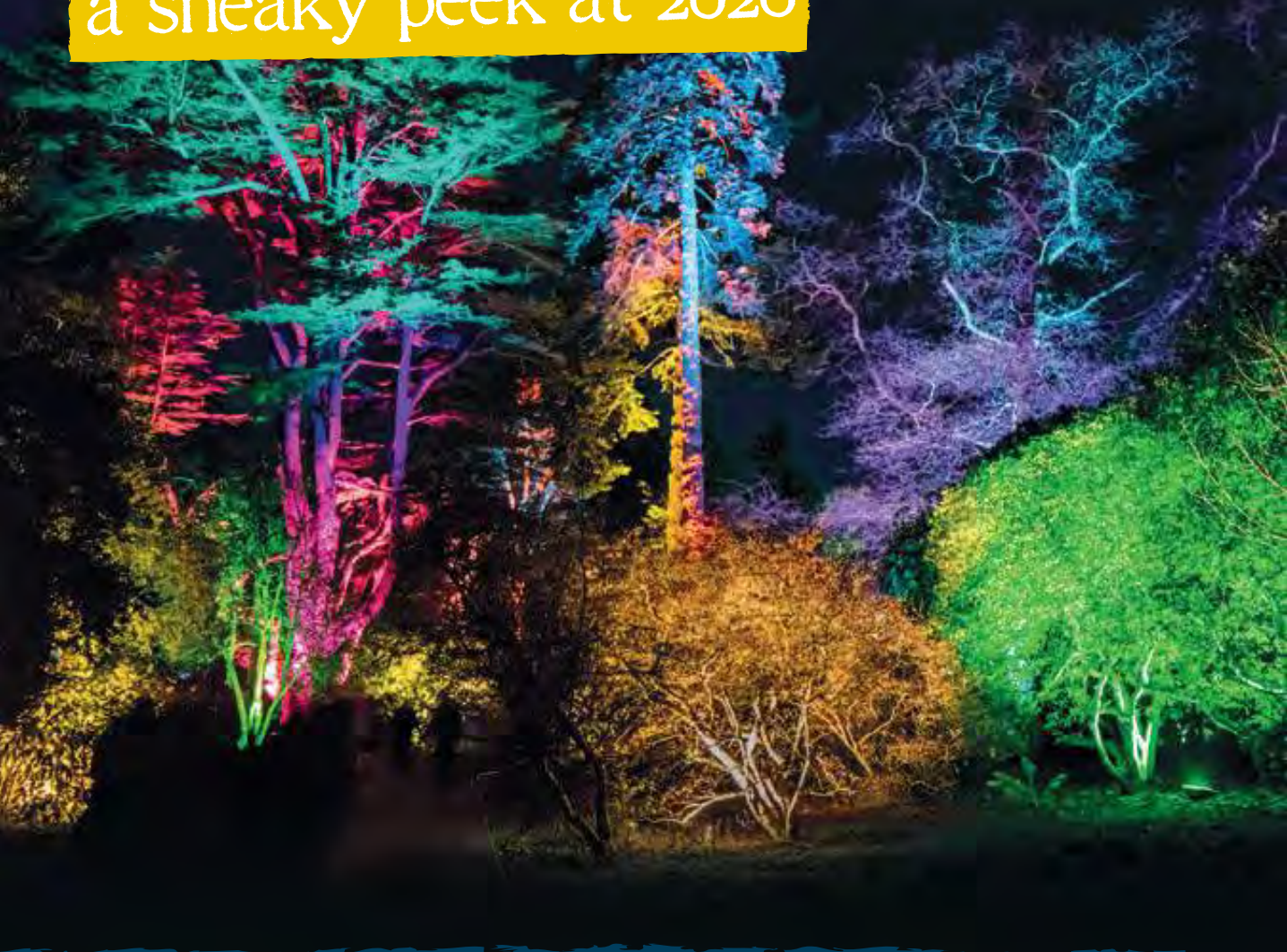
On site our educational provision – from seasonal activity trails, to family events and school sessions – all contributes to building the connection with trees. Meanwhile, our Tree Team is taking part in the Google Expeditions program, bringing a virtual view of forestry careers to children in Key Stage 2. Showing what it's like to work with trees up close helps to give children a taste of the exciting world of forestry.

The value of placements

Thanks to our members, student arborist placements are one of the many ways we're able to support Westonbirt Arboretum into the future. As The National Arboretum, we have a vital role to play in championing the UK's trees, working with partners to mitigate and respond to environmental threats, as well as preparing the next generation to continue this essential work.

For student arborists, gaining hands-on experience at The National Arboretum is the chance of a lifetime. More than this, these placements ensure that wide-ranging expertise is championed as we delve into the next era of forestry.

Enchanted Christmas: a sneaky peek at 2020



There may be a couple of months to go, but the preparations for Enchanted Christmas 2020 are well underway. This year will see our popular family event returning to Westonbirt with a new theme. We spoke to Johnny Palmer, CEO of Pytch events, to get a sneaky peek at what he has planned.



▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway



We hear there is going to be a new theme for this year?

The theme for this year will be 'A Journey to the West Pole.' The idea being that Father Christmas has his main base and workshop in the North Pole, but in order to get to all the children in the world in one night, he needs other outposts around the world. This year his 'West Pole' will be at Westonbirt Arboretum. Visitors will be asked to journey through the trees to find the West Pole. Along the way there'll be plenty to see and do with an exciting array of light displays, some old favourites from previous years and some entirely new displays!

Once you've got your theme, how do you go about bringing it to life in the arboretum?

When building an event, we create an 'alternative universe' that people can experience. In this universe, the laws of physics are different and so anything can happen. We have a think about what would exist in the West Pole, who would be there, what crazy things might happen? This provides the inspiration for the light displays and visual effects.

Once we know what light displays and features there will be, we start to physically create them. Some things are pretty tried and tested, but for some other displays we need to figure out how they will work. We then run a series of technical 'experiments', both in our Bristol workshop and out in the woodlands around Bristol and in the arboretum to see how they look in the great outdoors.

Is there anything that you're particularly looking forward to this year?

I'm looking forward to deciding how we'll build on and grow the event. This will be Pytch's second year working with Westonbirt, so we have a much more intimate knowledge of the site and the audience now. We are looking forward to building on the event this year to make it even better! Light trails are increasingly becoming a part of the Christmas and winter festivities. It's really exciting to be part of this evolving tradition!

Thanks Johnny, we look forward to seeing the event this winter at the arboretum!

Don't forget to make the most of your membership benefits by booking your exclusive half-price Friday tickets! Visit forestryengland.uk/westonbirt to book.



▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

Volunteer at The National Arboretum

Westonbirt has over 280 volunteers, who generously give their time, skills and experience to help care for The National Arboretum. Whether it's working with plants or people, we have a wide range of volunteer roles available. Discover which is the one for you.

You could join them!

A few reasons why you'll love being a volunteer:

- Become part of a vibrant community of like-minded people and make new friends.
- Share your love of the outdoors and help to bring Westonbirt to life for all our visitors.
- Make a real difference – we absolutely could not look after this extraordinary collection of trees without the help of our wonderful volunteers!



Credit: Brian Martin

On 14 November, we will be giving a short presentation about the arboretum. You'll have the opportunity to hear from some of our existing volunteers. Plus, Claire and Alice, from our volunteering office, will be at hand to answer any questions about volunteering and discuss the sort of roles that might be of interest to you.

And of course, there will be cake!

Interested?

Head to forestryengland.uk/westonbirt/volunteering to learn more. Our volunteer recruitment coffee morning is planned for Saturday 14 November at 10.30am in the Great Oak Hall, but please check the website in advance.



Credit: John Hathaway

Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum Team

Chief Executive

Mike Coe

Membership & Communications Manager

Jane Shute

Development & CRM Manager

Sarah Malina

Marketing & Communications Officer

Jo Murray

Membership Officer

Bev Starkings

Membership Administrator

Kelly Hough

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Carol Harrison

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Sales Assistant

Lucy Newton

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Lisa Price

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0300 067 3303

For marketing enquiries:

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For Great Oak

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Trustees

Mike Mintram (Chair)

Christine Burt (Vice Chair)

Mike Howarth (Vice Chair)

Beth Bottrill

Gavin Grant

Martin Green

Martyn Smith

Rachel Walker



Arboretum opening times

Please note that in order to keep visitors, volunteers and staff safe you must prebook a timeslot ticket to Westonbirt Arboretum.

9am–5pm (last paid entry March – Nov 4.30pm)
(Dec – Feb 4pm) closed Christmas Day

General Enquiries Monday–Friday

Tel: 0300 067 4890

westonbirt@forestryengland.uk

Learning Centre

The Learning and Participation Team offers a wide range of fun, hands-on programmes

Tel: 0300 067 4856

Mobility Scooter Reservations

Book in advance, collect from Welcome Building

Open daily 10am – 3.30pm

forestryengland.uk/Westonbirt

Volunteering

Tel: 0300 067 4853

volunteer.westonbirt@forestryengland.uk

Westonbirt Shop

Open every day 9.30am – 4pm

Tel: 01666 880 787

retail@fowa.org.uk

Restaurant and Café

Open 9.30am – 4pm

(Closed Christmas and New Year's Day)

Café open seasonally, Tel: 01666 880064

Westonbirt, The National Arboretum, Tetbury,
Gloucestershire GL8 8QS

Please note that as many of our staff are now working from home we may not be able to answer your call straight away. Please leave a message with your name and number and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

WESTONBIRT ARBORETUM'S

ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS

JOURNEY TO THE WEST POLE

Half price Fridays

Members of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum receive 50% off tickets for Enchanted Christmas on Fridays!

Walk the illuminated trail in search of talking trees, dazzling light displays, Father Christmas' elves, and maybe even a glimpse of Father Christmas himself!

SAT 28 NOV – MON 21 DEC

Open on selected evenings



forestryengland.uk/Westonbirt/enchanted-christmas
Box office: 0300 068 0400



Forestry England