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MAGAZINE OF The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum 

Westonbirt

SPRING/SUMMER 2021



A bright
future!

Planting for future generations

Explore fresh routes

Rediscover your senses

Connect with nature through art



Our vision for the future



Westonbirt, The National Arboretum is a remarkable place, home to over 15,000 specimens and 2,500 species of trees from around the world. It's a truly inspiring landscape, where you can learn about trees and enhance your own wellbeing.

Jane Shute, Supporter Engagement Manager

Globally, we are facing an environmental crisis. Trees play a critical role as they provide one of the most efficient ways of removing carbon dioxide from the air and producing oxygen.

Our mission at Westonbirt Arboretum is simple: to connect people with trees to improve the quality of life; and **our vision** is to be a world leader in trees, inspiring people through conservation, education and participation.

In this edition of the magazine, you can read about how our teams are striving to achieve our vision through everyday activities and longer term projects.

Our work has never been more important. Whether you have been a supporter for many years or are a new or returning member, your continued support is so important. We believe that we can accomplish everything we set our minds to. As someone who stands beside us, we want to thank you and assure you that your ongoing support will play a vital role in enabling Westonbirt Arboretum's vision for the future.

Read more about Our Place in a Changing World at fowa.org.uk/vision

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the friends
of Westonbirt
Arboretum



Westonbirt

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about the authenticity of
products advertised.

Rising to the challenge



The past year will be remembered as a year unlike no other at The National Arboretum. The charity, our staff and volunteers at Westonbirt and you, our members, have faced untold challenges and yet through it all I've been inspired by the way we have worked together to overcome them.

Despite last year's two-month closure, your donations and support have meant that the incredible work at Westonbirt has been able to continue and we can't thank you enough for your patience and perseverance.

2020 was a year of historic significance for the charity. In 1985 a small group of enthusiasts, who saw the need to work with the Forestry Commission to preserve, enhance and enlarge this unique landscape, met for the first time. They had the vision to bring a national focus to this region of Gloucestershire.

Last December marked the 35th anniversary of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum, a landmark shared with 35,000 charity members, a record number! Our vision continues to be to place The National Arboretum in partnership with Forestry England as a 'World Leader in Trees.'

Donating to the Friends ensures that the money you give is regulated under charity law for our conservation, education and participation aims. The charity will continue to ensure that this funding is secured, supporting The National Arboretum, the local economy and the communities we serve, protecting Westonbirt against a background of uncertain economic and political challenges.



Mike Coe

Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum, Chief Executive

'Westonbirt Hope' for the future

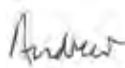


I would like to pay tribute to all the arboretum staff, whether they work for Forestry England, the Friends or for the various businesses that work with us. They have had to do things

very differently over the last 12 months, not least because we were without our wonderful volunteers for most of the time. Also thanks to you, our members, who continued supporting us and adapted to the changes we made.

It is very appropriate that the name chosen by public vote for our newly registered magnolia cultivar is 'Westonbirt Hope'. There could not be a more fitting sentiment for 2021.

I am delighted that in this issue Dan Crowley of Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) introduces the work he is doing having come back to the arboretum last year. I have always admired the work that our colleagues at Bedgebury National Pinetum have undertaken with Mulanje cedar, the critically endangered national tree of Malawi, highlighted in Dan's article. It is a big shame that tree will not grow to maturity in UK conditions. I hope through our work with BGCI we might be able to 'adopt' an endangered tree species from another part of the world not only to support its conservation in its native range but also grow specimens at Westonbirt so that we can inspire and educate our visitors.



Andrew Smith

Forestry England, Arboretum Director


Working through COVID-19

At the end of March last year, in line with the Government COVID-19 response, the arboretum was forced to close its gates to the public. This clearly had a significant impact on you, our members, as you lost the ability to use the arboretum for its health and wellbeing benefits throughout the two month closure but it also had a significant impact on the charity itself.

Mike Coe
CEO, Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum

The first impact was on the staff of the Friends and Forestry England and our volunteers as we moved to remote working, unable to visit Westonbirt. This was made even more challenging for the charity as it coincided with the migration and launch of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, the database that manages our memberships. However, staff across the site adapted to this new way of working admirably to ensure there was continued membership support throughout.

The next challenge was preparing the arboretum to reopen in a way that could be managed as safely as possible, working with government and national colleagues across the visitor destination industry to ensure a consistent and compliant approach. The only way to meet this test was to implement a system of time slots to ensure that the numbers on site could be controlled and I wanted to personally thank members for the way you have adapted to the new booking system, allowing us to open the arboretum and comply with the legislation. Throughout this period we were learning and adapting to fast moving information and although some mistakes were made, I hope you all saw the incredible amount of work that went into opening the arboretum back up.

 Credit: Johnny Hathaway

There were also of course financial concerns throughout 2020. As a charity supported by your funding, we were worried about a potential reduction in revenues as our supporters might choose not to renew annual donations. However, we were genuinely overwhelmed by your generosity and instead of a decline in membership, we saw overwhelming support as memberships increased at the fastest rate in the history of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum; taking us to over 35,000 members and allowing us to continue the vital conservation, education and participation work we support at the arboretum.

Our other financial concern was the shop which came under the ownership of the Friends in February 2020. Our new Retail Manager Alistair, has faced untold challenges including multiple closures, system issues and stock shortages alongside the changing COVID-19 retail regulations which meant the amount of stock we could put out had to be reduced due to distancing. However, despite all of these obstacles and thanks to the support of our members, the shop has managed to produce a small operating profit for the year which is incredible news for the arboretum. We hope that in 2021 we can give the space more focus with new branded product lines and closer links to the work of the arboretum.

Finally, we had to move our AGM date back to November and from a seated event in the Great Oak Hall to an online event. However, I'm pleased to say the digital AGM worked really well and given the continued uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, our next AGM will more than likely take the same virtual format in May, so if you haven't yet seen the last one please visit the recorded version at fowa.org.uk/agm.

Once again, I'd like to thank you, our supporters, for sticking with us and renewing your memberships in 2020. You really are the lifeblood of the arboretum, supporting Westonbirt Arboretum as we move towards our vision to be a 'World Leader in Trees'.

Socially distanced queuing system introduced at the Welcome Building.



Kelly, one of our dedicated Supporter Services Team adapting to home working.

Member and visitor feedback



“

My husband, daughter and myself visited your lovely arboretum today and had a super visit. You have managed to cope excellently with the restrictions imposed by the current situation.

”

“

Hello. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the efforts you have made to reopen. I know it's been a lot of hard work. You are one of my favourite places to visit. Please thank everyone for their efforts, you made my heart glad. The restaurant's cake and coffee was good too.

”



“

We love visiting the arboretum and I feel it's the best natural playground for our kids... and us as adults. I feel it's personally wonderful for my physical, spiritual and mental wellbeing. It truly is a special place. Thanks for all you do. Blessings.

”



“

We visited this morning and it was wonderful to be back! The social distancing measures in place were excellent and it was a very safe yet relaxing experience. The takeaway café queuing/collection system worked brilliantly and it was just so great to sit and have lunch at the picnic tables. Big thanks to all the staff that have made this possible.

”



“

I wanted to say a huge thank you for such a brilliant day today at the arboretum! I have torn ligaments in my foot and haven't been able to go very far at all for two months, so it was so great to have a mobility scooter and spend a few hours in nature today. It made my month!! Such a great idea to have the scooters available. I have made a donation to the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum charity to say thank you.

”

Planting our landscape for the future



▲ Credit: Alison Cobb



As part of our sustainable land management, and to ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy a wonderful collection of trees and shrubs, we undertake an annual planting programme. Lots of important factors are considered in the selection and addition of new specimen plants, not least of which their place within our historic and picturesque landscape.

Penny Jones, Propagator and Mark Ballard, Curator, Forestry England

Quite rightly, there is always a weight of responsibility and expectation on our shoulders in terms of maintaining and developing the arboretum as the Holfords, our founding fathers, would have wished.

They were extremely innovative and creative in their planting and landscape design style, and so it is essential that we think about not only how they did things, but crucially how they would do things in the modern age, and with a broader range of temperate plants at our disposal!

Amongst over 100 young plants, this season we planted a home-grown *Toona sinensis* in the recently created Centenary Glade, adjacent to Broad Drive. It will be the only specimen of this species in Silk Wood so far. We only had two such specimen plants at Westonbirt, with both trees located in the Old Arboretum. One of these is the champion on Mitchell Drive (tree number 15.0374), from which this latest specimen has been propagated by vegetative means.

A great many of our plants in our nursery have been expertly grown from seed collected in the wild. We can sometimes obtain plant material commercially, or we can deploy many tricks of the trade with our existing plants within the living collection, by means such as vegetative propagation. This technique can be described as follows:

“**Vegetative reproduction is any form of asexual reproduction occurring in plants in which a new plant grows from a fragment of the parent plant or a specialized reproductive structure, many plants naturally reproduce this way, but it can also be induced artificially.**”

There are many different methods of vegetative propagation, including cuttings, grafting and layering. But the simplest and most economical way to produce an offspring is to dig up some suckers from the ground surrounding the parent tree, preferably some distance away from the main trunk. Many trees such as *Pterocarya fraxinifolia*, *Rhus typhina* and *Clerodendrum trichotomum* sucker freely as a way of exploiting their environment to grow bigger and stronger, and ultimately out-compete other less vigorous species.

Some years back, when we were out looking for new planting positions, we noticed that *Toona sinensis* suckers were growing from beneath a neighbouring golden yew. This sheltered spot meant that these suckers had escaped the mower! During May 2019, a sucker from the champion tree was dug up, and then potted up into a five litre Air-Pot. The young sapling was again potted up in April 2020 and put on an astonishing 1.35 metre in growth making it ready for planting over the winter.

We were thrilled to able to create a new landscape feature within Silk Wood, now known as Centenary Glade, which marked the 100th anniversary of the Forestry Commission in 2019. This area is gradually taking shape, and with the all-important open spaces combined with the gradual addition of attractive young plants, such as *Toona sinensis*, it will hopefully become as aesthetically pleasing as the many other glades at Westonbirt.

Our Forest Research colleagues are beginning to show an interest in this species, due to its fast-growing habit and timber quality and the need to increase the diversity of our UK timber species in light of the rising threats from climate change and pest and disease. After all, what better place to study trees than Westonbirt, whether your interest is scientific, or simply pleasure.

Uses of *Toona sinensis*

Culinary

- The young shoots and leaves are rich in Vitamin A and are cooked to provide an onion like flavour
- Tea substitute
- Animal fodder

Medicinal

- Astringent
- Carminative (relieving flatulence)
- Ophthalmic (relating to the eye and its diseases)

Timber

- Furniture, window frames, sieve hoop-making and bridge construction
- Incense burning in temples

Other

- Street trees to provide shade





Mulanje Cedar seedlings ready for planting

Working in partnership with Botanic Gardens Conservation International



Having been a proud member of Westonbirt's Tree Team for nine years (four as an Arborist and five as a Dendrologist), in 2018 I left to undertake the MSc in Plant Diversity at the University of Reading. Whilst completing my studies, I began working with Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) on an exciting new initiative: the Global Conservation Consortia (GCC).

Dan Crowley, Global Conservation Consortia Manager, BGCI

The overall goal of the GCC is to coordinate groups of institutions and experts who work collaboratively to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to prevent extinction of target tree groups, and since July of this year I am happy to be back at the arboretum, hosted here as BGCI's Global Conservation Consortia Manager.

BGCI is the world's largest plant conservation network, with over 600 members in over 100 countries, whose mission is to mobilise botanic gardens and engage partners in securing plant diversity for the wellbeing of people and the planet.

BGCI's work aims to support and empower its members and the wider conservation community to promote and develop a more efficient, cost effective and rational approach to plant conservation. This is achieved through leading innovative and strategic programmes, with the GCC the latest example. The initiative is part of the Global Trees Campaign, a partnership between Fauna and Flora International and BGCI, which has supported the conservation of hundreds of the world's most threatened trees for over 20 years. As many members will be aware, Forestry England colleagues at Bedgebury Pinetum have been involved with the Global Trees Campaign over a number of years, with their work being instrumental in the

conservation of the Mulanje cedar, *Widdringtonia whytei*, a Critically Endangered conifer endemic to a single mountain in Malawi.

The development of the GCC is being informed by the results of the Global Tree Assessment, a BGCI-led initiative that has seen the extinction risk of all of the world's tree species assessed. As of late 2020, the results of this show that at least one in five tree species is threatened with extinction and in need of conservation action. Thus, the establishment of the GCC is appropriate and timely, and will focus on highly threatened taxonomic groups, particularly those that are technically challenging to conserve and manage. These include those that produce seeds that cannot be stored by conventional means, termed 'exceptional species', such as oaks, magnolias and maples.

Endangered paperbark maple



▲ Credit: Susanna Bayliss



At least one in five tree species is threatened with extinction and in need of conservation action.

As highlighted in Westonbirt's public engagement, such as 2017's *The little book of disappearing trees*, which has now been digitised on Arboretum Explorer (westonbirt.arboretumexplorer.org), Westonbirt grows several species of globally threatened trees, with the status of several better known now than when *The little book* was produced. These include several maples, with *The Red List of Acer: revised and extended* published by BGCI in September 2020, detailing the extinction risk of 158 maple species, with one in five threatened in the wild. It is thus fitting and fantastic that Westonbirt will work within the framework of the GCC to develop its role in international conservation, with not only maples in mind, but other genera too. There is great scope here and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work with Westonbirt to act for securing threatened trees globally.



Read the full report, *The Red List of Acer: revised and extended*:

<https://globaltrees.org/resources/the-red-list-of-acer-revised-and-extended/>

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 donation supports this incredible work. In return, you receive a host of membership 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



There is still time to bring a friend for free to Westonbirt Arboretum on Tuesdays until 30 March 2021 inclusive. Simply pre-book a free time slot for yourself and a secondary time slot for your friend up to seven days in advance. You will be required to show your valid membership card along with confirmation of both time slots at the Welcome Building when you visit. Valid for one friend per member per visit only.

* Please pre-book a time slot to visit Westonbirt Arboretum at [fowa.org.uk/pre-book](https://www.fowa.org.uk/pre-book)

Partner gardens

As a member, you can also benefit from discounted entry into selected partner gardens.

Visit for free:

Batsford Arboretum
Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos [batsarb.co.uk](https://www.batsarb.co.uk)

Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Glasshouse, Edgbaston, Birmingham
[birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk](https://www.birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk)

The Yorkshire Arboretum, Castle Howard, York [yorkshirearboretum.org](https://www.yorkshirearboretum.org)

National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire
[botanicgarden.wales](https://www.botanicgarden.wales)

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (including Dawyck, Benmore and Logan), Edinburgh [rbge.org.uk](https://www.rbge.org.uk)

Receive 50% off admission into:

Bedgebury National Pinetum, Goudhurst, Kent
[bedgeburypinetum.org.uk](https://www.bedgeburypinetum.org.uk)

Receive 2 for 1 entry into:

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Richmond, Surrey [kew.org](https://www.kew.org)

Royal Botanic Gardens Wakehurst Place Ardingly, Nr Haywards Heath, West Sussex [kew.org/wakehurst](https://www.kew.org/wakehurst)

Please check the partner garden's website ahead of visiting, as you are likely to be required to pre-book a time slot to gain entry.



Local partner discounts



15% off selected Cotswold Outdoor

Buy online at cotswoldoutdoor.com or present your membership card in-store with discount code **AF-FOWA-22**. Valid for selected lines only until 31 December 2021.



15% off Snow + Rock

Buy online at snowandrock.com or present your membership card in-store with discount code **AF-FOWA-22**. Valid for selected lines only until 31 December 2021.

15% off Runners Need

Buy online at runnersneed.com or present your membership card in-store with discount code **AF-FOWA-22**. Valid for selected lines only until 31 December 2021.



10% discount off Forest Holidays

Book online at forestholidays.co.uk using discount code **FOWA** for breaks booked before 31 December 2021.



10% off Go Ape Tree Tops Challenge and Forest Segway in the Forest of Dean

Book online at goape.co.uk using the discount code **GAARB**. Offer applies until 31 December 2021. Excludes Saturdays, bank holidays, gift vouchers and corporate bookings. Participation and supervision ratios apply.

For up to date details on your membership benefits please refer to fowa.org.uk/member-benefits

Great ways to support the arboretum



Your membership supports conservation, education and participation at Westonbirt Arboretum with the mission to connect people with trees. This support is invaluable to maintaining the site and securing its future for further generations to enjoy.

However, there are many more projects we would like to achieve as part of our 10-year vision, and here are a few ways you can support Westonbirt Arboretum.

Support a square

Mark a special occasion

Every acre at Westonbirt Arboretum requires ongoing care from our dedicated Tree Team. By supporting a 'virtual' square of the arboretum, your donation enables this vital work to continue. You can choose to dedicate your square to mark a particular celebration or a special commemoration by including a personal message on our website.

Support a square at fowa.org.uk/support-a-square

Donation £25 a year



Adopt a bench

Make a special tribute to a loved one

Adopting a bench is a lovely way to pay tribute to someone, who may have had a special connection with Westonbirt Arboretum. This rare opportunity offers the chance to display a personalised plaque that will be placed on a bench at a designated place within the arboretum.

Find out which benches are currently seeking adoption at fowa.org.uk/adopt-a-bench

Donation £2,000



Leaves of Life

Filled with lasting memories

Located in our beautiful Great Oak Hall, there are three magnificent tree sculptures filled with personalised leaves carrying wonderful memories and messages. Dedicate a leaf to a loved one or mark a special occasion, which will be enjoyed by yourself, and others, right in the heart of the arboretum.

Personalise your leaf at fowa.org.uk/leaves-of-life

Donation £280

Show your support

Make a donation

We welcome donations of any value to help support Westonbirt Arboretum. If you are able to Gift Aid your donation, we will receive a further 25% from HMRC in addition to your kind contribution.

Make a donation at fowa.org.uk/donate

Find out how you can further show your support for Westonbirt Arboretum at fowa.org.uk/support

Coming up

Active Forest Events

Westonbirt 10K
Sat 22 May, 4pm

SOLD OUT

Hot Air Balloon Flights

Take a hot air balloon flight and soar over the tips of the treetops.

Various dates in 2021 **Package prices vary**

For children and families

Buggyfit

An opportunity to regain fitness after having a baby.

Every Wed & Thu. Wed 10.30am & Thu 11.15am

Price: £7 pay as you go

Sense-sational Spring

Three different sensory play and discovery leaflets to collect from the Welcome Building this spring. Includes a web link for activities to continue back at home.

Spring symphony Mon 1 Mar – Sun 11 Apr

Scented woodland Mon 12 Apr – Sun 2 May

Tactile trees Mon 3 May – Sun 6 Jun

Free after admission

Be a Tree Detective

A summer activity trail – follow the clues to solve a new tree health mystery.

Visit our website ahead of the summer holidays to see what other tree detective activities we'll have on offer each week.

Free after admission

Due to the ever changing guidance regarding COVID-19 please check our website to see which events will be going ahead:
forestryengland.uk/westonbirt

Workshops and courses

Failsafe Plants

Learn the six layers of planting to design successful gardens.

Wed 17 Mar, Wed 11 Aug, 10am–1pm

Price: £75

Two Day Willow Sculpture Workshop

Spend two days creating something special from willow.

Sat 27 & Sun 28 Mar, 10am–4pm

Price: £160

Beekeeping for Beginners

Discover the wonders of the beehive and how you can keep your own honey bees at home on this one day course.

Sat/Sun: 22 May, 23 May, 12 Jun, 13 Jun, 3 Jul, 4 Jul, 17 Jul, 18 Jul, 4 Sep, 5 Sep, 10am–5pm

Price: £80, £140 for couples



Creative Plans

Spend a day learning a method for planning your garden.

Wed 23 Jun, 10am–4pm

Price: £105

Windsor Chair Making Course

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

Various week-long dates from May–Oct, 9am–5pm

Price: £425

Willow Sculpture Workshop

Create your very own wonderful willow sculpture in a relaxed and fun environment.

Sat: 13 Mar, 3 Apr, 14 Aug, 10am–4pm

Price: £85

Flower Posy Workshop

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

Fri 12 Mar, Wed 19 May, Wed 28 Jul, 10.30am–1pm

Price: £75

Planning Planting

Learn how to plan a flower bed for months of colour in this hands-on workshop.

Wed: 5 May, 14 Jul

Price: £105

Beginner's Photography Course

Aimed at beginner photographers who want to move away from the auto mode setting.

Mon 22 Mar, Fri 16 Apr, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: £65

Intermediate Photography Course

Develop your photographic skills and understanding in the stunning setting of Westonbirt Arboretum.

Mon 29 Mar, Fri 9 Apr, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: £120



Foraged Colour Workshop

Learn eco-friendly dyeing techniques using a variety of natural fibres and foraged plant materials.

Sat 17 Apr, Sat 24 Jul, 10am–4pm

Price: £75

Printing with Natural Dyes

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

Sat 15 May, 10am–4pm

Price: £75

Rustic Chair Making Course

Learn to make a rustic chair, stool or bench in the setting of Silk Wood Barn.

**Sat 8 May, Sun 9 May, Sat 19 Jun, Sun 20 Jun,
9.30am–5.30pm**

Price: £90

Spoon Carving

A relaxing day in the woodland carving a wooden spoon to take home.

Sat 26 Jun, Sun 27 Jun

Price: £75

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.

▲ Credit: Art Shape

Expressing our connection to nature

The Arts and Cultural sector has suffered hugely this year, having had to close many doors due to the pandemic. We felt very fortunate that Westonbirt, as an outdoor site, was able to continue running an important arts project. With the over-riding theme examining our critical connection to trees, it felt very timely during such unusual times.

Susanna Bayliss, Interpretation Officer, Forestry England

Emerging Artists

During 2020, Gloucestershire-based charity Art Shape, which encourages social inclusion within the Arts, teamed up with Westonbirt on their project Art Bridge Emergents. Supported using funding from Arts Council England, the project gave a group of 30 emerging artists, who face disabling barriers, the opportunity to further their professional development. The initiative included mentoring, networking, skill development and exhibiting opportunities.

The artists took part in workshops that explored our critical connection to trees and nature through various art media. Supported by online talks from established artists, each workshop focussed on new ways to develop the participant's own working practice whilst exploring the relationship between humans and trees. An exhibition of their work was launched online in January '21, offering visitors fresh ideas and perspectives on engaging with the wonderful tree collection around them.

Lungs of the Earth

Working with the Art Bridge Emergents, Deb Hoy, artist in residence for the project, created a site-specific installation reflecting the concept that human survival depends on trees. Using Westonbirt's Disappearing Trees Trail for inspiration, Deb and the participants explored the threats that trees face globally, including the common ash that is being devastated by Chalara ash dieback disease.

Lungs of the Earth is nestled within Silk Wood, next to the ash woodland. The structure is made from ash wood felled and milled at Westonbirt, and visually represents the vital role trees play in turning carbon dioxide into oxygen. The translucent material billows in the wind, and the macramé trees which look like blood capillaries create the effect of an alveoli, where gas exchange happens within our lungs. The geometry of the pod reflects the intricate geometry of nature, and the practical need for open spaces within the dome, providing ventilation due to COVID-19, create wonderful frames of the tree canopy beyond.



**Lungs of the Earth
installation in Silk Wood**

Connecting with nature

Despite the pandemic having a big impact on the project, we were able to navigate on-site artist workshops through social distancing, staggered starts, masks and lots of hand sanitiser! Although the project had to change, as the visitor participation we had planned was not feasible, it really brought home the importance of connecting with nature.

Through the pandemic, what we already knew about nature's importance for our wellbeing became ever more highlighted. Our critical relationship to trees was explored not only through the climate emergency but through the visceral relationship that we have to our landscape. This really hit home for me when I was told by one of the artists that her first trip out of the house after shielding was to a workshop at Westonbirt: a humbling reality that made the concept of exploring our critical connection to trees even more poignant.

View the diverse and glorious exhibition of painting, mixed media, drawing and installation by the Art Bridge Emergents artists online here: artshape.co.uk/pages/virtualexhibition



Artists trying green woodworking



A beautiful landscape for everyone!

Re-storying the landscape for social inclusion

Susanna Bayliss, Interpretation Officer, Forestry England

Our core mission is to connect people with trees, and we mean everyone! Westonbirt's heritage landscape was initially planted to promote picturesque principals that focus on visual beauty. We want to ensure that our visitor experience is socially inclusive and provides opportunities to enjoy Westonbirt through a mix of sensory perspectives.

We are currently involved in a research programme, led by Dr Sarah Bell at the University of Exeter, which aims to develop, share and inspire best practice in social inclusion into visitor experiences within natural landscapes. Zoe Partington (co-founder of Dis/Ordinary Architecture) and Andy Shipley (founder of Natural Inclusion) have already run training sessions for Westonbirt staff to support inclusive visitor engagement for those with visual impairment. They are now leading on two separate strands to the project.

Re-storying the landscape through disability arts

As a contemporary artist, and disability advocate in the cultural sector, Zoe will lead creative workshops at Westonbirt for disabled artists. In collaboration with Art Shape, a Gloucestershire charity aiming to break down barriers to art, these workshops will re-imagine landscape interpretation. An exhibition of the work produced will allow visitors to explore the site from new sensory perspectives.



▲ Credit: Sarah Lever
Zoe Partington



▲ Credit: Sally Booth

Andy Shipley

Sensing Nature and Sensing History tours

Andy supports sensory immersion experiences that give people a deeper connection with nature. He is leading on the creation of guided tours that will use multi-sensory interpretation. We have been recruiting and training volunteer visually impaired guides who are co-designing 'Sensing Nature' and 'Sensing History' guided tours, to explore and share the landscape and its history through different sensory techniques.

This work will feed into exciting policy guidance to support landscape decision making for social inclusion as well as biodiversity.

Check the Forestry England website and social media channels for more information on these exciting projects.

The art exhibition and guided tours will be available to the public in line with guidance on COVID-19 restrictions at the time.



“ You can’t build a great building on a weak foundation ”

Gordon B. Hinckley

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how important it is to connect with nature, now perhaps more than ever. For the community groups we work with this was not always easy before the pandemic, so the lockdown hit them harder than most.

Graham Anstey, Community Shelter Development Officer, Forestry England



Over the autumn and winter, different groups visited to help install a root protection system and floor layer for the shelter site. They also took part in green woodworking, art, crafts, and mindfulness activities. Everyone taking part is inspired to reconnect with nature and enjoy all the wellbeing benefits it brings while also learning a range of new skills. In the feedback we received everyone said how good they felt to be back in the woods and able to have a break from the stresses of life, with this positive feeling often lasting long after their visit.

With the foundations of both our Community Programme, and our Community Shelter now firmly in place, we are looking forward to pushing on, and to all the benefits it will bring to people's wellbeing and the arboretum!

Throughout lockdown we delivered a range of activities for care homes and families to enjoy in whatever green space they had access to. Activities included craft projects using simple household resources. A number of groups told us that their situation was made more bearable by knowing they hadn't been forgotten.

Once we had reopened the arboretum, we worked hard to find ways in which we could bring back our community groups to help prepare for the new Community Shelter. By thinking outside the box and working together, we have managed to restart our Community Programme safely and successfully.

Find out more at fowa.org.uk/community-shelter



Local, sustainable and wonderful!

Discover exciting new sustainable product ranges at our shop.



Soap Folk

Based in Stroud, Soap Folk is an environmentally friendly business producing luxurious soap bars that are kind to the skin and the planet!

Soap Folk's products are inspired by the beauty of the stunning Gloucestershire landscape. From the soap bar ingredients to the recyclable FSC paper packaging, sustainability is at the heart of all they do.

The Westonbirt Arboretum Shop has been making some subtle changes to the range over the last year. Our focus is to provide our customers with a diverse and exciting selection of products that also make great gifts and are locally and sustainably sourced.

We thought we'd take this opportunity to tell you about some of the brands we're proud to be supporting at The National Arboretum.

Green and Wilds

Dogs love Westonbirt! So, what better way to include them than stocking our shop with yummy natural, healthy products for all our four-legged friends to enjoy? From super-dog-food to eco-toys, everything from this Chippenham based business is 100 per cent natural and made from wholesome, honest ingredients.



Wildlife World



We're thrilled to stock the UK's leading wildlife-friendly garden products – Wildlife World. Conservation is at the heart of all the Wildlife World products, using FSC certified timber for their innovatively designed nesting habitats and their feeders for birds, mammals, amphibians and insects. Based just down the road from Tetbury, they work closely with wildlife experts to deliver award-winning products and continue their care for the natural world by only using renewable electricity for all their workshops!

The Beeswax Wrap Co

An inspired independent, female-led company that makes beeswax wraps to cut as much plastic from our lives as possible! Along the way to making the perfect wrap, The Beeswax Wrap Co have worked diligently to acquire an impressive range of eco-credentials over the last four years. They use only the finest British Beeswax of which most is sourced from within 20 miles of their Cotswold workshop. They also work closely with the beekeepers to ensure the bees are well cared for.



Tracklements



Celebrating 50 years in 2020, Tracklements offer high-quality, scrumptious products such as mustards, chutneys and jellies. Just down the road in Malmesbury, this business creates its products using only 100 per cent sustainable, environmentally friendly electricity and treats their wastewater to ensure that when it goes into the watercourse it's not harmful to nature. Everything is made by hand using traditional recipes with classic, delicious tastes.

We're thrilled to have discovered these brands and to be able to share their wonderful products with you. Look out for these items on your next visit to the Westonbirt Arboretum Shop!

Westonbirt Shop – Open every day 9.30am–5pm*, retail@fowa.org.uk

*Subject to Government guidance



Colours in the canopies

It's that wonderful time of year again when many of the arboretum trees are at their finest. Using this guide you can track down some wonderful specimens in all their glory but don't stop there! The arboretum is full of colour and scents everywhere you turn. Fill your heart and soul with nature's beauty and discover some of the world's most striking and beautiful trees!

Michal Dvorak, Dendrologist, Forestry England

▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway



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. 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, simply pick one up from the Welcome Building 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

Spring

- Judas tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*)
- Empress or Foxglove tree (*Paulownia species*)
- Chinese parasol storax (*Meliiodendron xylocarpum*)

Summer

- Flowering dogwood 'Norman Hadden' (*Cornus 'Norman Hadden'*)
- Colvile butterfly bush (*Buddleja colvilei*)
- Pheasant berry (*Leycesteria formosa*)



Empress or Foxglove tree

The must see specimens at Westonbirt are our *Paulownia kawakamii* and *Paulownia elongata*, flowering from late April through May.



0 100 200 300m



Chinese parasol storax

Keep your eyes peeled for the fruit of this tree, which are 5-10cm and very woody. Something you would not expect from such a delicate flower.



▲ Credit: Hugh Angus



▲ Credit: Mike Westgate

Flowering dogwood 'Norman Hadden'

The bracts of this plant appear in June as pure white, before slowly turning to a deep pink in July.



▲ Credit: Mike Westgate

Judas tree

The flowers are edible* even when raw and have a sweetly acidic taste to them, they can be used as a condiment in salads.



▲ Credit: Gina Mills

Pheasant berry

This plant is also known under names such as Himalayan honeysuckle, flowering nutmeg, or granny's curls.



▲ Credit: Hugh Angus

Colville butterfly bush

The colours of this plant range from dark pink, crimson and sometimes deep purple with a white throat.



▲ Credit:

*Reference for the edibility: [pfaf.org/user/plant.aspx?LatinName=Cercis+siliquastrum](https://www.pfaf.org/user/plant.aspx?LatinName=Cercis+siliquastrum)



▲ Credit: Hugh Angus



▲ Credit: Hugh Angus



▲ Credit: Mike Westgate

Spring highlights

- **Judas tree**
(Cercis siliquastrum)
Its brilliant purple coloured flowers make this tree highly ornamental. They appear in clusters, before the foliage emerges in May. It has been cultivated since ancient times. Judas tree is native to the East Mediterranean region and it is said to be the tree from which Judas Iscariot hanged himself – hence the common name. Judas tree is a great plant for sunny and dry positions, even with a poor soil.
- **Empress or Foxglove tree**
(Paulownia species)
We currently have mature specimens of four species of Empress trees (*Paulownia elongata*, *P. tomentosa*, *P. fortunei* and *P. kawakamii*). They are all spectacular trees, flowering from previous year flower buds in foot-long erected panicles. The flowers are foxglove-shaped, ranging in colour, purple and blue with some white and cream yellow.
- **Chinese parasol storax**
(Meliiodendron xylocarpum)
A relative to snowbell (*Styrax*) and snowdrop (*Halesia*), of which we have many in the collection. So far, we only have one specimen of this rare and very scarcely grown plant, originally from China. Its beautiful star shaped flowers can be white with pink veins, or simply plain pink, showing from the end of April. Penny (Propagator) and I are enamoured with this plant and we are impatiently waiting for it to start producing seeds. The Latin name means honey tree with a wooden fruit.

Summer highlights

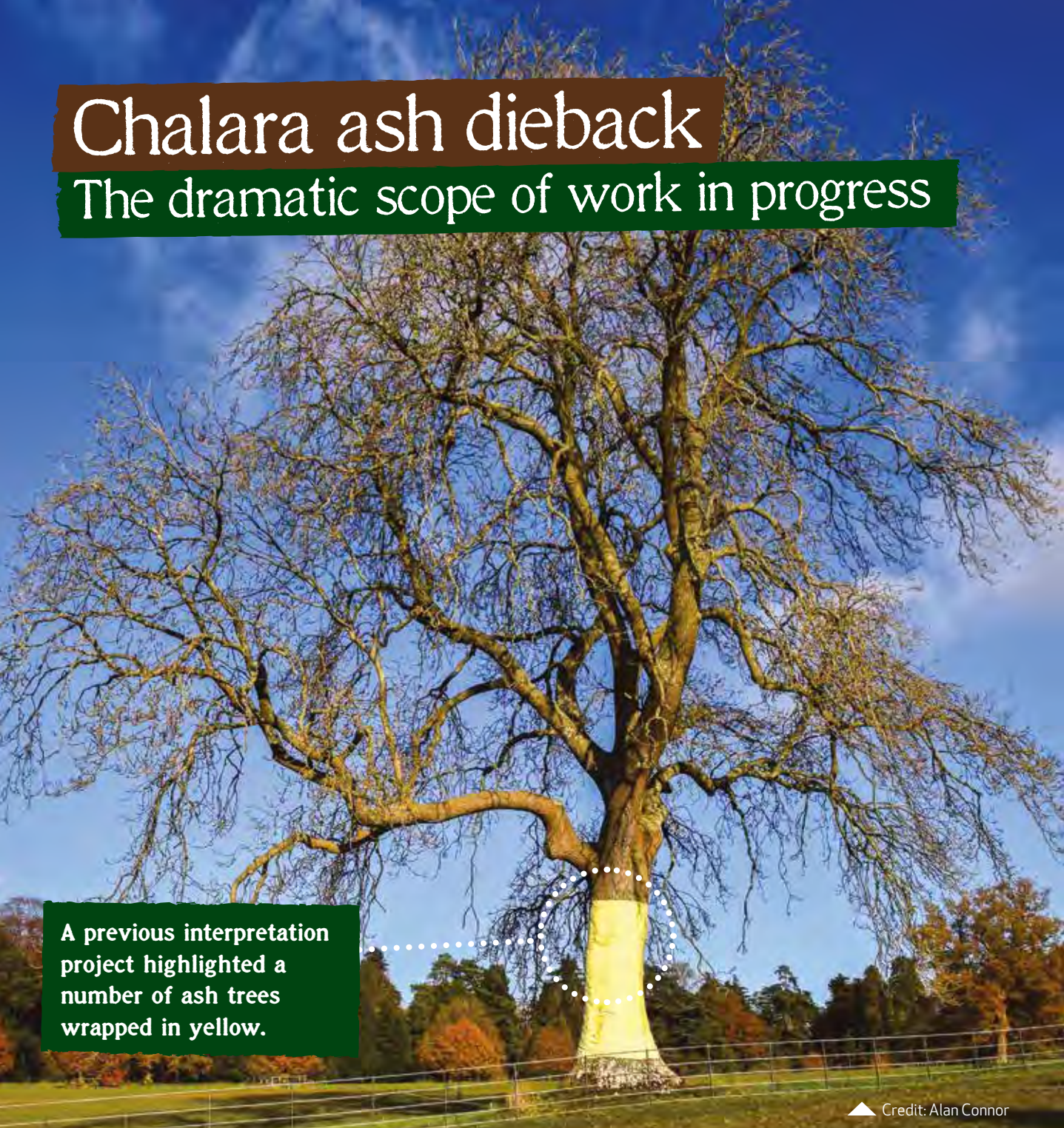
- **Flowering dogwood**
‘Norman Hadden’
(Cornus ‘Norman Hadden’)
Cultivar 'Norman Hadden' is one of the most famous within flowering dogwoods. The flowerheads start to purloin one's attention thanks to the bracts that appear in June as pure white, turning slowly to deep pink in July. In autumn you can admire its golf ball sized fruits, reminiscent of strawberries, which are edible,** but I was never impressed by their taste.
- **Colvile butterfly bush**
(Buddleja colvilei)
This butterfly bush is native to the Himalayas where it was discovered in the middle of the 19th century by famous botanist Sir Joseph Hooker, who claimed it was 'the handsomest of all Himalayan shrubs' at that time. This statement is owed to the shrub's flowers which are the largest in the genus, in hanging panicles in early summer (July).
- **Pheasant berry**
(Leycesteria formosa)
This low maintenance shrub from the Himalayas is best known for its claret red bracts that create a great contrast to its white flowers which form from June to September. The attractive fruit are reddish purple berries, quite large, which are said to be a tempting snack for pheasants, hence the common name.

Don't forget to pull out the map and bring it with you when you next visit to discover our seasonal picks!

** Reference for the edibility: pfaf.org/User/plant.aspx?latinname=Cornus+kousa

Chalara ash dieback

The dramatic scope of work in progress



A previous interpretation project highlighted a number of ash trees wrapped in yellow.

▲ Credit: Alan Connor



For those of you lucky enough to be able to visit the arboretum over the past few months and found yourself in Silk Wood, you will likely have noticed a significant change to the woodlands beyond Broad Drive.

Andy Bryce, Collections Manager, Forestry England



A forestry harvesting machine used to remove infected ash trees.

Due to the scale of these works, our very own Tree Team were unable to carry out this work; a specialist forestry contractor was instead appointed. Using purpose built forestry equipment to harvest, process and extract nearly 2,000 trees in just three weeks they have made a tremendous effort to

complete this initial stage in good time. The harvesting machine pictured is a tremendously efficient piece of equipment, and the operator highly skilled. Using a telescopic boom with an articulated head, the operator is able to grab individual trees, hold and sever them with a powerful chainsaw before allowing the tree to fall in the desired direction. The integrated computer system then allows the trunk to be measured, both in length and diameter, allowing each stem to be cut to an exact length before being stacked ready to be extracted with another heavy duty piece of equipment – the forwarder.

The forwarder gets its name from the process of moving timber forward from the harvesting site to a landing area ready to be loaded onto lorries and taken away. Carrying up to 13,000kg at a time, this surprisingly nimble machine works its way through the woodland on enormous tyres that reduce damage to the precious woodland soils beneath.

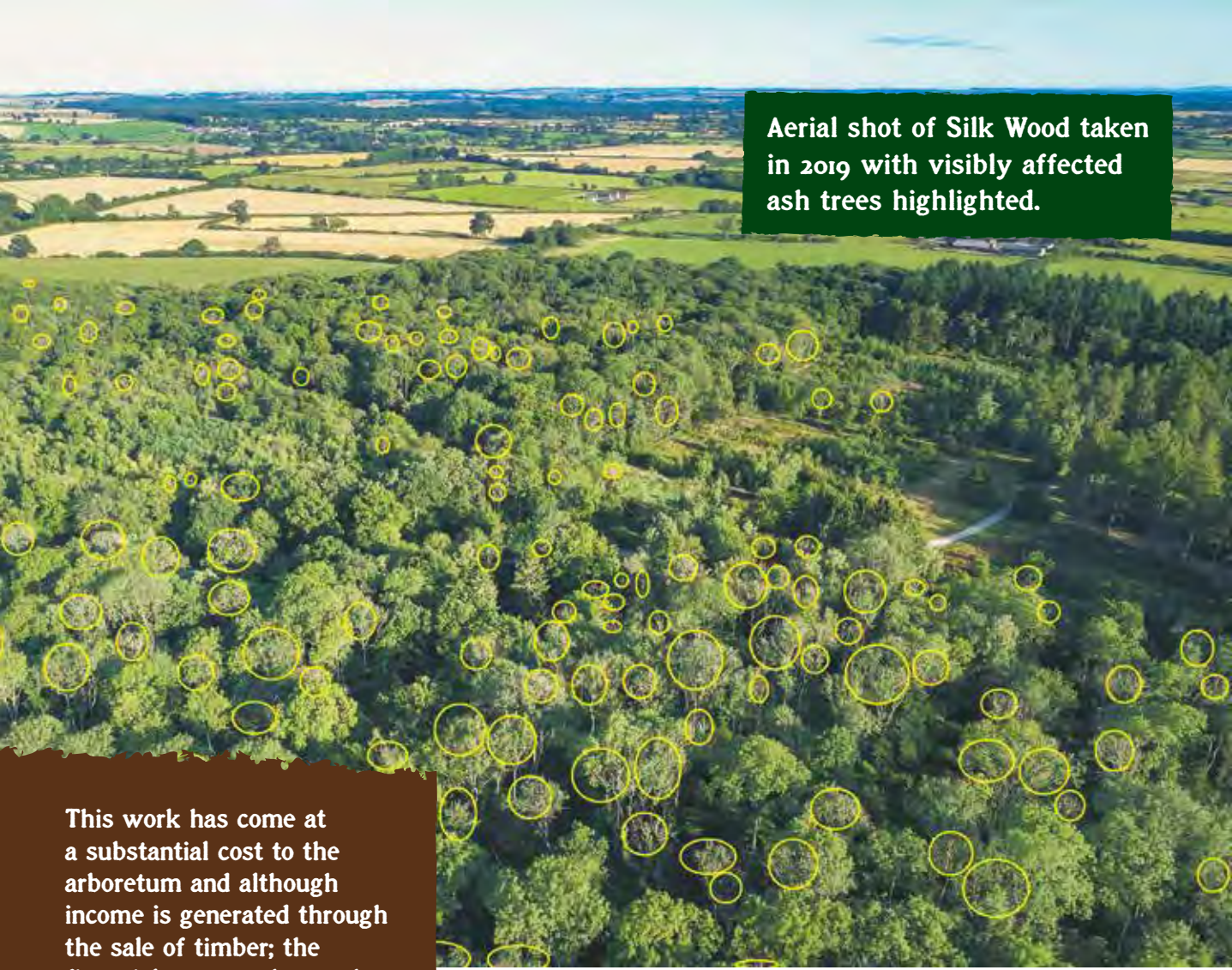
Due to the nature of the work and to ensure visitor safety, it was necessary to close a significant amount of Silk Wood beyond Broad Drive. I hope this wasn't too disruptive; possibly encouraging many of you to explore and enjoy alternative routes through the specimen trees of Silk Wood. Thank you for your co-operation during this time; I will need to lean on your appreciation again during future phases as we move throughout the woods to clear further infected trees.



Infected ash leaves.

Over February we began the process of removing Chalara infected ash trees from across selected areas of Silk Wood. This operation follows several years of monitoring and recording the decline of ash at Westonbirt as a result of the widespread pathogen Chalara ash dieback. This was just the first phase to remove diseased ash trees and prepare for replanting, ensuring these ecologically important woodlands continue well into the future.

The areas selected for this first phase of felling were shown to have the greatest percentage of ash compared to other species and are located in close proximity to a number of paths that criss cross through the woodlands. These areas have been cleared almost entirely to leave an understory of young trees and shrubs that will nurse newly planted trees in the near future.



Aerial shot of Silk Wood taken in 2019 with visibly affected ash trees highlighted.

This work has come at a substantial cost to the arboretum and although income is generated through the sale of timber; the financial support that each and every one of you has given via donations and membership, allows this work to be carried out without the arboretum having to bear the entire financial burden. Your membership goes straight back into the arboretum to support the important conservation work we carry out each year, many thanks to all of you.

Whilst it may be distressing for many of you to see the scale of works that are absolutely required here, I want to assure you that the management decisions have been made by our team of highly knowledgeable and experienced foresters and will ensure that woodlands will continue to form an important part of Westonbirt Arboretum. This is conservation work on our very own doorstep. Industry peers across England will be looking at the work we carry out here to help guide them on their own woodlands and the need to mitigate against this unstoppable disease.

To end on another positive note, I have on my regular walks through the arboretum witnessed several ash trees that continue to look healthy despite enormous pressure from this disease. The hope is that these few individuals will continue to thrive demonstrating a natural resistance to Chalara and each year produce resilient seed that will contribute to the successful regeneration of Westonbirt's woodlands.

For more information on Chalara ash dieback at Westonbirt Arboretum visit www.forestryengland.uk/westonbirt/chalara

news

Travelling electric

As part of Forestry England's ambitious plan to be carbon free by 2033, we have upgraded the staff pool car to an ultra-low emission vehicle (EV) Kia e-Niro and installed a 7kw twin fast charge point at our offices.



A large part of our emissions are travel related so this new zero emissions car is very much a step in the right direction. We are reviewing options of EV charging points for the visitor car park.

▼ Credit: Johnny Hathaway



Cows' work

Westonbirt's small herd of Galloway cows have done a tremendous job of conservation grazing across the Downs.

Brought in to remove grass and scrub over the winter months, conditions for a host of native wildflowers has improved. The cows will shortly be removed from the Downs to allow wildflowers and grass to flourish before returning again in September to start all over again.

New restaurant tenants

Previous tenants Calcot sadly left the Westonbirt restaurant in January.



We'd like to take this moment to thank them for all their outstanding work over the past seven years.

We are however delighted to welcome Fosters Event Catering who have won a seven-year contract to provide the catering services at the Westonbirt Restaurant. Come and visit the restaurant to enjoy fresh, locally sourced food and drink.

Growing support

Last year was certainly a challenging time with the COVID-19 disruption. However, as with all things bad, there is always a positive aspect.

As our Supporter Engagement Team navigated through a new CRM system, remote working, site closure and subsequent reopening challenges, we adopted agile working and resilience. We are proud to have helped our supporters grow to 35,000, which was a wonderful milestone to mark our 35th anniversary!

We would like to acknowledge and thank our members who were able to seamlessly renew memberships and support us throughout these challenging times. A big welcome to all our new members and of course those who have returned. Thank you!

The Supporter Engagement Team

Update on the Quarantine House

We are excited to be finalising our plans for our new Quarantine House, which will form a vital part of our Propagation Unit and aim to start building this summer.



Thank you to all those who have donated funds to help make this important project a reality so we can continue to introduce new plants to the arboretum and ensure we reduce the risk from pests and disease.

Please note we have recently updated our privacy statement at fowa.org.uk/privacy



Congratulations to the last issue's winners: Patricia Macpherson, Anne Farrington, Pat Parsons, Ronnie Barber, Gill Parker, David Prosser, Pat Parsons, Linda Tillotson, Moira Hargreaves, Hilary Lee, Darren Galpin, Peter & Teresa Baddeley, Val Forbes, Malcolm Potter, Colin & Karen Falder.

Supplied by our supporter and tree expert, Roger Gorst

Across


1. Hard wood from a deciduous tree, native to India used for outdoor furniture and decking on boats. (4)
3. Tree producing even harder and heavier wood, once used for ships rudder bearings. (8)
9. This might best be hidden by planting an evergreen tree. (7)
10. Trees producing oil and coconuts. (5)
11. E.g. Hazel for *Corylus avellana*. (8,4)
13. Trees similar to Californian white oaks found back in Selborne, Hampshire. (6)
15. City with The Dominion Arboretum. (6)
16. Tree bearing a large fleshy fruit, native to Central and South America. (7,5)
20. Taken from a box made of *Cedrela odorata* wood and smoked! (5)
21. An Asian fan palm that could make an army pal happy. (7)
22. Often made of timber palisade and earthworks, surrounding castles. (8)
23. Man involved in a discovery concerning fruit from a *Malus domestica* tree. (4)

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Down

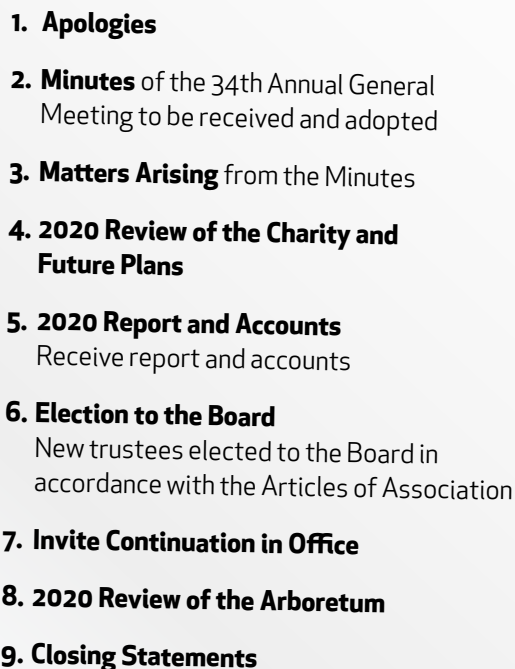
1. Large palm like plant e.g. *Cyathea*. (4,4)
2. Sounds like a large piece of wood directly to port or starboard of a ship. (5)
4. Horrible small tree with stinging hairs used for boundaries in South America, hidden in some mature rain forests. (5)
5. A forest surrounded by 4 down. (12)
6. Dried root of a *Jateorhiza* plant used as a bitter tonic, in local Umbanda religion perhaps. (7)
7. A tall post, produced by beech trees, eaten by pigs! (4)
8. Deciduous Indian tree, pinnate leaves yellow in autumn; used unusually as "street trees" in Chiswick. (12)
12. Tree of genus *Phoenix*, bearing one seeded drupes growing in clusters. (4,4)
14. Conservative sticky Australian tree. (7)
17. What you should do with a container grown Acer after a few years. (5)
18. Sealed; the Iroko planks in his yacht. Sounds as if he settled the bill. (5)
19. Tree that should be included in any Westonbirt Arboretum crossword. (4)

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!



Agenda for 35th Annual General Meeting

**JOIN US ON WEDNESDAY 19 MAY 2021
AT 6PM**

- 
- 1. Apologies**
 - 2. Minutes** of the 34th Annual General Meeting to be received and adopted
 - 3. Matters Arising** from the Minutes
 - 4. 2020 Review of the Charity and Future Plans**
 - 5. 2020 Report and Accounts**
Receive 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**
 - 8. 2020 Review of the Arboretum**
 - 9. Closing Statements**

Entry to the AGM

At the time of writing this, we are unable to confirm whether the meeting will be held in person or virtually but will update you in our Member eNews nearer the time.

Proxy voting

Any member who is unable to attend the AGM in person and wishes to submit a vote will be able to do so at fowa.org.uk

Minutes and accounts

Agenda, papers and minutes of the 34th Annual General Meeting will be available at fowa.org.uk/agm or at the AGM. A small number of 2020 draft accounts will be available at the AGM.

Issued by the trustees of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum – January 2021.

A message from CEO Mike Coe

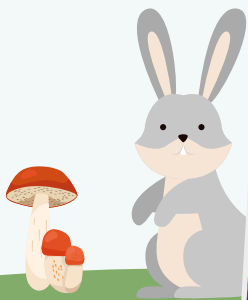
“ Our AGM is your chance to understand how your donations are helping us achieve Westonbirt Arboretum's 10 Year Vision. You will also learn about life at the arboretum and meet the trustees and other members. We hope you will join us whether it is in person or virtually. ”

Full details about the AGM will be available in May 2021 at fowa.org.uk/agm

FAMILY FUN!

Exploring fresh roots

Trees are amazing above the ground, but the root system underground is amazing too!



Strong roots

Without roots, trees would not be able to grow tall and strong!

Massive trees need a big root system – they act as an anchor to help keep the tree standing. These roots spread out at least as far as the width of the canopy, but can go up to four times as far. Yet most roots only grow down into the first metre of the soil!



Water and nutrients for the tree

Underground, the roots take up water and nutrients from the soil which then travel up the trunk to other parts of the tree.

The roots can also store some of the food that is made by the leaves during photosynthesis – the leaves use sunlight energy to make sugar (food) and oxygen, from the water taken up by the roots and carbon dioxide from the air.

Did you know?

Tree roots have a hidden secret that helps them to grow; they work as a team with mycorrhizal fungi. In autumn you might see some of this fungi, fly agaric, growing near a birch tree. The threads of fungi underground attach to the tree roots and help provide the tree with water and nutrients. In return the tree feeds the fungi.

Stand at the trunk of a tree



Now walk out to where the branches stop.

The roots will be going under your feet, stretching out even further, for at least half the distance again!



A seed's first roots

When a tree's seed is ready to grow, the first thing that emerges is the tap root.

It goes down into the soil and then side roots develop over the years to help keep the tree nice and stable as it grows.





STIHL



AKI
SYSTEM

CORDLESS POWER. BY STIHL.

**READY FOR ANY CHALLENGE.
THE STIHL AK SYSTEM. CORDLESS POWER TOOLS
FOR MEDIUM-SIZED AND LARGER GARDENS.**

Real gardens never stop growing. They constantly present challenges. Be ready to take on the challenge with tools from the STIHL AK System. Powered by a high-performance Lithium-Ion battery that can be used in all the tools across the system, these lawnmowers, hedge trimmers, chainsaws, leaf blower and grass trimmer are designed to be easy to use, lightweight and quiet, without compromising on performance.

That's real cordless power. Made by STIHL.

AVAILABLE FROM APPROVED STIHL DEALERS, SELECTED GARDEN CENTRES AND BY VISITING [SHOP.STIHL.CO.UK](https://www.shop.stihl.co.uk)



Go wild for your meetings

What could be more inspiring for a meeting venue than the tranquillity of Westonbirt Arboretum. Absorb all the energy of an amazing venue in the heart of the natural world. Why not choose something a little different as you go back to face-to-face meeting with your colleagues and clients?

The Great Oak Hall is full of light and beautifully constructed, providing the perfect location and a professional environment.

We can set everything up to meet all your requirements. You will also be able to explore beautiful pathways through 600 acres of trees to add even more inspiration to your meetings.

For more information visit fowa.org.uk or contact greatoakhall@fowa.org.uk for details and availability.

A change is as good as a rest



Credit: Brian Martin

I am incredibly proud of the Westonbirt Community Programme and all that it has achieved over the past seven years, in helping to connect people with trees and to improve their quality of life. Yet it can also be an emotional project to work on and I needed a rest.

Karen Price, Westonbirt Community Coordinator, Forestry England



A six-month secondment to oversee the community engagement strategy in Forestry England's West District was the perfect opportunity to take a breath, see what was happening elsewhere, and reflect on what the next steps might be for the Westonbirt Community Programme.

The Forestry England estate provides a varied array of volunteering opportunities. Coordinating these across the region, from Cornwall to Shropshire, I had the opportunity to observe and learn more about the different ways Westonbirt might work in partnership with local groups and organisations, supporting initiatives and offering meaningful volunteering activities for service users. These activities will help groups and individuals to continue to enjoy a therapeutic connection with the arboretum when their time with the Community Programme comes to an end.

Working closely with the ecologists across the region, I have discovered more about the incredible biodiversity that our nation's forests support. Whilst we may not have cray fish, pine martens or beavers at Westonbirt, we do have a vast wealth of flora and fauna flourishing within the arboretum. Shining the spotlight on these will help engage new audiences and deepen their connections to nature.

Supporting the ten strong Community Ranger Team, I have been inspired by their passion and creativity in the way they tell our story and support safe access to the nation's forests, often in very challenging circumstances. I am keen to explore how we can co-create activities and resources with local community groups to help tell and share our stories of Westonbirt and continue to be a welcoming and accessible site for marginalised groups. I also know we will keep in touch, share ideas and good practice and continue to grow outstanding community participation programmes across the South West.

How to plant trees and shrubs

Five years have passed since I planted my little redwood on the Downs. It is now around five times the height and happily established near the Welcome Building. In years to come it will be a grand sight, greeting visitors each time they visit Westonbirt Arboretum.

Cairn Hurst, Arborist, Forestry England

The redwood was one of about 300 trees planted at Westonbirt during the winter and spring of 2015/2016; a task the Tree Team carry out each year using carefully developed techniques. I'd like to share some of the basics of how we plant our trees, to help you on your way to many successful plantings of your own.

- **Remove a circle of turf one spade length around the tree.** The turf should be thick enough to remove the roots of the grass but thin enough that the valuable topsoil remains.
- **Dig a circular planting pit with straight sides**, no more than twice the diameter of the pot and no deeper than the height of the pot (if the soil is particularly heavy we rough the soil up a little on the sides and bottom of the hole). The surrounding soil provides stability for the tree, while not digging too deep helps keep the tree at the right height when any disturbed soil settles.
- **Remove the pot and place the tree in the hole**, rotating to the desired direction. Make sure the root flare (the point where the stem tapers out into the first roots) is approx. 2" proud of the surrounding soil.
- **Grade soil from the surrounding level to the final height of the planted tree.** Avoid planting too low with soil built up around the stem as most trees do not grow well like this and will ultimately fail.
- **Cover all de-turfed soil with a layer of mulch 2-3" deep**, making sure not to pile any up round the base of the tree.
- **Help protect the tree with some form of cage.** We use Tubex recycled plastic netting, held in place with five wooden stakes driven into the ground in a circle, each one 4-6" in from the edge of the mulch.



Each of our trees are lovingly grown in an Air-Pot® by our green-fingered propagator Penny. Air-pots are made from recycled plastic and designed to promote good healthy root growth and minimise the root-circling effects of standard plastic pots.

Recycling our seasonal signs

Did you spot something different about our seasonal trail signs? In 2020 you may have noticed a modification in the material used in the trail signs. We're excited to share the reasons and results behind the change.

Westonbirt's Green Team

Each year a portion of your membership donation goes towards establishing educational trails throughout the arboretum, giving visitors an opportunity to engage and learn about Westonbirt's tree collection and the environment in general. Changing the trail signs seasonally was leading to a build-up of old, non-recyclable signs that couldn't be used again partly due to wear and tear and partly because we like to provide new and interesting educational information.



And so the search began for new sustainable materials we could use for signs, that would last at least three months in all weathers and then be recycled. Last year we tested a special paperboard from REELbrands, which is clay coated on both sides with a hard middle to keep it strong and durable. It can be digitally printed and holds up against our unpredictable weather in the UK!

This material is plastic free, 100 per cent recyclable, 100 per cent biodegradable and 100 per cent compostable, so once the sign has come to the end of its useful life, it can be placed into our normal paper/cardboard recycling stream at Westonbirt. An added bonus is that the signs are made in the UK.

The new material has not only been used for the seasonal trails but also for our Enchanted Christmas event and general visitor signs.

The results so far are looking good and we're hoping to continue using these paperboard signs for 2021 trails and events. Look out for them on your next visit – we hope you agree they look great and make you feel even better knowing they are able to be disposed of in an environmentally-friendly way!

Funding for future growth



▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

National Heritage Lottery Recovery Fund

Westonbirt Arboretum was one of 445 organisations across the country that successfully applied for a grant in the autumn, as part of the Government's Culture Recovery Fund. We were delighted, to receive a grant of £195,500 to help us recover from the financial impact of COVID-19 and bolster the resilience of the site in such challenging times.

Sophie Nash, Programme Manager, Forestry England

Like so many other visitor attractions, the arboretum was forced to close for over two months, resulting in the cancellation of our Forest Live concerts. We also had to cancel smaller fundraising events and activities which generate important income for the arboretum.

The grant was used to help cover some essential costs as well as covering additional costs incurred to enable us to respond to COVID-19. These costs included hiring more marquees to provide covered spaces for catering

as well as providing additional PPE for community participants so they could continue working with us as part of our community wellbeing programmes. The funding also enabled us to appoint a project manager to help with a backlog of activities and cover the salaries of some of our core staff team.

We also appointed some specialist consultants to help us review and shape clear strategies and action plans in a number of areas including: visitors and members, sustainability and fundraising.

Spring in the air and on the ground

Moving into the spring and towards summer is a wonderful time of year when our wildlife is at its most active, although some creatures can be hard to spot.

There are five species of oil beetle that are sadly in decline. The most common one in the UK is the black oil beetle (*Meloe proscarabaeus*).

Their name comes from the oily secretion squirted from their legs when alarmed. The female carries eggs in her large abdomen which she then deposits in a hole in the ground. Once hatched the larvae climb up into flowers to await a visit from a solitary bee on which to hitch a ride to the hive. The larvae eat the bee's eggs and pollen whilst they pupate before emerging the following spring to start the cycle all over again.



Kestrels are known for hunting along the edges of woodlands.

They are amongst the smaller birds of prey, similar in size to a magpie, with a wingspan of about 75cm. They will hunt small mammals and birds but their favourite prey are field voles. Where forest meets field is often where you will find this sharp eyed bird of prey hovering in search of the next meal. Kestrels often nest in tree hollows, producing four or five eggs in the spring time.



The white-legged snake millipede can often be found in rotting vegetation.

To break a myth, millipedes don't have 1,000 legs but between 40 to 400 pairs of legs. The white-legged snake millipede has a shiny black body with about 100 white legs. When threatened they curl up and can secrete an unpleasant fluid to deflect unwanted attention.

Many trees reproduce by producing pollen.

There are those that use the wind to spread their pollen, such as conifers that produce cones. Other species rely on bees and insects. One fascinating example is the horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) which produces a mixture of male, female and hermaphrodite flowers streaked with yellow nectar guides. These guides turn to crimson when the flower is pollinated – a colour bees can't see, so they continue to focus on the yellow ones!



If you would like to contribute to our woodland seasonal update we would love to hear from you.
Contact magazine@fowa.org.uk



A royal visit

The Duchess of Cornwall visits Westonbirt Arboretum

On 27 October last year, we were delighted to welcome our Royal Patron, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, to the arboretum. Our CEO Mike Coe and Andrew Smith, Forestry England's Director of Westonbirt Arboretum, met the Duchess on her arrival.

▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

Welcome

At the entrance, Her Royal Highness met three of our longest-serving charity staff members, Kelly, Bev and Lorna.



STIHL Walkway

The Duchess then walked along the arboretum's STIHL Treetop Walkway, opened in May 2016, which is 13 metres high and 300 metres long.



Community Shelter



Next HRH met with Graham, our Community Shelter Development Officer, who gave her a preview of our plans for a new community shelter. Thanks to support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the programme has worked with 7,228 individuals from hard to reach audiences, empowering them to enjoy the benefits of spending time amongst trees.

Amongst the Acers

Curator Mark Ballard took HRH on a tour of Maple Loop, one of the best locations in the arboretum to take in our world-famous autumn colour show.

Meeting Rich

The Duchess then met Tree Team Supervisor, Rich Townsend, our longest serving member of staff, who has been at the arboretum since 1988.



Finally, The Duchess visited part of the arboretum's ancient Silk Wood which contains ash trees infected with Chalara ash dieback, a disease that is infecting ash trees across Europe and the UK. Mark Ballard explained how Forestry England are planning to remove infected ash trees to make way for new plantings and create a resilient woodland for the future.

Silk Wood



We are delighted to announce that Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall has renewed her patronage to the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum for a further five years.

Dendrology

what's it all about?



What is dendrology? According to Wikipedia dendrology is the science and study of woody plants (trees and shrubs), specifically their taxonomic classifications.

Michal Dvorak, Dendrologist, Forestry England

▲ Credit: David Hughes

The labelling and database records of any important tree collection, such as Westonbirt's, are never static because the taxonomic understanding of plant names change and evolve over time. To stay on top of the game, it is very important that we keep up-to-date with changes and correctly label our plants.

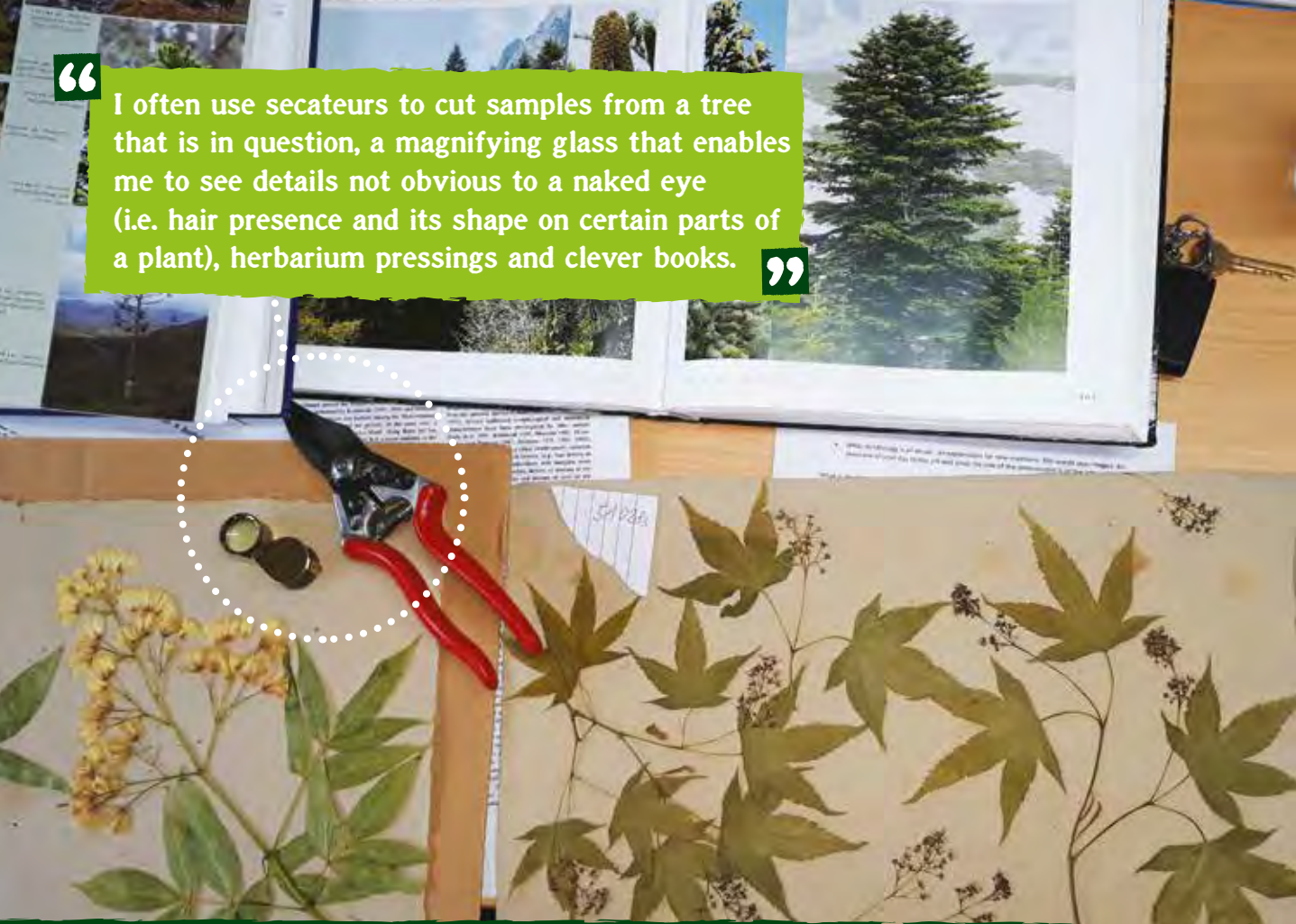
The main part of my job is to undertake an ongoing and never-ending revision (taxonomic identification and verification) of the tree specimens we have within our

vast tree collection. There is little point in a tree collection, no matter how broad, if the name of the tree on the label is misleading, archaic, or even wrong. I try to go through each specific plant group at a time (I am currently reviewing all our pine specimens) and check that the name on our database and on the tree label are correct. It can be a very quick task or quite a time-consuming adventure, not always ending in a clear conclusion, which can be rather frustrating. An example of a quick task would be going through Scots pines, which are easy to recognise, to verify each specimen and tick the tree record in our

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I often use secateurs to cut samples from a tree that is in question, a magnifying glass that enables me to see details not obvious to a naked eye (i.e. hair presence and its shape on certain parts of a plant), herbarium pressings and clever books. ”

”



database confirming the name has been checked. This can just require a quick look at the tree from a distance. An example of something more challenging is trying to identify and verify pines from Mexico and China. These regions are one of the biodiversity hotspots (manifold species) for pines and not all of them are fully described and documented. Also, the naming might not be fully settled. Sometimes, a lot of investigation must take place to help with the identification, such as digging in the records to learn how and when the plant was propagated, what the origin of the seed is or by which means we obtained it.

Luckily for me, as a dendrologist at Westonbirt I am in a very fortunate position to be able to stick my nose into propagation affairs. With our propagator, Penny, I enjoy planning which plants or plant material for propagation we would like to obtain and where from. These plant species must fit our accession criteria i.e. conservation, national collection, heritage value, landscape interest, education and research. As we can't grow every plant we would like to due to limitations on space.

Another aspect I enjoy is overseeing our phenology (seasonal changes such as flowering and fruiting) recording volunteers. This opportunity has allowed me to observe how trees are changing throughout the year in a very detailed manner.

I relish being in this role as it offers a diverse range of tasks and opportunities. To give some more examples of what a dendrologist gets up to: I've travelled to see and study other significant plant collections within the UK, established contacts with institutions and colleagues all around the world and I look forward to helping with future tree hunting expeditions to collect seeds of woody plants in the wild from their native habitats and undertaking field work focused on their study and conservation.

Keep an eye out for Michal's Tree of the Month blogs in our eNews.

Bikes and scooters at Westonbirt

How to be a wheely safe rider



▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway



▲ Credit: Alison Cobb

Children's bikes and scooters are a brilliant way to help little ones explore the arboretum. We welcome young children on bikes and scooters at the arboretum providing they are under 70cm from floor to handlebars.

There are lots of benefits to bringing a small bike or scooter for children when you visit. Easy mobility allows young children to enjoy being active in a safe environment, it helps to support young legs and lets them enjoy the beautiful surroundings while covering more ground. A lovely, fun experience that helps connect children with the trees of Westonbirt Arboretum from a young age.

Please measure the bike or scooter before you arrive to double check it is under 70cm from floor to handlebars to avoid disappointment. On arrival our staff will ask you to measure the bike or scooter against our height limit board. If the bike or scooter is over 70cm your child will not be permitted to ride it around the arboretum.

Follow these top tips for a fun, safe day out!

- Encourage little ones to always slow down or get off and walk when you need to pass other people at a social distance.
- If your child is starting to ride ahead, make sure a grown-up can keep up so they don't go out of sight (a great workout grown-ups!)
- Bikes and scooters must be walked around the entrance/exit, restaurant and over the STIHL Treetop Walkway to avoid accidents in busy areas.
- Store bikes and scooters to the side or in a safe place to prevent them from becoming trip hazards.

Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum Team

Arboretum opening times

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

Please pre-book your visit
at fowa.org.uk/pre-book



Chief Executive

Mike Coe

Supporter

Engagement Manager

Jane Shute

Supporter Services

Team Leader

Julia Bartlett

Marketing &

Communications Officer

Jo Murray

Supporter Services Officer

Bev Starkings

Supporter

Services Administrator

Kelly Hough

Supporter

Services Administrator

Chloe Vincent

Finance Manager

Emma Frost

Finance Officer

Maureen Nisbet

Retail Manager

Alistair Williams

Business Officer

Lorna Smith

Enquiries

membership@fowa.org.uk

Patrons

HRH The Duchess of Cornwall

Giles Coode-Adams OBE

Sir Henry Elwes KCVO

Hon Beth Rothschild

Sir Crispin Tickell GCMG, KCVO

President

Christopher Brickell CBE

Vice Presidents

Roger Busby CBE

Trustees

Mike Mintram (Chair)

Beth Bottrill

Gavin Grant

Martin Green

Veronica Morriss

John Parker

Martyn Smith

Rachel Walker

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 – 5pm

Tel: 01666 880 787

retail@fowa.org.uk

Restaurant and Café

Open daily from 9.30am – 4pm

(Closed Christmas and New Year's Day)

Café open seasonally, Tel: 01666 880064

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



Forestry England

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