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MAGAZINE OF The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum 

Westonbirt

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

A community in bloom

Silk Wood Community Planting Project

Our new Green Woodworking Shelter

**Boosting the skills and wellbeing of
diverse community groups**

Women in forestry

10% off
for Friends of
Westonbirt Arboretum
members

Westonbirt Shop The best local produce

- Delicious foods, preserves and sweets
- Beautiful handmade crafts
- Homeware, gifts, books and toys

Our products are sustainably sourced from outstanding local businesses.

Every penny spent helps to keep Westonbirt Arboretum thriving.

Visit us on your next visit and discover the best in local products!



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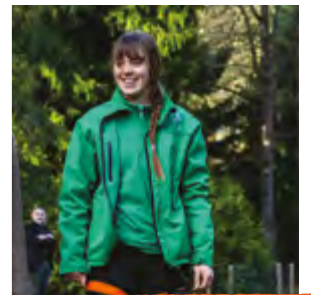
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Conservation:

Protecting our trees for the future



Education:

Sharing knowledge to create change



Participation:

Connecting people with nature

the friends
of Westonbirt
Arboretum



Westonbirt

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Every effort is made to check
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should satisfy themselves
about the authenticity of
products advertised.



From strength to strength



Our partnership with Forestry England continues to go from strength to strength as we identify more opportunities to work together and support the arboretum.

We have been recruiting new staff members and a new Board of Trustees. Good

charity governance is critical to any charity, and our board of professionals will help us to further develop the charity.

The trustees and staff are focussed on the next three years. One priority is to develop our fundraising capability to support more projects like the Silk Wood Community Planting Project (page 8-9) and continue our work into the future. We are also focussed on supporting local and regional communities through the Access to Nature Programme (page 38-39) to visit the arboretum.

As an environmentally conscious organisation we're looking at ways to reduce our ecological footprint and become more sustainable. One way we will be exploring this is by looking into a digital magazine to reduce our paper consumption, waste and carbon footprint.

Thank you for your continued support of The Friends.

Emma Griffiths
CEO, Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum

Spring 2024



Over the past 12 months it has been rewarding to see the Silk Wood Community Planting Project get fully underway (page 8-9).

We have been engaging with the local community

and making progress both preparing the site and enabling the planting of the first trees. I congratulate The Friends for the success in fundraising without which it would not have been possible to progress.

We were also very privileged to welcome His Majesty King Charles III in December to plant a Wollemi pine in the Sand Earth part of Silk Wood (N18 on the visitor map). This launched our partnership project with Botanic Gardens Conservation International and Botanic Gardens of Sydney. We are part of an international 'metacollection' helping to conserve this dinosaur tree that was until recently thought extinct. We also dedicated this part of the arboretum as 'Coronation Glade' to commemorate the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla, both of whom have had a long association with the arboretum.

Andrew Smith
Arboretum Director, Forestry England

Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum AGM

03 July 2024 from 2pm to 4pm



The 38th Annual General Meeting will take place on 03 July 2024 from 2pm to 4pm in the Great Oak Hall. The event will be a summer celebration of all the exciting new projects that are underway at the arboretum and funded thanks to your support!

We have arranged talks and tours to explain how your support is enabling Westonbirt to become a world leader in trees, to play an important role in conservation, to share critical knowledge that helps combat climate change and to connect people with nature.

If you are unable to join us in person, do feel free to join us online.

Book now

Places are limited so please book to attend this free event.

Book online at: fowa.org.uk/agm

Experts on the Board

The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum are governed by committed trustees with a broad range and depth of experience. Following the end of Mike Mintram's term of office, our new Chair is Neil Sachdev. Neil has been awarded an MBE for his work in energy efficiency and sustainability. Our new members of the Board of Trustees bring experience from The National Trust and, our neighbours, Highgrove Enterprises.

These new appointments bring diverse skills and experience at an exciting time for both The Friends and the arboretum, supporting a strong and successful future. Working with Forestry England to deliver our shared vision, the Board of Trustees and Chair are supporting the CEO to develop a new 3-year strategy.



New Chair: Neil Sachdev MBE

Neil has broad experience in climate change, sustainability, change management, strategy and corporate governance. He currently serves in a number of roles: Chair of the HM Land Registry Board, Chair of the East West Railway Company and Chair of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation Board for the Ministry of Defence. Previously, Neil was the Group Property Director of Sainsbury's and Tesco's Board Director responsible for UK property and operations. He has an MBA from Stirling University.

“ I am delighted to be taking up the role of Chair, at the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum. The arboretum has been one of my favourite places to visit for many years and I'm looking forward to seeing what we can achieve through my tenure and work with The Friends staff, Board and Forestry England. It's an important time globally for tree conservation and managing the impact of climate change on the environment. The arboretum plays an important role in all our futures. ”

New Trustees:

Nigel has extensive experience in retail and visitor attractions. He is currently Head of Merchandising and Supply Chain for Highgrove Enterprises, previously acting as CEO. Prior to this, Nigel held the positions of Merchandise Manager then Business Change Manager at English Heritage. With his extensive retail and visitor attraction experience, Nigel will be a great support to the development of the Westonbirt Shop, as well as other areas of the charity.

Nigel Frost



“ With my 30 years of retail experience, I look forward to contributing to The Friends' success by helping to improve the retail experience and sales growth. ”

Christian Walker



Christian is the General Manager of the National Trust's West Oxfordshire Portfolio comprising the Buscot and Coleshill Estate; Chastleton House; Uffington White Horse Hill; Ashdown Estate and other properties. He previously served as North Worcestershire General Manager, comprised of Hanbury Hall, Greyfriars, Knowles Mill, Rosedene and as Operations Manager at Coughton Court and Croome Park.

Before joining the National Trust, Christian worked for a rural consultancy, advising on the adaptive re-use of redundant land and buildings, typically on farms and estates across the UK, and for a consultancy working on restoration projects of historic buildings and landscapes. Christian will be a great support to the development of operations and other areas of the charity's work.

“ I am delighted to become a trustee to support such a special place. As a landscape architect managing estates for the National Trust, I'm keen to use my experience to help the team broaden the connections and impact of the arboretum. I'm looking forward to seeing the expansion and development of a diverse membership alongside the wider promotion and protection of Westonbirt Arboretum. ”



Silk Wood Community Planting Project is underway

You may have noticed some changes to the landscape of Silk Wood. At the heart of this ancient woodland, an exciting endeavour is unfolding. Part funded by The Friends, the Silk Wood Community Planting Project is designed to regenerate areas of clear-felled ash to create Westonbirt's first community woodland.



Oscar Adams, Project Manager, Silk Wood Community Planting Project

The story began in 2015, when an outbreak of Chalara ash dieback hit the arboretum. The difficult decision was subsequently made to remove 5,000 mature ash trees within Silk Wood. The felling was unprecedented in the arboretum's history and left behind swathes of bare land where the ash trees once stood.



Credit: Ally Whaley

The felling was completed in 2021 and the area was left fallow for two years. In line with Westonbirt's 10-year vision, 'to be a world leader in trees, inspiring people through education, participation and conservation', the decision was made to use the felled site as an opportunity to engage schools, community groups and volunteers in an ambitious three-year replanting project. The project will involve participants in every stage of the regeneration process, from designing and planting to monitoring and management.

A visit to Delamere Nursery, which supplies the whole Forestry England estate, was an important step in the project planning. The visit gave us a clear insight into the future life and resilience of trees that have been selected for planting. Trees that could be standing at Westonbirt for centuries to come.

Initial groundwork began with a comprehensive baseline floral survey of the first area to be planted. The survey was completed by a team of brave volunteers amidst the dense and unforgiving undergrowth!

As an important part of the project, we involved the community with the design of the woodland. Woodland design workshops were delivered to over 200 pupils at schools in Gloucester, Bristol, Cirencester and the local area. The workshops taught children about trees and forestry. They were then given the opportunity to present their ideas for the community woodland. Some of these ideas are being used to inform the final design.

In October 2023, a forestry mulcher cleared the vegetation in the first area to be planted. We wouldn't usually clear areas so thoroughly, but it was necessary to provide accessibility for the groups we are involving.

Tuesday 07 November 2023 was an exciting milestone for the project, our first day of tree planting! 42 Small-leaved limes were planted by employees of MillerKnoll, a funder for the project. These trees are being protected with cardboard tree guards, one of five different styles of biodegradable tube we are testing.





The Friends will continue to support fundraising efforts for the Silk Wood Community Planting Project over the next couple of years. We have successfully raised the majority of funding required for the first year externally, and are grateful to have received generous grants from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The John Horseman Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, MillerKnoll, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust and Gloucestershire County Council.

We look forward to sharing updates about the ground-clearing and planting activities with community groups over the rest of the year.

Visit The Friends blog for updates fowa.org.uk/blog



During the survey, a total of 84 species were recorded:

-  2 ferns,
-  15 grasses/sedges/rushes,
-  11 woody plants,
-  56 herbs.



Lime planting.

Credit: Helen Chick



Limes ready for planting.

Credit: Nia Crouch

Leave a beautiful legacy

the friends
of Westonbirt
Arboretum

the
Goodwill
Partnership

Whether you want to protect trees or conserve the beautiful National Arboretum, a gift in your will to us is a wonderful legacy for future generations.

The Goodwill Partnership offers Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum members an easy, efficient and FREE will writing service.

With so many conservation and environmental challenges ahead of us, a gift in your will helps to ensure that Westonbirt Arboretum will always be a beautiful place to visit and a pioneer in the protection and conservation of our planet.

▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

To find out more visit fowa.org.uk/free-will or call us on **01492 510 340**



Are your wishes clear?

Free will-writing service

▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

It may surprise you to know that 63% of adults in the UK don't have a will. Some people may think it's too complicated, or perhaps too time consuming, or expensive?

Writing a valid will is the only way to ensure that your wishes are truly met, supporting your loved ones and the causes you care about.

The Goodwill Partnership shares our commitment to preserving the natural world and recognises the invaluable contribution your support makes. If you choose to leave a gift in your will to Westonbirt Arboretum, you'll be leaving a wonderful legacy of beauty and conservation to future generations. Your generosity will help to fund the care of this precious landscape and enable us to expand our educational programmes, conservation efforts, and community outreach.

If you have a will but would like to update it, The Goodwill Partnership can help you write a fresh one, which is often easier than updating an existing will. Alternatively, you can speak to your solicitor about a codicil to amend your current will.

To book an appointment with The Goodwill Partnership visit fowa.org.uk/free-will or call **01492 510 340**
Find out more about leaving a legacy at fowa.org.uk/legacy

Your free will, provided by the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum, applies to simple wills only. Complex wills requiring Property Funds or Discretionary Trusts may incur additional costs. Your Goodwill Partnership representative will alert you of any additional complexities up front so that you can make the best choice to suit your circumstances.

Coming up



Arb Show

Britain's longest running arborist trade show promises a wonderful day out for all those with a passion for trees.

Fri 17 & Sat 18 May

Price: Free after admission



Forest Live

▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

Join us among the trees to hear the best in live music and connect with nature.

Thu 04 Jul: Gregory Porter

Fri 05 Jul: Anne-Marie

Fri 12 Jul: Nile Rodgers & CHIC with special guests Sophie Ellis-Bextor & DECO

More dates and acts to be announced, check the Forestry England website for the latest Forest Live line up.

Guided walks and tours

Westonbirt Guided Walk

Explore the seasonal highlights of Westonbirt's Old Arboretum.

Daily (Apr-Sep), 11am & 2pm

Price: Free after entry

Discovery Walks

Take the path less travelled and delve a little deeper into our captivating trees.

Every 1st and 3rd Sat of the month, 10.30am

Price: Free after entry

Wild Flower Guided Walk

Discover the fascinating world of wild flowers and other flora at Westonbirt Arboretum.

Every 1st Tue of the month (Apr-Sep), 10.30am

Price: Free after entry

Sensing Nature Guided Walk

Let our visually impaired guides lead you through an immersive and interactive sensory experience.

Every Fri of the month (Apr-Sep), 11.30am

Price: Free after entry



▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

Active Forest Events

Nordic Walking with the Nordic Nomad

Join the Nordic Nomad as she teaches you how to Nordic walk.

Every Tue & Wed, 10am - 11.15am

Price: £8.50 pay-as-you-go - must be a member of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum

Westonbirt's May 10K: Run for the Trees

Our annual 10K run through the arboretum in all its spring glory.

Thu 23 May, 7pm

SOLD OUT

Relish Running

Races for everyone, all ages, and abilities. Half Marathon, 10km, 5km and 1 mile fun run at The National Arboretum.

Date Sun 23 Jun, from 8am

Price: Half: £38, 10km: £27, 5km: £22, 1-mile fun run: £7.50

Workshops and courses

Level 3 Forest School Leader Training

Gain skills, experience, and a certified qualification to run your own Forest School programme.

Wed 06 Mar, Wed 20 Mar, Thu 21 Mar, Fri 22 Mar, Wed 10 Apr, 9am-4pm

Price: £950

Failsafe Garden Plants

Gain a good understanding of how to select the right plants for your garden plus top tips to help them flourish.

Wed 20 Mar, 10am-1pm

Price: £90

Willow Sculpture Workshop

Spend a relaxing day crafting and weaving your own willow design.

Sat 23 Mar, Sat 18 May, Sat 15 Jun, Sat 06 Jul, 10am-4pm

Price: £95

Windsor Chair Making Course

Create your very own Windsor chair using traditional skills.

Various dates in 2024, 9am-5pm

Price: £585

Planning Garden Borders

A workshop to provide you with everything you need, including your own drawing kit, to make your own borders bright and beautiful.

Wed 10 Apr, Sat 25 May, 10am-4pm

Price: £140



Two Day Willow Workshop

Enjoy a two-day escape creating something special from willow.

Sat 27 & Sun 28 Apr, 10am–4pm

Price: £180

Introduction to Woodland Management

Learn the main fundamentals of owning, managing and working in a UK woodland.

Sat 27 Apr & Sat 28 Sep, 10am–4pm

Price: £100

Botanical Printmaking

Produce exquisite impressions from the plants around Westonbirt.

Sat 04 May, 10am–1pm

Price: £60

Hand-tied Bouquet Workshop

Relax as you learn a simple florist technique to make a hand-tied bouquet.

Wed 08 May, 10.30am–1pm

Price: £85

Make Space: Nature Collage Workshop

Join local mixed media artist Gemma Pitman for a nature inspired creative workshop.

Sat 11 May, 10am–4pm

Price: £85

Creating Garden Plans Workshop

Find out how professional garden designers create a well thought out garden.

Wed 22 May, 10am–4pm

Price: £140

Spoon Carving

Learn to make a spoon out of a branch from a tree at the lovely Silk Wood Barn.

Sat 25 May, Sat 20 Jul, 10am–4.30pm

Price: Visit the Forestry England website

Beekeeping for Beginners

One day course to introduce the important basics of beekeeping.

Sat 22 Jun, Sun 23 Jun, Sat 20 Jul, Sun 21 Jul, 9.30am–4pm

Price: £80 (£120 for couples/parent with child)

For children and families



▲ Credit: Paul Box

There's No Place Like Home

Find animal homes and try our nest building challenge.

Tue 02 – Fri 05 Apr, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

New Life

Challenges and activities about woodland animal babies.

Tue 09 – Thu 11 Apr, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Discovery Days at the Great Oak Hall – Bioblitz

Join us to survey Westonbirt's wildlife.

Sat 20 & Sun 21 Apr, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Discovery Day at Silk Wood Barn – Camouflaged Creatures

Try our camouflage crafts, quiz, and challenges.

Sat 18 May, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Minibeast Mimics

Explore these clever creatures through tasks and crafts.

Tue 28 – Thu 30 May, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Discovery Day at Silk Wood Barn – Sensory Woodland

Use your senses of scent, touch, and sight to explore.

Sat 15 Jun, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Discovery Day at Silk Wood Barn – Music of Nature

Listen to and create the sounds of nature.

Sat 20 Jul, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Earth – The Art of Mud

Explore mud through art, creative play, and science.

Tue 06 – Thu 08 Aug, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Wind – Blown Away

Design your own seed to disperse on the wind.

Tue 13 – Thu 15 Aug, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Discovery Day at Silk Wood Barn – Fun with Sticks

Microscope discovery, whittling and willow challenges.

Sat 17 Aug, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Find out more

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



▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

Fire – Sunshine and Shadows

Make your own light sensitive paper with Justin Quinnell.

Tue 20 – Thu 22 Aug, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Water – Amazing Journeys

A series of water challenges, science, and play.

Tue 27 – Thu 29 Aug, 10.30am–3.30pm

Price: Free after admission

Home Educated Learning Event for 7–11 year-olds

Join us to explore the science of plant growth on Thu 02 May, and delve into forest food chains on Thu 27 June.

Thu 02 May & Thu 27 Jun, 10am–12pm

Price: £5 per child age 7–11, £3 for younger and older siblings

Tots & Twigs Forest School

Forest School for preschool aged children (2–4 year-olds).

Term time, Mon, Thu & Fri, 10.15–11.45am & 12.30–2pm

Price: Visit the Forestry England website for term prices



The heart of Westonbirt:

A glimpse into our supporter survey

In the summer of 2023, we reached out to you, our supporters, to gain insight into your feelings about Westonbirt. An astounding 1,421 members responded, and your voices painted a heartwarming portrait of our shared passion for this arboreal sanctuary.






A magazine that speaks to the soul

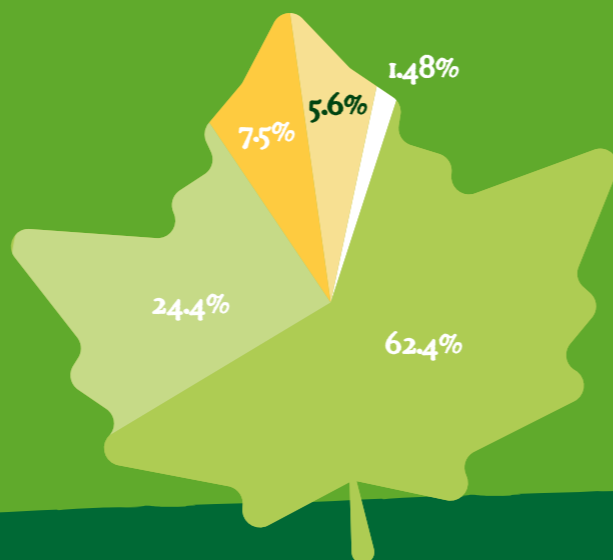
Our Westonbirt Magazine, with its captivating stories, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and stunning imagery, offers a unique window into the arboretum's vibrant heart. And you, our supporters, have embraced this publication with open arms. As an environmentally conscious organisation we will be reaching out to you, our supporters, to get your thoughts on how we can make our magazine greener including reducing paper, waste and our carbon footprint.

Reasons behind your membership

When asked about the reasons behind your membership, your responses echoed the very essence of Westonbirt: A place where nature's symphony plays, where the cares of the world melt away, and where memories are lovingly etched into the bark of time. Most of you cherish the opportunity to visit Westonbirt multiple times a year, seeking solace and rejuvenation. For many, Westonbirt represents a haven of safety, a place where children and grandchildren can freely explore the wonders of nature without fear. Others value Westonbirt as a place of connection, where family and friends gather to share laughter, conversation, and the simple joy of being together.

-  1 To be able to visit multiple times each year
-  2 It's a safe place for my children/grandchildren to explore
-  3 Meet up with family and friends who live nearby
-  4 To support Westonbirt's 10-year vision
-  5 It's a great place to walk my dog(s)
-  6 To support a local charity
-  7 Participate in the family trails and activities
-  8 To spend time alone

-  I enjoy receiving the magazine, browse and flick through it
-  I look forward to receiving the magazine and read it cover to cover
-  I receive the magazine but don't read it
-  I don't receive the magazine
-  No response



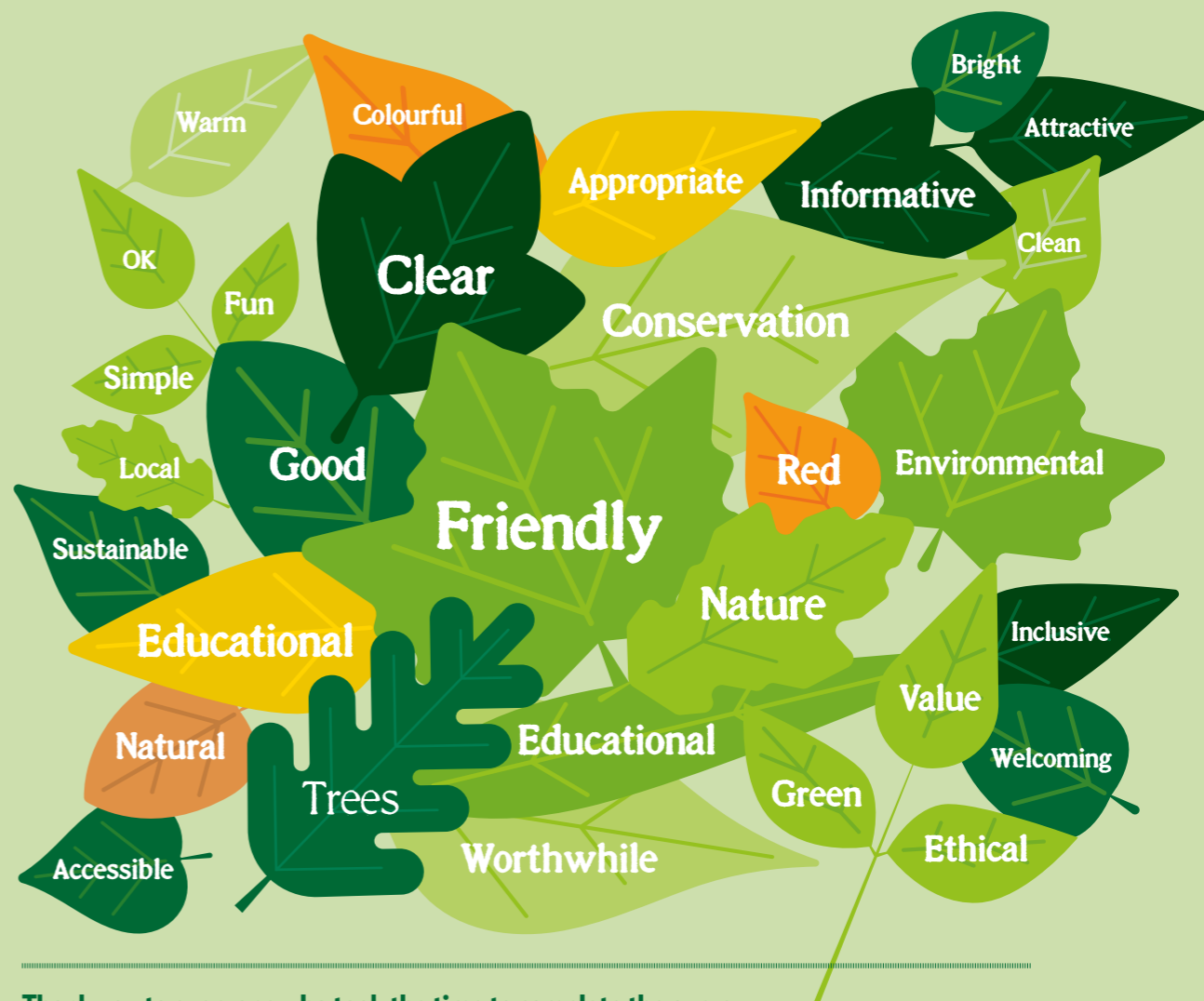
Credit: Johnny Hathaway



Credit: Johnny Hathaway

Words that paint a thousand pictures

We asked you to describe our charity in just three words, and your responses overflowed with love and admiration. Words like "friendly," "worthwhile," and "environmental" that echo our own sentiments.



Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the survey. We appreciate your insights and we will continue to use your feedback to support our work.

Membership benefits

As your Westonbirt story continues through membership, your support will help enable the arboretum to thrive. In return for your loyalty, we are delighted to offer you these fantastic benefits:



Visit Westonbirt Arboretum all year round!
(except Christmas Day)



Kids go free! Bring up to 4 of your own children or grandchildren free of charge (age 18 and under)



Family activities in school holidays



10% off at the Westonbirt Arboretum Shop
Simply show your valid membership card when making your purchase.



Behind the scenes Westonbirt Magazine and regular Friends' eNews (opt in to receive our eNews by emailing membership@fowa.org.uk)



Earlybird pre-sale for Christmas at Westonbirt and Forest Live concerts

Please pre-book your free time slot to guarantee your entry on these key dates:

Autumn – Tuesday 01 October – Sunday 17 November 2024

Christmas – Saturday 21 December 2024 – Wednesday 01 January 2025

Time slots are released 7 days in advance and can be booked online at fowa.org.uk/prebook or by phone on **0300 068 0400** between Monday–Friday, 09.00–17.00. Pre-booking is also available year-round.



Partner gardens

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

Visit for free:

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

Receive 2 for 1 entry into:

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Richmond, Surrey kew.org

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

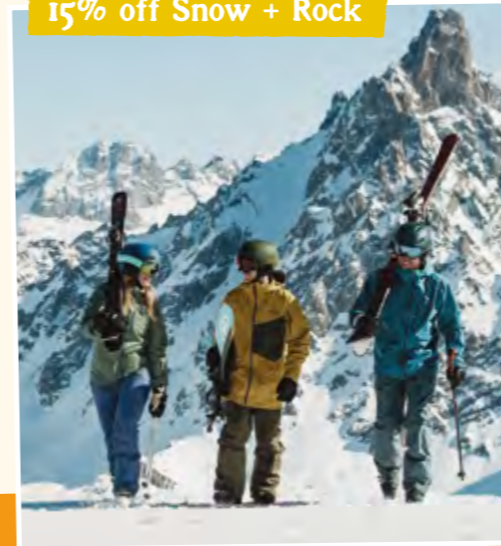
Please check the partner garden's website ahead of visiting, as you might be required to pre-book to visit.

15% off Runners Need



Visit the running specialists and present your membership card in-store, or shop online at runnersneed.com with discount code **AF-FOWA-M1**. Valid until 30 September 2024 (T&Cs Apply).

15% off Snow + Rock



Huge range of ski, snow and climbing clothing and equipment from the world's best brands. Shop in-store with your membership card, or online at snowandrock.com with discount code **AF-FOWA-M1**. Valid until 30 September 2024 (T&Cs Apply).

Local partner discounts

15% off at Cotswold Outdoor

Get expert advice and the best brands in-store with your membership card, or shop online at cotswoldoutdoor.com with discount code **AF-FOWA-M1**. Valid until 30 September 2024 (T&Cs Apply).



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 **GAARB24** until 31 December 2024. Excludes Saturdays.

Visit our website for full details at fowa.org.uk/membership-benefits

Meet Westonbirt's Retail Manager

Graham Edmonds, Retail & Buying Manager, Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum

Having moved from Guildford, I've lived locally for 25 years with my partner Michaela and our rescue cat, Kitkat. Westonbirt Arboretum has been one of our favourite haunts from the moment we moved here.

Westonbirt is a special place for me. During lockdown the arboretum was an absolute lifesaver. I walked here every day, even if the weather was terrible, it made such a positive difference and helped me through that tough time.

During my career I've worked for WH Smith for many years, mainly as a buyer, especially for books and for airport shops. I became a director of Ottakars the bookseller, before finally leaving the book industry in 2006.

With my partner we started a business called Shruti Designs, which was a gift, home and fashion wholesale business. We sold the business in 2018. After a period of semi-retirement, I decided to get back on the work wagon and managed the Cotswolds Dog & Cats Home shop in Tetbury where I fell in love with retail again. When the Westonbirt job came up, it was too good an opportunity to miss!

Outside work, I love nature, walking and photography. I also love to write. I've had a dozen books published, the last one being Wild Orchids of the Cotswolds. If I'm not in the shop I'll be out in the arboretum looking for Broad-leaved helleborine and Common spotted orchids!

Check out the shop on your next visit. Every penny of profit made helps keep Westonbirt Arboretum thriving.



Graham enjoys nature, walking and photography.

Our new Green Woodworking Shelter



Thanks to funding from The Friends, we have created a Green Woodworking Shelter. It's another unique piece of architecture that complements the Community Shelter, providing more all-weather workspace for our community groups.

Neil Seegobin, Project Manager, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum

Completed in September 2023, the shelter provides a space for green woodworking and storing equipment, such as pole lathes and shave horses. Architect, Piers Taylor, from Invisible Studio, designed the shelter. His brief was to ensure: 'it complements the architectural form of the Community Shelter and provides a practical space.' The design was brought to life by contractors Pearce+, who built the shelter in just six weeks.

The design is a stunning 'organically shaped' green oak frame shelter with an unusual triangular footprint and an aluminium dome-shaped roof. The shelter is supported by six oak legs connected to a triangular support beam, that in turn support over 85 individually shaped oak poles. The roof is covered by over 275 aluminium discs that are connected to the poles by individual bolts and over 2,250 rivets. Open on all sides, the shelter has one lower overhanging side to protect against prevailing weather.

The structure has been sustainably constructed using Westonbirt oak that was milled onsite. The aluminium discs are also recyclable and reflect the light back into the internal space.

Co-funded by The Friends and Forestry England, the Green Woodworking Shelter is a unique asset to the arboretum.



Community group volunteers using pole lathes.



Aluminium dome-shaped roof.




Initial designs for this unique piece of architecture.



85 individually shaped Westonbirt oak poles in the roof.



 **Boosting the skills and wellbeing of diverse community groups** ▲ Credit: Mandy Leivers

“I’d like to invite you to take a deep breath in through your nose, hold the breath and then breathe out slowly through pursed lips.” This is how most of the Community Programme sessions begin at Westonbirt Arboretum.

Mandy Leivers, Community Coordinator, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum



Westonbirt Arboretum’s Community Programme works with a diverse range of groups to support positive mental health and wellbeing. Our activities enable participants to connect with nature and enjoy all the wonderful therapeutic benefits that Westonbirt has to offer.

In 2023 almost 800 people took part in the programme and a further 315 people came on group self-led visits through the Community Access Scheme. This scheme enables groups, who would otherwise face barriers to

visiting the arboretum, to enjoy all the wellbeing and mental health benefits at a reduced rate.

Most of the Community Programme activities take place at the Community Shelter and new Green Woodworking Shelter. The Wild Westonbirt youth group is one such programme, where 14 to 18 year-olds enjoy practical conservation tasks, woodland crafts, wildlife watching and campfire cook-ups. This helps them to build confidence and make friends, whilst boosting their mental health and wellbeing.

“ It was an amazing experience and I learnt so many new skills. I enjoyed the meals we had, being there to see the new growth in the coppice area and seeing how we have made a difference to the community shelter was really great. ”

Wild Westonbirt participant

During the summer, we held a weekend camp for young people from Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group, in partnership with Creative Sustainability. It was a fun-packed weekend with a tour of Silk Wood, a wellbeing walk, a moth trapping event, and the opportunity to connect and relax with other young people.



“ Having exclusive access to camp in Westonbirt was very exciting and special for the young people. Some young people had additional needs or are marginalised and socially isolated. One of the things they liked most was talking to new people and building relationships. They can’t wait to come back again! ”

Group leader

Working with Bridges for Communities and Ashley Community Housing we also hosted visits with asylum seekers and refugees. So far, 126 adults and children have been welcomed to Westonbirt from a range of countries, including: Afghanistan, Albania, Cameroon, Hong Kong, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Pakistan and Ukraine.



These visitors revealed that they can feel isolated and stressed by their uncertain situation. Guided walks through the arboretum gave them the chance to be in the open air and experience the benefits of being in nature whilst connecting with others and having some fun. All of which meet the aims of our Community Programme!





Tree highlights in spring and summer

With the arrival of spring, the trees of the arboretum enter a period of growth and reproduction that continues through the summer. It's a fantastic time to come and enjoy the wonderful colours and beautiful flowers and foliage on display. Why not pull-out this section and bring it along as a guide.

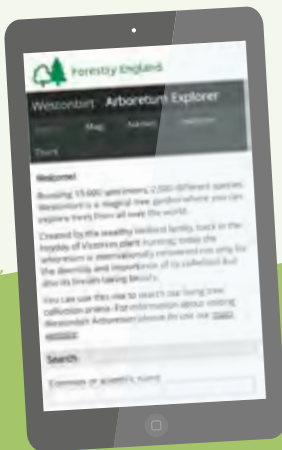
Seasonal map

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 trees easier. If you would like a copy of the full map, pick one up on your next visit from the Welcome Building.

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



Use our Arboretum Explorer

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

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

Tree guide

Spring

- Judas tree: *Cercis siliquastrum*
- ★ Dawson's magnolia: *Magnolia dawsoniana*
- Winter hazel: *Corylopsis sinensis*
- Foxglove tree: *Paulownia tomentosa*
- ★ Sargent's cherry: *Prunus sargentii*

Summer

- Vine-leaved maple: *Acer cissifolium*
- Rehder wingnut: *Pterocarya x rehderiana*
- ★ Chilean firebush: *Embothrium coccineum*
- ★ Manna ash: *Fraxinus ornus*
- Copper beech cultivar: *Fagus sylvatica 'Riversii'*



Judas tree: *Cercis siliquastrum*



Winter hazel: *Corylopsis sinensis*
Flowering before many of our showier blooms here at Westonbirt, allows its delicate fragrant flowers, held in elegant trailing racemes (flower clusters), to take centre-stage.



Rehder wingnut: *Pterocarya x rehderiana*

Dawson's magnolia: *Magnolia dawsoniana*
Magnolias evolved around 95 million years ago, when dinosaurs walked the earth and before bees existed. The flower reflects this ancient origin, with tough carpals (the female reproductive part), which can withstand munching from beetles, their original pollinator.



Credit: Mike Westgate



Credit: Sara Smith

Chilean firebush: *Embothrium coccineum*



Foxglove tree:
Paulownia tomentosa



Manna ash:
Fraxinus ornus



Credit: Ally Whaley

Vine-leaved maple:
Acer cissifolium



Credit: Dan Crowley



Credit: Ally Whaley

Sargent's cherry:
Prunus sargentii

Spring highlights

● Judas tree:
Cercis siliquastrum

Believe it or not, this beautiful sun-loving tree is related to our garden peas and beans. Before green, kidney-shaped leaves emerge in spring, its branches are swathed in masses of pink flowers. In its native range of the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia, these pea-like flowers are used in salads, enjoyed for their mildly acidic flavour. Later in the season, decorative purple pods develop and dangle from the tree.

★ Dawson's magnolia:
Magnolia dawsoniana

Endangered in its natural habitats, in Western Hunan and Central Sichuan, China, this species has sadly fallen victim to illegal logging and deforestation. Dawson's magnolia is also rare in cultivation, which is a shame as this stunning tree is covered in abundant lightly scented, blushing pink flowers in April – May.

● Winter hazel:
Corylopsis sinensis

Despite being called winter hazel, early spring is typically the best time to admire the elegant, pale-yellow flowers of this small tree or shrub from Central and Western China.

● Foxglove tree:
Paulownia tomentosa

It's easy to see why this species' common name is the foxglove tree; as around May, lilac, trumpet-shaped flowers cover this glorious showstopper. Beautiful flowerheads are followed by attractive heart-shaped foliage. When *Paulownia tomentosa* is coppiced, it produces huge leaves which are prized by some gardeners for their tropical look. Invasive in parts of the US, it is so fast growing that it is now being trialled as a future forestry tree here in the UK.

★ Sargent's cherry:
Prunus sargentii

Native to northern Japan and Sakhalin Island, Sargent's cherry is a superb species if you're looking for a profusion of spring blossom. Swathed in single pink flowers in April, blooms are followed by fresh, reddish bronze foliage which soon turn green. This species also looks spectacular in autumn, with the leaves turning blazing shades of oranges and reds in late September – early October.



Credit: Ally Whaley

Summer highlights

● Vine-leaved maple: *Acer cissifolium*

This unusual *Acer* from Japan, is one of the few maples with compound leaves. The foliage inspired the latin name *cissifolium*, which comes from its resemblance to the leaves of some vines in the *Cissus* genus. The yellow flowers are minute and can be easily missed but are followed by winged samaras (winged seed cases) which are an attractive shade of pink and hang in long racemes (flower cluster) towards the end of spring and into summer.

● Rehder wingnut:
Pterocarya x rehderiana

The Rehder wingnut is a hybrid between *P. stenoptera*, the Chinese wingnut and *P. fraxinifolia*, the Caucasian wingnut. In late summer, winged fruits in long catkins look spectacular draping from the tree. As a member of the walnut family, the wingnuts make up part of our National Collection of Juglandaceae, which are also represented by the hickories and the walnuts.

★ Chilean firebush:
Embothrium coccineum

In June, look out for the exotic scarlet flowers of this shrub and small tree from Chile and Argentina. Hummingbirds are an important pollinator in their natural range, although a range of insects and birds also visit their flowers. They have 'proteoid roots' (clusters of rootlets), which allow the plant to take up nutrients that are inaccessible to other species.

★ Manna ash: *Fraxinus ornus*

This native of Southern Europe and Asia Minor is a popular ornamental specimen tree. In late spring to early summer, the tree is covered in a flurry of fine, creamy-white flowers. The stems can be tapped for their sap, which crystallises into manna sugar. In fact, the sugar mannose derives its name from the tree. Of the three European ash species, it appears to be the least affected by ash dieback.

● Copper beech cultivar:
Fagus sylvatica 'Riversii'

Described as the best of the copper beeches, this spectacular specimen tree needs plenty of space to reach its true stately form. It has large, serrated leaves which emerge a wine-red and mature to a deep, vibrant, rich purple in summer. In autumn they turn a magnificent shade of copper.

Copper beech cultivar: *Fagus sylvatica 'Riversii'*



Credit: Rosie Anderson

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

Westonbirt springs into life



Ross Martin,
Wildlife and
Conservation
Ranger, Forestry
England, Westonbirt Arboretum

The cold, dark days of winter are gone and spring is well underway within the arboretum, signalled by the sound of songbirds and the sight of newborn wildlife.

Westonbirt's landscape provides a wonderful habitat and ecosystem for an abundance of fauna and flora. Radiant colours and fragrant aromas of early spring flowers, blossom and budding trees herald the beginning of new life for all sorts of wildlife including insects, bees and butterflies.

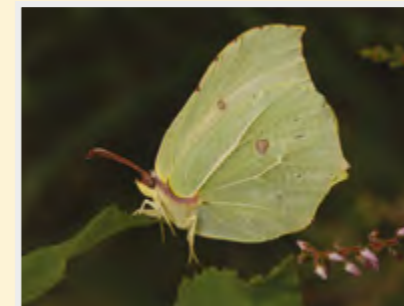
Roe deer: Reside in both Silk Wood and the Old Arboretum. They give birth to their fawns, usually twins, in May. Prior to giving birth, the doe will force her yearlings from the previous year out to find their own territory, known as 'pushing out'. There will be a high number of vulnerable newborn and juvenile deer moving within the arboretum during spring. If you do find a newborn fawn, please do not touch it. If you are walking your dog, please keep them within sight and ensure your dog has good recall.



Bees: The Early bumblebee is one of the smallest and most attractive bumble bees. It has a bright orange tail and yellow bands on its body and can be found throughout the arboretum in early spring.



Butterfly: The Brimstone is a fairly large, pale-yellow butterfly, with distinctive, leaf-shaped wings. Most common in spring, usually seen in ones or twos, they can be found in sheltered parts of Silk Wood and along sunny, woodland rides and mature hedgerows.



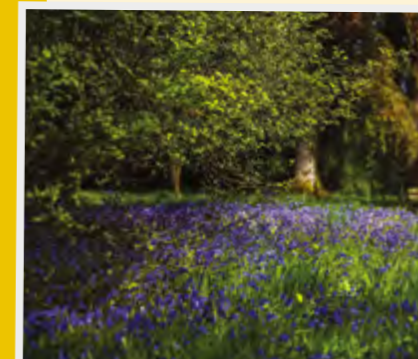
Cuckoo: The Cuckoo is well known for its iconic sound, heard last spring in the coppice area next to the Tree Top Walkway. Only



visiting the UK briefly, cuckoos arrive from late March or early April and leave in July or August to winter in central Africa. Juveniles can be seen from late May.

Cuckoos are brood parasites and lay their eggs in the nests of other birds including Reed warblers, Meadow pipits, Robins and Dunnocks.

Bluebells: The beautiful blue-purple hues and distinctive smell of a carpet of bluebells, is a well-loved sight in Silk Wood, particularly around Cherry Glade.



Bluebells are an important source of nectar for many invertebrates including bees, hoverflies and butterflies.

Wild garlic: Flowers in late spring throughout the arboretum, easily found in Silk Wood. It is an important early bloom for bees and other insects that pollinate wild garlic. As an 'ancient-woodland-indicator' plant, seeing it indicates that you're standing in a rare and special habitat.



By continuing to care for the arboretum we are also sustaining a **vital haven for a vast range of wildlife that calls this special place home.**



FAMILY FUN!

Westonbirt's explorer challenge

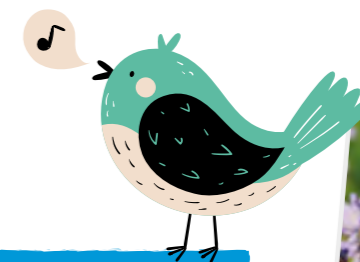
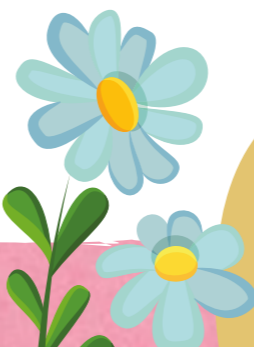
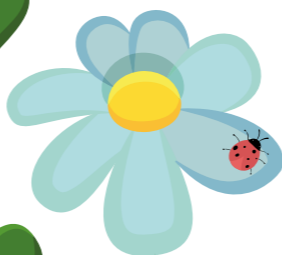
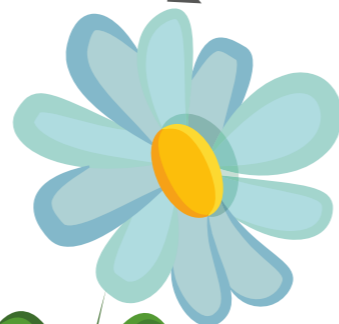
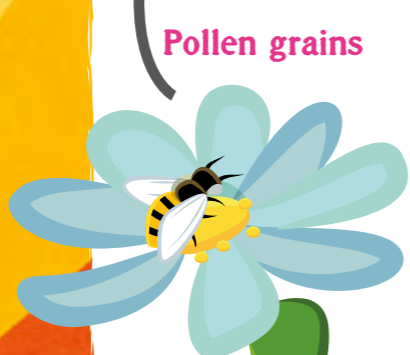
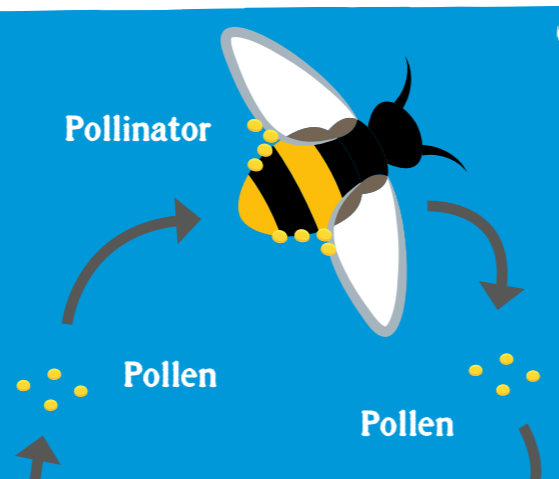
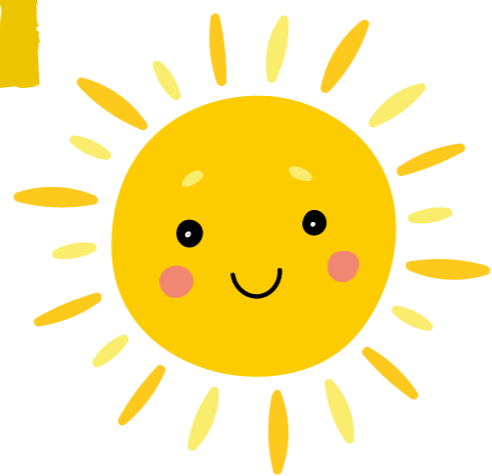
It's time to get your detective's hat on and see if you can complete our explorer challenge!

Colours of the rainbow

Can you match each colour to something you find at Westonbirt?

Spring and summer is the time when trees and other plants are at their most colourful, attracting bees and other insects to pollinate them. By visiting flowers, bees carry pollen from the male anther of a flower to the female stigma. This allows plants to produce seeds that will grow and flourish.

Colour spotter



Singing in spring & summer

This is a time of year when birds are in full song to find a mate and announce their territory.

Can you hear three different bird songs in the woods today?



Tortoiseshell butterfly

Butterfly detecting

Can you spot a butterfly somewhere in the arboretum?

After spending the winter as an egg, larva, chrysalis or hibernating as adults, butterflies come out to enjoy the warmer weather. There are many types of butterfly, here are a few you might spot: Red admiral, Peacock and Tortoiseshell.



Red admiral

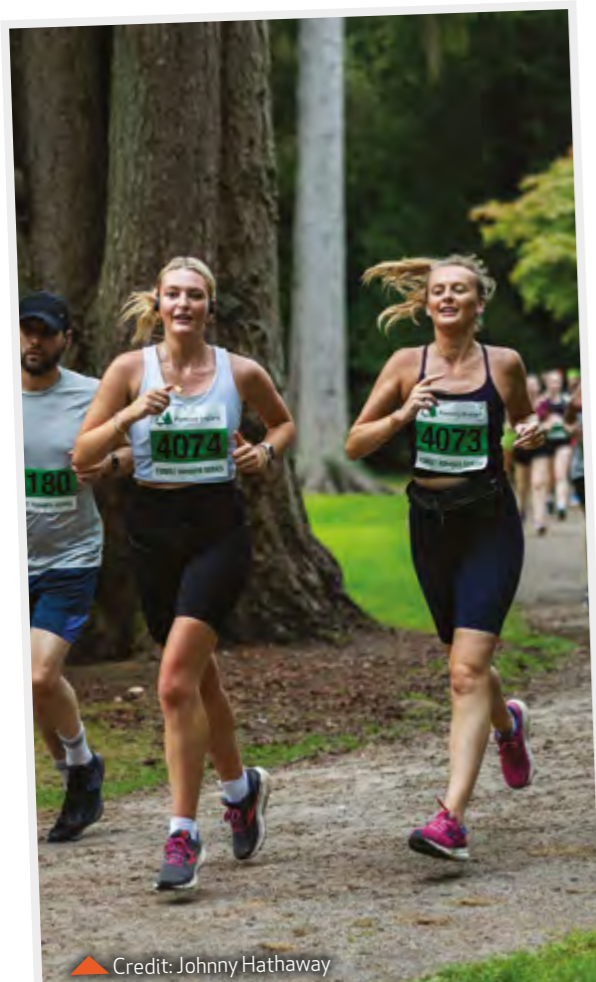
Insect inspector

It's a busy time of year for insects looking for food and preparing for a new generation before the season is out.

Insects are very important to our planet, so we must be careful not to harm them but can you find five different insects on your visit? Look out for ladybirds, peek under logs for beetles and other creepy crawlies and look around tree trunks for ants.



Peacock butterfly



Credit: Johnny Hathaway

Run for the Trees 2024

The Westonbirt annual 10k will be taking place on 23 May this year. We have a team of enthusiastic runners, who are passionate about the arboretum and will each raise £250 in support of our work at Westonbirt.

If you are running the 10k and are interested in raising funds for the arboretum we'd love you to set up your own JustGiving fundraising page. You can find out more on our website fowa.org.uk/RunForTheTrees

Harry wins woodwork award



Heritage crafts co-chairs – David Clarke and Jay Blades, Repair Shop TV Presenter.

Credit: @stefanoboski

Harry Morris, furniture maker, restorer and tutor at Westonbirt Woodworks has won the Young Woodworker of the Year award 2023 for an outstanding start to his woodworking career.

Harry was invited to attend the Heritage Crafts Annual Awards event, sponsored by Axminster Tools and The Royal Mint at Windsor Castle last November alongside peers from the heritage crafts sector.

Harry said

“It was an emotional day, my brother joined me, we watched some amazing people receiving recognition of their contributions to their crafts. They’re an inspiring and supportive bunch of people. I’m going to use the £1,000 prize money to print my book: *Woodworking with hand tools.*”

Limited numbers of the book are available at: www.htmorris.com/booklet

Visitors to the arboretum are welcome to visit the woodworks to watch Harry and others practice the traditional craft of Windsor chair making whenever they’re running courses, or visit the Westonbirt Woodworks Shop any Saturday.

Funding for sustainability improvement works

In December 2023, Forestry England heard that their bid to secure funding from Defra (Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs) had been successful, enabling Westonbirt’s Capital Investments team to invest £138,000 of the awarded funds in more net zero 2030 improvements. Planning was then able to go ahead to complete a detailed feasibility to install solar panels on some of the largest building roofs on site, possibly including the Welcome Building and Tree Management Centre.

These funds will also go towards sourcing new waste bins. These will include more dog waste bins and a greater range of recycling bins for specific materials in visitor areas, rather like the variety of recycling bins we use at home. These improvements will action findings from a recent waste and recycling audit carried out at Westonbirt Arboretum.



Read more about the work we have been doing to make Westonbirt as green as possible on page 46.

Grand fir poem



View from the top of a Grand fir tree.

Westonbirt’s tallest tree, a Grand fir, now has it’s own poem. Kindly written by one of the arboretum’s lovely volunteers – Alan Connor.

Abe

Standing tall and proud,
head and shoulders above the crowd.
Presence and poise,
without creating noise.
The benchmark set by a family member,
holding the trophy aloft, no sign of surrender.
Patience is key in gaining the throne,
working to achieve the ultimate goal.
Then in 2023 the opportunity was to arrive,
as the forester with the measure headed up the drive.
Over and over, check and review,
finally the record comes into view.
Measurement suggests,
the pretender is pushing,
one hundred plus years,
striving for that crown,
At last recognition,
443 metres confirmed.
Tallest tree in the collection,
in Westonbirt.

Wild Wonder at Westonbirt

Our fabulous children's book festival

In September Westonbirt Arboretum hosted a three-day children's literature festival that aimed to engage, inspire and educate children through books, drawing and storytelling themed around nature.

It was a wonderful event, with some of the biggest names in children's literature attending. Jacqueline Wilson, Ben Miller, Philippa Forrester and even the Gruffalo took to the stage to share magical stories set in the natural world around us.

The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum kindly supported the event with a grant that provided free event admission to disadvantaged groups. This enabled those who might otherwise have been unable to attend, often due to cost, to enjoy these magical few days. Thanks to The Friends, children came to the arboretum with their families and were able to make the most of the festival as well as exploring all the attractions of the arboretum.

There was something for everyone to enjoy, from drawing lessons and storytelling to guided walks and talks around the arboretum.

Each child was given a £10 voucher to spend on books in the Westonbirt Shop, allowing them to continue enjoying reading after the event.

The feedback we received from the event was overwhelmingly positive. Our event volunteers commented on how many children left Westonbirt with smiles on their faces, having been energised and inspired by the experience.



Having plenty of books in a home has been shown to enhance both the enjoyment of, and confidence in, reading. **According to a survey by the National Literary Trust, 32.6% of children and young people with fewer than 10 books at home said they enjoy reading compared with 61.4% of those with 50 or more books at home.**



Leaves of life



A wonderful gift, a beautiful memory

Add your leaf of life to our beautiful sculpture that stands in the Great Oak Hall. Each leaf carries a unique message, often commemorating special events or in celebration or memory of a loved one.

A personalised leaf requires a one-off donation of £280. The money raised helps to fund the essential work of the arboretum for the enjoyment of future generations.

Donate a leaf of life for someone special today.

Make your leaves of life donation by visiting
fowa.org.uk/memory





Access to Nature

Equal opportunities for people to engage with the natural environment

For many people living with a disability or mental health problem, there can be significant barriers to gaining access to nature.

In response to these challenges, the Barnwood Trust, The Friends and several other environmental organisations including Forestry England, WWT Slimbridge, Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership and the National Trust, are working together to better understand these barriers in order to improve access to nature in Gloucestershire.

Barnwood Trust work to improve conditions for disabled people and those with mental health conditions in Gloucestershire. In partnership with The Friends and other green organisations, Barnwood Trust have formed an Access to Nature Learning programme. The programme is designed to assess and understand the issues people face by listening to those who live with these experiences, and also by connecting with experts to share good practice.

In September 2023, The Friends hosted a gathering of the Access to Nature participants at Westonbirt Arboretum. The day included a walk around the site to consider some of the accessibility standards. Discussions included possible future developments and a review of the benefits the tramper mobility scooters and site shuttle bus bring. These vehicles were funded by The Friends, thanks to members.

A 2022 national survey by EuansGuide.com, the disabled access review website seeking views on access for disabled people found that **74% of respondents had to change their plans because of poor accessibility.**

Access to Nature is extremely important for physical and mental health. Unfortunately, there is considerable inequality to accessing outdoor space, not only for those living with a disability or mental health problem but also for people with protected characteristics, who may feel restricted by things like age, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

Access isn't just about the physical environment like gates or steep paths, it also considers factors such as access to transport, language used on websites, and a supportive welcome on arrival.

The Access to Nature programme aims to improve accessibility and inclusion across the county, so everyone can enjoy the countryside and take advantage of the benefits nature has on our wellbeing. Through the programme, the organisations have been learning about legal access requirements, improving good or best practices, and positively changing organisational thinking and behaviour.

The network has been hearing first-hand from people with lived experience of protected characteristics and have identified the challenges faced by the whole sector. Their pioneering county-wide approach is something that they were asked to present at the National Outdoor Recreation Network Conference with the hope that others will follow in their footsteps.

We're looking forward to sharing more about improving accessibility at Westonbirt Arboretum and Gloucestershire in the future as Access to Nature continues to develop.

Find our more at barnwoodtrust.org or scan the code to watch the short video documentary.



Sensory guided walk.

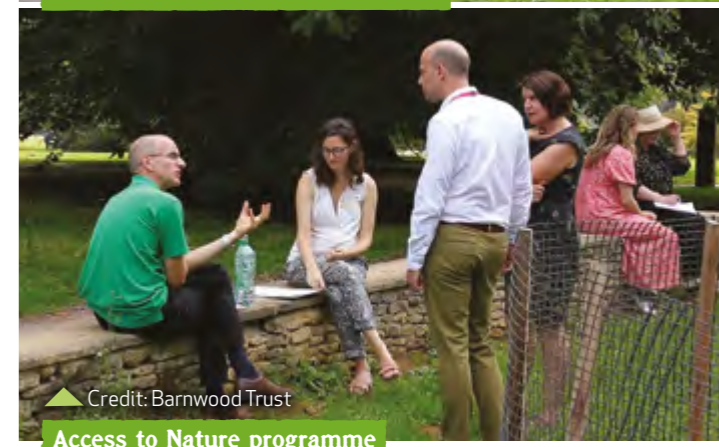


Credit: Barnwood Trust

Access to Nature programme participants meeting in the Great Oak Hall.



Westonbirt Arboretum shuttle bus.



Credit: Barnwood Trust

Access to Nature programme participants at Westonbirt.



Credit: Barnwood Trust

The Friends' Quiz

Well done to everyone who had a go at the quiz in the previous issue of the magazine.

We encourage you to don some stout shoes and make your way into the arboretum to find some of the answers.

This quiz has been devised by Malcolm Potter and fellow volunteers Alan, Liz, Pauline, Helen and Sue.

We hope that you will have a go at all the questions, send your answers to us and if all are correct you will see your name in print in the next edition. Why not team up with family and friends and make a game of it by looking for clues in your favourite part of the arboretum on your next visit.

This issue we are giving away a complimentary annual membership subscription to the first person who emails in all the correct answers to magazine@fowa.org.uk

We have grouped the questions geographically:

1 The Old Arboretum

2 Silk Wood

3 The Downs and around

Arboretum Explorer is available to help you locate individual trees, plants and facts.



Simply scan this QR code to access Arboretum Explorer or visit westonbirt.arboretumexplorer.org

HINT: Be warned, not all answers can be Googled!

The Old Arboretum

1. There is a group of trees in Holford Glade that were planted to commemorate a particular event. What are these trees?

- a. Scots pine
- b. Monkey puzzle
- c. Holford pine

2. This cone is very distinctive and easily recognised by the three-pronged bracts that look like the lower half of a mouse. There is a group of three of these lovely trees not far from Duke's Cut. Can you name the tree?

- a. Sitka spruce
- b. Black pine
- c. Douglas fir



3. There is a large spreading tree located near Pool Gate. It gets its name from the description of a handy metal fixing. What is it?

- a. Wingnut
- b. Acorn nut
- c. Butterfly nut

4. The Dew Pond, also near Pool Gate, is typical of such historic dew ponds all over the country. Metal detectorists sometimes explore them looking for:

- a. Gold coins thrown into the water by people making a wish
- b. Historic sheep tags from these animals taking a drink
- c. Metal archaeological remains unearthed when the pool was originally excavated

Silk Wood

5. The arboretum has 29 different types of Alder. Where in Silk Wood will you find the greatest concentration of varieties?

- a. In Green Lane
- b. Under the Tree Top Walkway
- c. Along Waste Drive

6. What is new in Sand Earth (Sections 18/19N)?

- a. Westonbirt's tallest tree
- b. A huge badger set
- c. Part of an exciting new conservation initiative

7. Only 20 good paces along the path south of Gruffalo's Child there is a very rare fruit tree with the name of a place in Devon. What is it?

- a. Apple
- b. Cherry
- c. Pear

8. Westonbirt is home to several species of Violets. Why were Sweet violets once carried in nosebags (small bunches)?

- a. To de-sensitise the nose
- b. To mask unpleasant odours
- c. To revive women suffering from the vapours

The Downs and around

9. One of the plants found on The Downs is Quaking grass. Why is it so called?

- a. When sheep eat it they can get an illness called 'The Shakes'
- b. The flowers tremble in the wind
- c. It was once used to make Quaker Oats

10. A few meters in front of the restaurant there is a large tree which puts on a very fine floral display in late spring. Which of these is it?

- a. Handkerchief tree
- b. Tulip tree
- c. Indian bean tree

11. There is a large circular area at the start of the Tree Top Walkway. What is it for?

- a. Children to let off steam by running in circles
- b. Demonstrate the diameter of a large tree
- c. To show the length of the Tree Top Walkway in coiled rope

12. The Westonbirt shuttle is intended to provide free transport for:

- a. Staff and volunteers
- b. Families with young children only
- c. Anyone

The answers will be published in The Friends' May eNews and will include some associated and interesting facts, a few of which may surprise you!

Don't forget to email your answers to magazine@fowa.org.uk to be in with the chance of winning your next membership subscription for free!

Book review: The Essential Tree Selection Guide

The Essential Tree Selection Guide, published by Filbert Press in association with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Co-written by Henrik Sjöman and Arit Anderson.



Dan Crowley, Tree Conservation Manager, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum

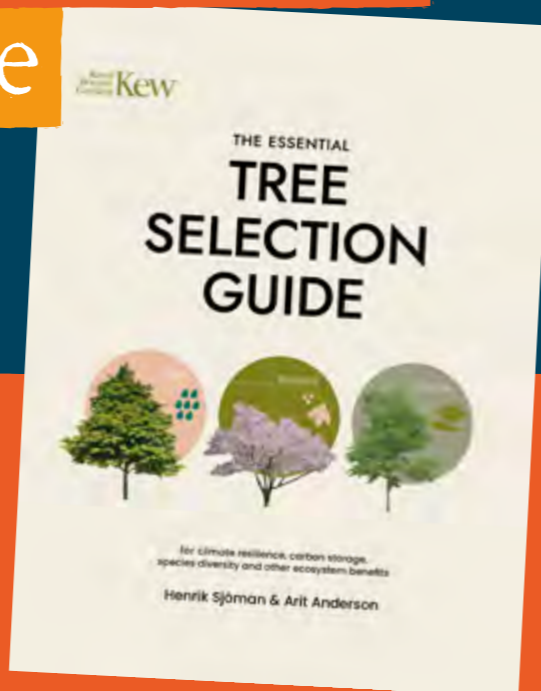
Every now and then, a new tree book comes along that immediately grabs your attention. With the ever-increasing need for a properly informed approach to tree planting, The Essential Tree Selection Guide does just that. Drawing on Sjöman's extensive research, the book provides a modern-day approach to tree selection and is packed with information that will excite anyone with a serious interest in learning more about temperate trees.

A very useable reference, this hefty volume begins with a 'how to use this book' section, outlining the four parts that follow.

Part 1 sets the scene by detailing the benefits of trees, and makes an exploration into the ecosystem services that trees perform.

Part 2 looks at the characteristics of trees which lend them to selection across different (and often challenging) growing conditions.

Part 3 is the largest section – a highly impressive directory of trees. There are more than 500 included here (265 species plus cultivars), chosen for a range of criteria and comprising a mix of coniferous and broadleaved, deciduous trees. Descriptions of each tree are concise, including key attributes and ultimate dimensions.



Authors: Henrik Sjöman is Scientific Curator at Gothenburg Botanical Garden and an Honorary Research Associate at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Arit Anderson is a garden designer, writer and TV presenter.

Part 4 is a reference table, with species arranged alphabetically, allowing selection criteria to be viewed at a glance. The book is furnished with photos throughout, showing trees both in cultivation and the wild.

While the book is principally a guide for those in the business of specifying which trees ought to be planted where, it is also a valuable resource regarding the benefits and importance of trees in different contexts. The information within is research-based and the expertise and wealth of experience of the authors is evident throughout.

If you are after detailed tree information in one place, then look no further. They didn't call it 'essential' for nothing! Available to order from the Westonbirt Shop.

My roots at Westonbirt

Westonbirt Arboretum is such a special place for many reasons, as supporters will know. I was lucky enough to be an integral part of it for 10 years, from 1998-2008, as a Trustee of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum. It was a period of change, transition and growth, that put The Friends on the path to its current standing.

William Leschallas, former Trustee of The Friends

My wife and I moved down to the Cotswolds with our two young sons in 1997 for work related reasons. We are still here today.

A special cluster of trees in Silk Wood holds many happy memories. This is where we used to go for our children's birthday parties. Our party bags were considered somewhat unusual as we rewarded/thanked the parents who joined us with Acer saplings rather than bags full of plastic and chocolate for their children!

My love of trees drew me to Westonbirt, and then to their AGM. It was held at the Royal Agricultural University, which coincidentally is where I work now. I raised a point during that meeting that obviously resonated with those present, as I was invited to meet with the Trustees to discuss becoming one myself. It was an honour and I gladly accepted the position.

The Trustees included John Workman, Henry Elwes and Roger Busby – key people who founded The Friends. They had done a fantastic job and the membership was beginning to grow fast!

During my time on the Board, the Great Oak Hall was built. It was an amazing achievement and a huge amount of thanks is still owed to all those who put so much time, effort and money into making it happen. I became one of the founding directors of Great Oak Hall Ltd and held this post from 2000–2007.



On a recent visit to The Friends exhibition in the Great Oak Hall I had quite a surprise when I saw a photo of myself on the history storyboard standing with the former Duchess of Cornwall. I remember the royal visit to the arboretum well.

I have been thrilled to watch the arboretum and The Friends flourish. Seeing some of the ideas that were in their infancy, when I was in my tenure, come into fruition has made it even more special to me.

As a lecturer at the Royal Agricultural University, I'm keen to see students consider a career in forestry and I'm particularly pleased that The Friends fund trainee apprenticeships which you can read more about on page 44–45.

Women in forestry

We are delighted to have caught up with Caitlin and Naomi, two women who are forging their careers in different aspects of forestry thanks to funding from The Friends.

Meet Caitlin, Trainee Arborist

We caught up with Caitlin mid-way through her year as our Trainee Arborist.

What attracted you to the role?

You need practical qualifications to get into this work but you don't always need a very broad knowledge of tree species and physiology (though you learn a lot on the job!). I wanted to learn more about tree care and conservation, about diseases and how to work for the benefit of trees and their environment.

What sort of work are you doing?

There's such a broad range of work to do as an arborist. Obviously there's tree work but also mowing in the summer, learning to use tools and equipment, nursery care and propagation. I've been helping to sort the seeds from a trip that was made to Taiwan. At the time of this interview it's winter so the seeds are placed in a mix of soil and sand and kept in the fridge. This replicates their natural environment. In the spring they come out for propagation.

What is your experience as a woman working in forestry?

I've had a very positive experience. Initially you might worry that you really need to prove you're capable because it's sometimes perceived as a male environment. But I haven't been made to feel this in any of the places I've worked. I feel comfortable at Westonbirt Arboretum and part of the team.

Do you work with other women in the team?

Yes, I love working with Chrissie, who is one of the climbers, and also with Penny and Nina in propagation. Before working here I hadn't worked with any other



Caitlin, Trainee Arborist, planting a critically endangered Wollemi pine with HRH King Charles III.

women, so I really enjoy having women around me, who share the same passion for trees and conservation.

Would you encourage more women to consider a similar career?

If it interests them, then yes, women shouldn't hesitate to get into the industry. I think it's an amazing world to work in with lots of opportunities and I would encourage anyone to learn more about it.

What do you hope to do in the future?

To work in the conservation of woodland. Forestry England are doing a lot of rewilding work that interests me. Nursery tree care also interests me. I love the sheer range of work we do and I want to keep learning about tree care to help protect and nurture trees in their natural environment.

Meet Naomi, Coppice Apprentice



We caught up with Naomi to find out how she's getting on in the role as Coppice Apprentice.

What interested you in becoming a Coppice Apprentice?

I love the fact that alongside working in the woodland, and taking care of the array of plants, trees and animal life, there is also an array of resources for fuel and beautifully crafted items. I came to the apprenticeship with some understanding of what coppicing is, but not how to do it!

How has it been so far?

The first ten months have been a fantastic immersion into the coppice cycle. Starting in January, I joined in the cutting season, when the hazel, which has matured over seven years, is cut down to stumps, known as 'stools', to produce even better hazel rods over the next seven-year cycle.

What do you hope to achieve from your apprenticeship?

I hope to acquire a working knowledge of the coppice and learn how to restore and manage quality productive hazel and other species to support biodiversity. I also want to master the use of tools to allow me to craft beautiful things and sell these to make a living.



A community group learning about the coppice.

What are some of the challenges you face?

Building up my body's strength and stamina to meet the physically demanding tasks involved in coppice management has been a challenge. Producing enough coppice and craft products to sustain a full livelihood will also prove challenging.

What trees are you most interested in?

The coppice is predominantly hazel, with large 170-year-old oak trees and some ash and willow. I've been learning to create a wide range of products from woods like hazel, oak, ash, birch and holly.

How do you contribute to the sustainable management of the coppice?

We cut the coupes annually across a seven-year cycle, ensuring they can self-seed within the coppice and be protected from damage. I have also been involved in animal and plant surveys.

What are the job's most important qualities?

You need a love of the outdoors, enjoy learning, being active and be willing to practice. When I'm a bit cold, wet and tired, I remind myself how blessed I am to be where I am.

What are you passionate about?

About being part of a movement to bring more land back under coppice management. I am also keen to be involved in promoting coppice as a regenerative management strategy that can support environmental goals.



Westonbirt makes the shortlist for sustainable tourism award

Credit: Johnny Hathaway



There is a team at Westonbirt working on all things green, and we don't just mean the trees!

Sophie Nash, Programme Manager, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum

The Green Team is made up of like-minded staff from Forestry England and The Friends. We all share a passion for sustainability and together we are on a mission to make Westonbirt as green as possible.

From electric usage, waste collection, signage recycling and water consumption, the team work together to come up with ways we can make small improvements that will lead to big changes.

We are constantly working behind the scenes to find new ways to improve the arboretum's sustainability and green credentials, whilst also helping achieve Forestry England's aim to be net zero by 2030.

Significant steps have been taken to date to improve Westonbirt's sustainability, including switching to a Green Energy Tariff, fitting LED light bulbs across site, making sure the food waste is taken to a local anaerobic digester and recycling crisp packets, biscuit wrappers and used pens through a Terracycle collection from the site offices. We have also been testing sustainable signage options to stop interpretation signs going to landfill and we are using a new waste provider to ensure general waste is travelling less miles and reducing the amount of our waste ending up in landfill.

In November 2023, Westonbirt's Green team received a surprise visit from a South West Tourism Awards judge, who was following up our award entry and was eager to find out more about Westonbirt's sustainability measures.

At the time of writing, we are waiting to hear if Westonbirt has won the award for 'Ethical, Responsible, Sustainable Tourism 2023'.

New signage: Discover more about our most iconic trees



Trees are fascinating both for their scientific importance and their social history.

Susanna Bayliss, Interpretation Officer, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum

I have worked here for 11 years and still find it amazing that I can walk past a tree of which there are only a handful left in the wild; or a tree that was once used to treat toothache; or a tree that is sacred for a particular religion.

There are certain trees that capture the imagination of our visitors; big trees, unusual fruits and gnarly bark are but a few tree features that draw the eye and prompt questions!

With funding from The Friends we have produced signs for 40 of our key trees. The signs offer up something for everyone, be it science, folklore, religion, culture or practical uses.

Being careful to consider the heritage landscape, and of course photo opportunities, these signs will offer a more permanent information base for those who are wandering past and interested in learning more about the wonderful Westonbirt trees.

At Westonbirt Arboretum you will find fantastic temporary trails, craft events, discovery days and art exhibitions, offering a wealth of information about trees. You might find out something that surprises you, so be sure to have a read on your next visit!

Western red cedar one of the 40 key tree species.



Example of the new interpretation for our key tree species.





A better place for visitors, dogs and wildlife



Credit: Johnny Hathaway



We love seeing your four legged friends enjoying Westonbirt. Dogs and their walkers are some of our most frequent visitors, one dog walker told us they had visited 350 days in a year!

Ben Oliver, Learning and Participation Manager, Forestry England, Westonbirt Arboretum

Dog owners and walkers provide vital support through their membership or admission, as well as their day-to-day patronage of our other services and facilities, such as our catering and the Westonbirt Shop.

With incidents involving dogs increasing, and the desire to make sure that Westonbirt Arboretum remains a fantastic site for people, wildlife and dogs, we gathered a team of staff and volunteers to ask questions and listen to feedback on all things dog related.

From 21–24 September we held a 'Woofs, Wags and Walkies' event, at which we were able to speak to hundreds of walkers, both with and without dogs, in the arboretum and also through our online survey.

The event feedback has helped us identify some immediate actions we can take, such as adding a dog waste bin on the top corner of Oak Avenue in Silk Wood. Going forward, we are also looking at running a programme of ongoing events for dog owners. In this way we can continue to work with dog owners to create an enjoyable, safe and welcoming place for everyone.



Credit: Johnny Hathaway



Regal canines of Westonbirt Arboretum



A wonderful idea from one of our members, Lorraine Collinson.

The moment we drive into Westonbirt Arboretum's car park our two cocker spaniels named Scout and Jarry (who sleep the entire 50 minute journey) perk their heads up and look out the window and begin a two minute long 'howling' ritual to show their appreciation to us that yet again they have the privilege to wander around the glorious arboretum.

To them it means going back to their grass roots, to do what dogs were born to do run free and use their sense of smell to explore and seek out new adventures among the woodlands, not to mention meeting all their canine friends along the way.

As Westonbirt Arboretum is so close to prestigious connections, I thought it would be great to give my two cocker spaniels some fun regal titles. My dogs Scout and Jarry have tags on their collars engraved with the names Princess Scout of Westonbirt and Jarry the Earl of Westonbirt!



They couldn't be happier than when they are here. Westonbirt means sheer happiness to them and they look forward to their visits every weekend in a safe, healthy and beautiful environment. Their happiness is my happiness.

Share your story on what Westonbirt Arboretum means to you. Simply send us a picture, 150 words and we'll choose some of the finest to feature in the magazine or on social media.

Send your story and photos to magazine@fowa.org.uk

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Keep in touch

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Arboretum opening times

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

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

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
forestryengland.uk/westonbirt

Volunteering

Tel: 0300 067 4853
volunteer.westonbirt@forestryengland.uk

Westonbirt Shop

Open every day, except Christmas Day and Boxing Day
Tel: 01666 880 787
retail@fowa.org.uk

Restaurant & Pantry

Open 9.30am - 4pm

Smokehouse

Open 12pm - 3pm during weekends, bank holidays and at varying times in school holidays
Closed Christmas and New Year's Day
Tel: 01666 880 787

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