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MAGAZINE OF The Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum 

Westonbirt

AUTUMN/WINTER 2024/25

Deep rooted dedication

How membership funds vital conservation

A new era of play at Westonbirt

Enhancing access to nature

Christmas gift guide

Give the gift of Westonbirt

This season, give someone you love a gift they'll love: membership to The National Arboretum.

Commemorate your next special occasion with a gift that lasts all year round (and supports our conservation efforts)! For only £45, you're providing **unlimited entry** and many more exciting perks – see page 46 for more on membership.



Support a square

Add your own personalised message to an entire acre of our digital arboretum.



Leaves of life

Celebrate a life changing moment by inscribing a special message on one of our metal leaves on display in the Great Oak Hall.



Sponsor a bench

Honour your memories together with a treasured resting spot.

Limited number of benches available. Get onto our waiting list via our website.

Find out more here: fowa.org.uk/join-support

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the friends
of Westonbirt
Arboretum



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Westonbirt

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In particular, readers should satisfy themselves about the authenticity of products advertised.

Arb-solutely incredible



It's all thanks to you

Next year marks the 40th anniversary of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum, a milestone which stirs a profound sense of pride and utter gratitude.

For four decades, our community has flourished, unified by a devotion to the appreciation and protection of natural wonders. With this edition, I would like to extend a genuine, heartfelt thank you for your vital contribution.

This issue, let's delve into some extraordinary species, from the delicate Amami maple, an emblem of rare beauty, to the Wollemi pine, a living fossil on the brink of extinction. Hear from Westonbirt's expert team about the critical work being undertaken in the arboretum's cherished Silk Wood, which continues to inspire us with its radical native beauty. And discover how Westonbirt's conservation strategies and future-proofing planning has us set to inspire hearts and minds for generations to come.

Emma Griffiths
CEO, Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum



A focus on conservation

It is a shocking statistic that the UK ranks fifth in a list of all countries in terms of percentage of our native trees threatened with extinction.

Tree conservation is at the core of what we do, which is why I'm passionate that we work with tree species native to the UK, as well as the hundreds of species we have collected from around the world.

The UK's ranking is in large part due to the threat to many species of whitebeam, part of the Sorbus genus, many of which occur nearby to Westonbirt in places such as the Avon Gorge. Quite rightly, we are now using our expertise and connections to help protect them. Like much of our work at the arboretum this wouldn't be possible without financial support from The Friends. Thank you!

Andrew Smith
Arboretum Director, Forestry England



Keep an eye out for our new icon, helping you spot the things that have been funded through your membership with The Friends, and our fundraising efforts.

Your continued membership is instrumental in assuring the future of Westonbirt Arboretum, supporting access to nature, enriching the experiences of those who visit, transforming the landscape, and creating a legacy for nature and conservation. Your unwavering support is exceptional, and thanks to you, we're funding some standout projects for the arboretum...

As we celebrate these achievements, we also look ahead to future projects and opportunities. With your continued support, we can ensure that Westonbirt Arboretum remains a vibrant, accessible, and inspiring place for generations to come. Thank you for all that you do for our community.

Play

An accessible, nature-inspired zone of play.

See pages 20 & 21



Accessibility

New mobility scooters and a shuttle bus are on site.

See page 13



Research

Alongside the University of West England, we're funding a four-year PhD research project to identify the current and potential future threats to *Tilia*.

People

We continue to fund several positions at Westonbirt Arboretum, including the Tree Conservation Manager, the Silk Wood Community Project Manager, and Trainee Arborist, to help assure access to the expertise that the arboretum needs.



Silk Wood

The first year of planting has concluded with 3,300 trees planted.

See pages 22 to 26

Signage

To enhance your connection with nature, we've introduced some new and improved signage. The 'Today' board highlights what's on, the 'Window on Westonbirt' showcases each week's best sights, and the new key species tree plinths share some interesting facts.

See page 10

Access to nature

Working with The Barnwood Trust, we're taking part in initiatives that encourage and enable access to nature, removing some of the socio-economic, geographic, and cultural challenges to accessing the arboretum.





The Amami maple: critically endangered

The Amami maple survey team
Dan Crowley (Left)

▲ Credit: Dan Crowley

When it comes to tree conservation, there are few better qualified than The Friends-funded Tree Conservation Manager Dan Crowley. His work takes him to collections and forests at some of the furthest points of the planet, collecting seeds, researching new insights, and helping to curate the Westonbirt conservation collections. We caught up with Dan about his recent trip to Japan to research the critically endangered Amami maple, for which Westonbirt is providing ex-situ conservation for the species.

Westonbirt is renowned for autumn colour, owing particularly to the Japanese maples peppering the collection. Despite their eye-catching palette, the collection here is somewhat limited in species, when compared to the diversity of those found on the Japanese archipelago. The archipelago is native to around 25 maple (*Acer*) species, with more than half of these indigenous to those islands. Species such as *Acer palmatum* and its affinities are common as both wild and cultivated trees, but other species are far less frequent. Japan is home to three known maples at risk of extinction in the wild.

As part of Dan's work, he sits on the Steering Committee of the Global Conservation Consortium for *Acer*, which is led by the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden (UBC). In March 2024, alongside Douglas Justice and Ryo Sugiyama from UBC, Dan travelled to Japan to survey wild populations of rare and threatened maples with fellow maple researcher Ikuyo Saeki of Osaka University. The primary target was the Amami maple, which is in fact the world's rarest maple and is part of the collection here at Westonbirt, as featured in 'The Little Book of Disappearing Trees'.

Ex-situ conservation refers to the protection of a species outside of its natural habitat, typically because of the enhanced threat of potential extinction in the wild. An ex-situ population could in theory be used to re-populate a wild site if needed.

Occurring only on the tiny island of Amami Ōshima, the species was first described in 2000 and assessed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, with only 10 mature trees identified. Prior to the research visit, this species had never been comprehensively surveyed. Accompanied by local guide, Mr. Takashi, the group undertook a thorough assessment of the population. Considering its sub-tropical locale, a stone's throw from the ocean, in an area that feels most unlike maple country, it's not a complete surprise that this tree had been overlooked for so long!

Following the time spent on Amami Ōshima the group headed north to visit populations of the Japanese red maple, *Acer pycnanthum*. Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, it's another featured in *The Little Book* and while Westonbirt's trees are of modest dimensions, those in the wild become impressively big! In unexpected snowfall, the group visited trees including those visited by Ernest Wilson more than 100 years ago, and met with members of the Japanese Red Maple Conservation Group, who have worked to conserve the species for more than 30 years.

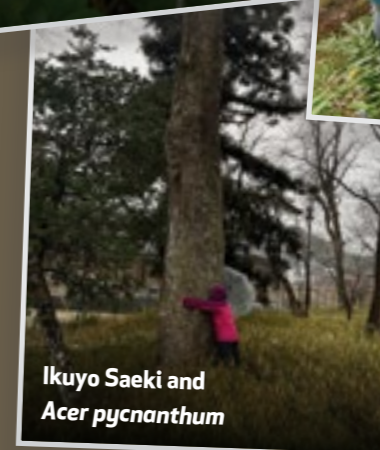
Dan comments "It was inspiring to learn about their work and, at our meeting, I presented on Westonbirt and our involvement in global tree conservation. Our new friends were of course excited to learn about the significance of our collection of Japanese maples too! The threatened Japanese maple that we didn't see was Miyabe's maple, *A. miyabei*, though we hope to work on this species in the future. Watch this space! I am very grateful to the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum for their continued support for our tree conservation work. Many thanks too to the Japanese Pro Natura Fund for supporting my involvement in these vital efforts to conserve threatened Japanese maple species."



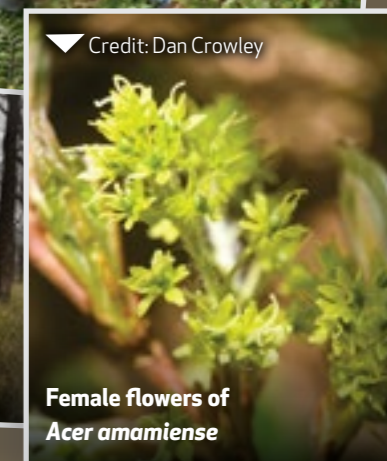
A seedling in the wild population



Ryo Sugiyama and Ikuyo Saeki recording and measuring a wild tree



Ikuyo Saeki and *Acer pycnanthum*



Female flowers of *Acer amamiense*

“ Dan comments:

Hearteningly, we found 12 mature individuals of the Amami maple, including three females, dozens of saplings and hundreds of seedlings! Having feared that there were no female trees left, this made for a very exciting find. However, the species is still very much on the edge. Its ocean-side habitat has been bisected by a road, and all the specimens are entirely in the tsunami risk zone. A single, extreme weather event could easily wipe out the entire population. Still, there is work we can do to ensure that the site is protected from illicit felling, while improved representation in geographically-distant botanic gardens can act as a back-up to the wild population. Our next step also includes updating the species' IUCN Red List assessment.

”

The Friends is proud to fund Dan's position as Tree Conservation Manager, as a vital part of the work at Westonbirt.



Critical conservation:

Westonbirt's role in the preservation of species

A pivotal aspect of Westonbirt's role in international conservation is the arboretum's ability to provide ex-situ safeguarding of species threatened in the wild. The collection contains genetically-diverse examples of some species, sourced from distant geographies, that can act as insurance against natural disasters and climate change, for species under threat in the wild.

Working closely with academic institutions as well as other botanic gardens and arboreta, Westonbirt's experts curate a collection that not only provides visual appeal, but in many cases helps assure the futures of some species threatened in the wild.

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

Globally, 45,300 plant and animal species are threatened with extinction, equating to 28% of all assessed species. Aided by international conservation stalwarts, The International Union for Conservation of Nature created the Red List which catalogues global species and their 'conservation status', from "Least Concern" for species unlikely to become threatened with extinction in the near future, through to "Extinct" for species that are known to have been lost altogether. Species that are known only in ex-situ collections are referred to as "Extinct in the Wild". Some are still listed as "Data Deficient" or "Not Evaluated", highlighting the essential role of organisations like Westonbirt, in helping to assess potentially threatened species.

Many people are familiar with the IUCN Red List, thanks to the spotlight on threatened animal species, but are less acquainted with the species of flora (including trees) that are equally essential. The Global Tree Assessment (GTA) is assessing the conservation status of every known tree species. Data up until 2021 was published in the State of the World's Trees Report by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), who have launched the Global Conservation Consortia in response, aiming to bring together institutions and experts to accelerate conservation action and ultimately prevent the extinction of highly threatened plant groups. It is critical that every tree and plant species are saved from extinction given their fundamental role in supporting biodiversity through food and habitat.

Westonbirt's role

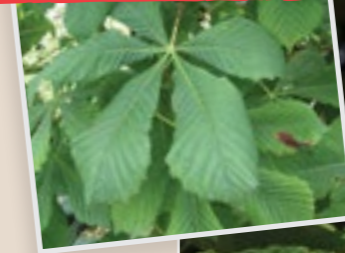
As well as participating in international research and curating a collection of established trees, Westonbirt is creating a legacy against threat, through education and expertise. The recent expedition to survey the Amami Maple (see pages 6 & 7) and the planting of the Wollemi pine (see page 10) are both examples of our conservation work in action; the former informing future actions, and the latter providing assurance for the imperilled wild population.

Example specimens at Westonbirt

Horse chestnut

Despite being commonly cultivated in Britain, this species is declining and now assessed as Vulnerable in the wild.

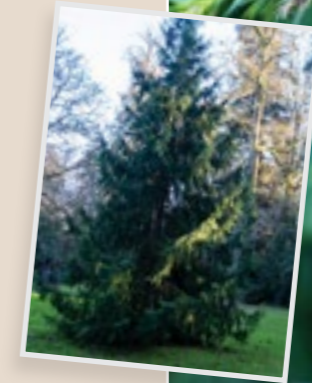
VULNERABLE



Coffin tree

Widely used in China to build coffins due to its heavy and durable timber, the species has been subject to significant habitat loss and remaining stands in Taiwan are now very isolated.

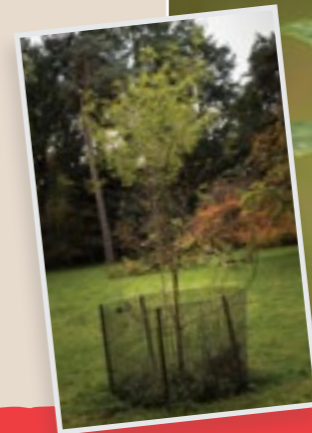
VULNERABLE



Five-finger maple

Native to China, there are only four known populations of this maple in the wild.

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



Credit: Ally Whaley



Credit: Brian Martin

For more on the IUCN Red List, Westonbirt's role, and where to find threatened trees in the arboretum collection, we recommend "The Little Book of Disappearing Trees" which is available in the Shop. Funded by The Friends, all proceeds support the continued management of the arboretum.



Funded by
The Friends

Arboretum all stars

Have you spotted the new wooden plinths that have appeared in the arboretum?

Funded by the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum thanks to members' continued support, informative plinths have been developed for 39 of Westonbirt's tree species. Each plinth shares key facts linked to science, folklore, religion, culture, and practical uses of the tree, looking at its importance from every angle.

Did you know, as well as smelling like candy floss or burnt sugar, the katsura tree is important in Japanese folklore? It's said the gods use the tree to descend from heaven, representing the link between earth and sky. Learn this and more on the plinths.



Wollemi pine

Westonbirt Arboretum is playing a pivotal role in the ex-situ preservation of a living fossil species.

Our work is helping bring the Wollemi pine back from the brink of extinction, establishing a genetically-diverse population, and providing a safeguard against climate and natural-disaster related local extinction. This project is a prime example of the gravity of the tree conservation work carried out here as part of the collection, and the arboretum's essential place internationally.

A chance discovery in 1994 by Australian botanist and explorer David Noble, found the unique pine growing in a remote gorge in the Wollemi National Park in New South Wales, Australia. It has been dubbed the 'dinosaur tree' because fossil records show they were living 200 million years ago alongside the dinosaurs,



King Charles III joined staff at Westonbirt Arboretum last year, to plant the endangered saplings.

and the species was thought to have gone extinct more than 70 million years ago. The Botanic Gardens of Sydney has gone on to collect seed, grow, and distribute more than 170 young Wollemi pine trees worldwide, including six that are now incorporated into the living collection here at Westonbirt.

On the shoulders of giants

At the end of July, we said goodbye to longstanding arboretum Curator, Mark Ballard, who has been the custodian of this land for more than 23 years. Mark is a man that has positively shaped arboretum change, as well as guiding it through unique challenges such as the Chalara ash dieback outbreak that felled a part of the ancient woodland.



Credit: Mark Ballard

During his tenure, the arboretum has established many new species; the Welcome Building was built and has this year celebrated its tenth anniversary; the Treetop Walkway was added; and perhaps Mark's crowning success is the transformation of the sense of arrival here at Westonbirt, relocating the car park and visitor journey, and the ensuing increase in biodiversity at the heart of this spectacular landscape. He will be sorely missed, but his departure creates scope for the next generation of landscape custodians.

Speaking of his early days in the role, Mark highlighted "I stood on the shoulders of giants. A legacy of custodians responsible for preserving the landscape and preparing it for future challenges. My goal during my time here at Westonbirt was to leave it in better shape than I found it, with the ambition that my successor will do the same. It is a role with a focus on gentle evolution."

"During my time at Westonbirt," Mark continued, "I have needed to employ 360-degree vision of this historic, picturesque landscape and the unique botanical collection. It has needed an eye to the past to preserve the history and heritage, an eye to the present, managing it for today, and an eye to the future, considering and planning for the challenges of tomorrow. It is a role that takes a lot of focus and energy, and one I am privileged to have given so many years."

Westonbirt has seen too much change in 23-years to condense into a single article, but it is fair to say that the place is somewhat unrecognisable from where Mark began.

The whole arboretum has evolved; the landscape, the collection, the engagement with nature, and importantly, Westonbirt's place on the global conservation stage.

Mark reminisced about his time here at Westonbirt with a reflection on the heightened expertise of the Tree Team here at the arboretum. "We have enhanced our understanding and curation of the collection" Mark commented "through seed collection in the wild, seeing trees in their natural habitat; where they grow, how they grow, and what they grow with. It has all helped provide a lead from nature and inspiration which feeds back to the composition of Westonbirt. I leave behind an incredible Tree Team on site. The best I've ever worked with. I am confident that they will continue to positively shape this historic landscape."

Mark admits that working at Westonbirt will be a tough act to follow, so he'll be taking some time to consider 'what next?'. He is clear on his aspirations for Westonbirt though "However small, we all, visitors, members, staff and volunteers, have a responsibility and duty of care. First, to recognise the importance of Westonbirt and how special it is, and second, to care for it as a legacy for at least the next 200 years. It is a jewel in the crown of the landscape."

Mark plans to stay on as a member of The Friends, and closed his interview with "A really big and heartfelt thanks to The Friends and all the support I have been lucky to have over the years. The Friends has enabled us to travel, collect, and fund vital equipment, trainees, and staff, which all makes Westonbirt what it is today. Thank you to everyone for the kind messages ahead of my departure."

The perfect prescription

From a childhood home on a family-run cider orchard and hazy days spent romping through woodlands with his siblings, arborist would be a natural career choice for Westonbirt's latest trainee. Yet Jon's career path was initially rooted in an entirely different field.

In July, Jon Wordsworth joined the Westonbirt Tree Team on a twelve-month training contract, alongside pursuing a part-time, distance-learning Masters in Forestry from Bangor University. "My childhood love of trees has never really left me" comments Jon, "and after twenty something years spent giving back, it was time to reconnect with nature. Having joined Westonbirt, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude for the opportunity I have been given, but also a natural sense of connection with the trees that I have found here. I have an overwhelming belief that we, as humans, or at the very least I, am meant to be here among the trees."

In his early 20s, Jon originally considered a career in conservation, going so far as to pursue a project in Fiji, but a lack of money for the flights soon put paid to youthful fantasy. Instead, a series of corporate jobs coloured his early-twenties, before he branched out into medicine, ultimately becoming Partner in a Bristol GP practice. Jon also spent a lot of time delivering outreach medicine in underprivileged locations, and everywhere he travelled, he took a keen interest in the natural world and how it was being used. He comments "I saw first-hand the devastating impact of deforestation, but also the intrinsic value of healthy woodland ecosystems on the native population. It shaped my belief in the power of trees."

His own love of nature led Jon to strive as a patient advocate for social prescribing, encouraging the great outdoors as the perfect tonic for low mood. Jon said "I was always working with social prescribers to utilise nature as a solution to diagnoses such as depression and anxiety, giving people a grounding, long-term toolkit for coping. In fact, my own consulting room was papered with nature-inspired photography and I was spending every weekend in the woods with my kids and my wife, George."

Just as Jon was re-evaluating his passion for work, his membership with The Friends highlighted the vacancy for Trainee Arborist. "My friends told me to take my own advice," comments Jon, "and to do something I am extremely passionate about. My work with the NHS has been incredible, and it has fulfilled my sense of duty, but it was something that no longer brought me intense joy."

Now, he is here at Westonbirt getting stuck into the practical reality of being an arborist, and he is loving every minute. Jon comments "I am being trained across the full lifecycle of the tree, from growing and planting through to planned removal and necessary felling. I'm learning about the individual trees, but importantly, I am also studying them in the context of the arboretum aesthetic and their wider place in the collection. The best bit of the job is learning every day, and I am really looking forward to absorbing as much as I can."

The Trainee Arborist position is proudly funded by The Friends, giving individuals like Jon an opportunity to gain a compelling introduction. Jon continues to be a member of The Friends with his family, and we look forward to seeing his ongoing success.



Access all areas...



The Friends is proud to fund two initiatives to improve accessibility at Westonbirt Arboretum, helping encourage access to nature.



We've been bus-y

Following maintenance issues with the historic shuttle bus, The Friends is proud to have provided a £26,000 grant for the new bus, now on site.

Not only has the funding been used to purchase an upgraded battery-operated shuttle bus, but its replacement means that the service can be expanded to support all visitors, alongside those with mobility restrictions. Weather-proofing and ease of driving has encouraged more volunteers to undertake training, and this, combined with the increased battery life, means that the shuttle can now stay operational all day.

Further enhancing the value of the shuttle bus, short walks have been designed as a loop from several of the shuttle stops, to support visitors who would not ordinarily have been able to see much of the collection. These have been very positively received, exhibiting the arboretum's standout features. This aligns perfectly with Westonbirt's mission to 'connect people with trees to improve the quality of life'

Wheely awesome

Committed to ensuring that the site is accessible to as many people as possible, The Friends is proud to have granted £11,195 to the arboretum to improve the fleet of on-site mobility scooters.

Previously funded by The Friends, 10 mobility scooters are available for arboretum visitors to hire free of charge, but many of them were becoming increasingly expensive to repair. The Friends has supported the replacement of two scooters, and funded the purchase of an off-road mobility scooter for use by Forestry England's volunteers and community groups to enable better access to all areas of the arboretum beyond the capability of the visitor fleet of mobility scooters.

Boosting access to nature even further, the arboretum is now part of the Robin bus route. See page 34 for details.

Coming up

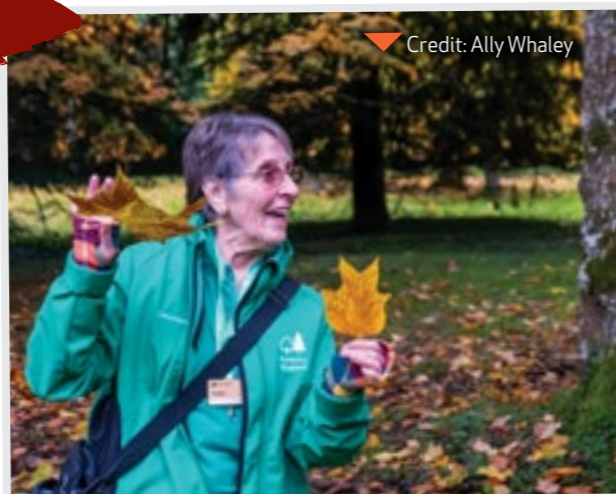


Christmas at Westonbirt

Get ready for a brand-new festive experience at Westonbirt Arboretum this Christmas. Forestry England has teamed up with the award-winning, internationally acclaimed light trail producers behind Christmas at Kew, Christmas at Bedgebury, and Christmas at Blenheim to bring you a light trail never-before-seen at Westonbirt.

Fri 29 Nov – Tue 31 Dec (open on selected evenings)
Price: From £18

Free parking for one car with your membership, worth £8.



Guided walks and tours

Westonbirt Guided Walk

Explore the seasonal highlights of Westonbirt's Old Arboretum.

Check website for days & times during autumn & winter

Price: Free after admission

Discovery Walks

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

Every Sat, Sep – Nov, 10.30am

Price: Free after admission

Wild Flower Guided Walk

Discover the fascinating world of wild flowers and other flora.

Tue 03 Sep, 10:30am

Price: Free after admission

Sensing Nature Guided Walk

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

Every Fri in Sep, 11:30am

Price: Free after admission

All workshops and courses need to be prebooked via Forestry England's website

Workshops and courses

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

Windsor Chair Making Course

Create your very own Windsor chair using traditional skills.

Mon 02 – Sat 07 Sep, Mon 09 – Sat 14 Sep, 9am – 5pm

Price: £585

Ecstatic Dance

Come and join us as we dance a somatic journey that is wild, barefoot, and free!

Sat 14 Sep, 1:30pm – 4pm

Price: £28.88

Willow Sculpture Workshop

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

Sat 14 Sep, Sat 12 Oct, Fri 22 Nov, Sat 14 Dec, 10am – 4pm

Price: £95



Spoon Carving

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

Sat 21 Sep, 10am – 4:30pm

Price: £75

Introduction to Woodland Management

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

Sat 14 Sep, Sat 28 Sep, 10am – 4pm

Price: £100



Botanical Printmaking

Learn relief and monoprint techniques to produce impressions from plants around us.

Sat 21 Sep, 10am – 1pm

Price: £60

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.

Eco Vase Arrangement

Learn how to arrange flowers directly into a vase using chicken wire and plain water.

Sun 06 Oct, 10:30am – 1pm

Price: £95

Take One Tree

12 workshops spread through the winter months from October to March. Fell a birch tree and then with the guidance of our expert tutors make lots of beautiful items to keep and use.

Start dates: Sun 13 Oct, Mon 14 Oct

Price: £600

Make Space – Nature Collage

A nature inspired creative workshop through the joy and spontaneity of collage.

Sat 26 Oct, 10am – 4pm

Price: £85

Planning Garden Borders

Learn how to make your own borders bright and beautiful including your own drawing kit.

Sun 27 Oct, 10am – 4pm

Price: £140

Botanical Leaf Printing (eco-printing)

Reconnect with nature and learn all the basic approaches and techniques of eco-printing.

Sat 02 Nov & Sun 03 Nov, 10am – 4pm

Price: £225

Sketching your Environment

Spend the day drawing and painting onsite, experimenting with materials, and creating a response to the inspiring space at Westonbirt.

Sat 09 Nov, 10am – 4pm

Price: £90

Christmas Wreath Making

Make your wreath as wild and natural as you dare.

Sun 01 Dec, Wed 04 Dec, Sun 08 Dec, 10am – 12:30pm

Price: £75

For children and families

Tots & Twigs Forest School

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

**Term time, Mon & Thu 10.15 – 11.45am,
Fri 10:15 – 11:45am & 12:30 – 2pm**

**Price: 8-week course £70 (£62 for members)
plus the Eventbrite fee.**

Wild Westonbirt

Leave the well-trodden paths and explore the wilder side of the arboretum, aimed at young adults aged 14–18.

Every third Saturday of the month – 10am – 4pm

Price: Free

Meet the Machines

Climb in – discover how and why we use these machines and enter our prize draw challenge. Kids can sit in a tractor, sit-on mower, ATV mule, and Carron utility vehicle, with a chipper, stump grinder, and MEWP also on display.

Sat 21 Sep, 10:30am–3:30pm

Price: Free after admission



Home Educated Learning Events

Designed for children age 7–11. In addition to our usual sessions, we now offer quiet, more relaxed sessions available for up to six families, for children with neurodiversity and other needs.

Thu 26 Sep, 10:30am – 12pm

Finding Art in Nature, using our autumnal landscape to explore colour, texture, shape and form.

Thu 07 Nov, 10:30am – 12pm

Season of Mists, challenges linked to seasonal changes in the woodland habitat.

Price: £6 per child age 7–11, £4 for siblings

Friends or Foes

Become a tree health expert, explore fungi under a microscope and take part in discovery activities.

Sat 19 Oct, 10:30am – 3:30pm

Price: Free after admission

Trees of the Future

Amazing seeds, discovery collection, sowing and crafts – help to grow the trees for the future.

Mon 28 Oct – Fri 1 Nov, 10:30am – 3:30pm

Price: Free after admission

Christmas Crafts

Use natural materials to create decorations to take home and take part in our Christmas prize draw challenge.

Sat 14 Dec, 10:30am – 3:30pm

Price: Free after admission

Winter Wonders

Join us to discover the amazing ways trees have adapted to winter, through discovery, challenges, and crafts.

Tue 18 – Thu 20 Feb, 10:30am – 3:30pm

Price: Free after admission

Exhibitions

Vivid Vistas

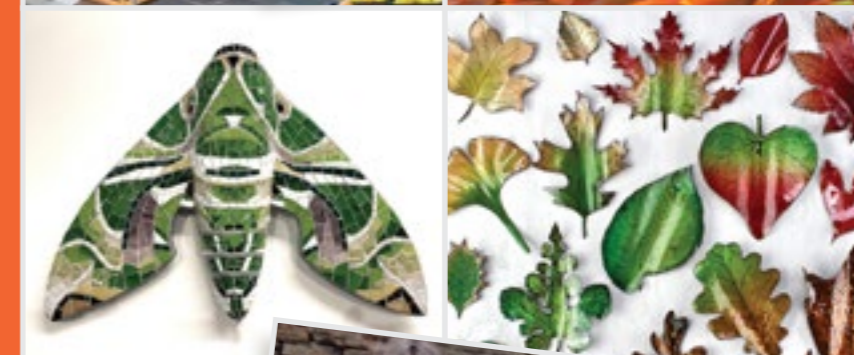
Landscapes by Andy Walker.

Fri 30 Aug – Mon 02 Sep



Cotswold Craftsmen Guild

Fri 04 Oct – Mon 07 Oct



Pots and Paintings

Fri 18 Oct – Sun 27 Oct



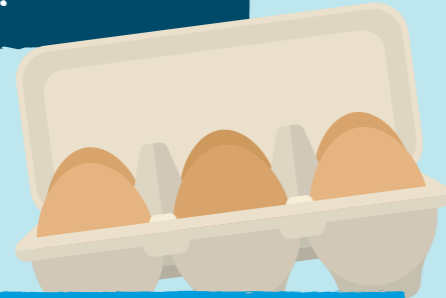
FAMILY FUN!

The amazing adventure of our feathered friends

Imagine traveling across countries without a map! Birds do just that using the sun, stars, Earth's magnetic field, and landmarks to navigate. It's called migration, helping birds stay warm, find food and secure the perfect home for their babies.

Winged wanderers

During our cold UK winters, some birds like swallows and swifts fly all the way to Africa to keep warm and find food. When spring comes, they return to the UK to raise their chicks in our countryside and gardens.



How to make your own bird feeder

1. Save an egg box from your recycling and cut the lid off.
2. Decorate your egg box using colouring pens.
3. Pierce two holes on opposite sites of the egg box and loop a piece of string through, making large knots in the bottom so that you can hang it off a tree branch.
4. You can now fill it with bird seed, place it in your garden, and see what birds it attracts!

The Arctic tern takes the prize for the longest trip. It travels from the freezing Antarctic to the UK and back every year, flying around 44,000 miles!



Bird Bingo: what birds can you spot in the trees?

Birds build their nests high up in trees to keep safe from predators. In thick branches, they are protected from bad weather and can find lots of fruits, seeds, and insects to eat. During migration, birds use trees to rest and chat with their friends. So, trees aren't just homes for birds – they're a huge buffet and a cosy neighbourhood rolled into one! That's why it's super important to take care of trees, so our feathered friends always have a happy place to call home.



Blue Tit



Robin



Song Thrush



FUN FACT

Did you know some UK bird species like starlings, jays, and crows, can mimic sounds they hear, including human voices and car alarms? This ability can help them distract or blend in with predators, but scientists think the clever and curious creatures do it for fun too!

Colours of nature

Can you collect the rainbow?





Let's play!

Puddle stomping, mud pie baking, cloud spotting, toe tapping, boundary busting, free range play is the best of Westonbirt. "Let nature be your teacher" penned William Wordsworth, while Albert Einstein heralded play as "the highest form of research". All are akin to the ethos of play here at the arboretum. An ethos that is blossoming ever more vibrantly this year.

Westonbirt offers the ultimate natural playground, a space where core memories form, confidence is boosted, risk is understood, and children learn their own limits. A space that allows children boundless freedom within safe sanctuary, to be creative, to problem-solve, to intellectually develop. Play in nature stimulates all the senses, and introduces children to their place in the world, at a different size and scale to any of their other life experiences. It is this which Forestry England and The Friends most want to foster.

Over the summer, we have embarked on the first of three phases of play development at Westonbirt. The culmination of more than four years of work between Westonbirt's teams, our focus groups, our fundraisers, and the recently appointed partners in play, Earth Wrights. Many of the keen eyed among you will have

already spotted the first development site in the Old Arboretum alongside Main Drive. The purpose of the three phases are to encourage more play, but to do so in a way that seamlessly blends between the play spaces and the arboretum; the structures and the trees, to encourage children of every age to be confident going off path in the woodland.

Neil Seegobin, Project Manager at Forestry England Westonbirt Arboretum comments

“ At Westonbirt, we are a haven for natural exploration. A safe sanctuary where parents can relax while children explore; where imaginations thrive and potential is realised. Our style is in many ways the antithesis of playgrounds and structured play, with 'freedom' fuelling our brief for new play experiences. In the coming years, we are creating spaces which encourage children to feel right with leaving the path to play within the tree collection. ”

The first of these three phases is nearly complete, thanks to the continued loyalty of our members, fundraisers, and donors secured by the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum. Conceived by play designers Earth Wrights, Phase 1 is creating an accessible, open, nature-inspired zone of play that compliments the environment it is sited in. Centred from a focal oak tree, an elevated boardwalk not only enables children to gain a little height in their play, but also aids accessibility of the zone. Tree nets offer canopy views, while speaking tubes emulate the mycelium root structure of fungi. Felled trees and logs offer climbing routes, while covert carvings offer detailed discovery throughout the space. In front, views across The Downs. Behind, uninterrupted trees, ripe for exploring. Every part has been curated to emulate or complement nature, to promote space and exploration, and to create almost limitless capacity for children to engage and thrive in nature.

We're busy fundraising for play development phases two and three, which includes the site of the former Explora-tree, with the hope to redevelop this area in 2025. It was removed earlier than anticipated, to help ensure visitor safety. In the meantime, please enjoy the outdoor green games there instead.



For more information on our new play areas, visit our blog here



Silk Wood update

The regeneration project empowering local communities at Westonbirt Arboretum.

The site at Silk Wood was home to many ash trees which had to be felled, so we're looking to the future as we seek to regenerate.



Understanding the threat

Chalara ash dieback is a detrimental fungal disease that originated in Asia. While it has little impact on Asian ash trees, it has had a catastrophic effect on the European ash since its introduction to Europe about 30 years ago.

Because our trees didn't develop alongside the fungus, they lack natural defences. Only 1-5% of European ash trees have a tolerance, so we expect to lose an estimated 60-180 million ash trees nationwide. This is a massive loss that poses a serious threat to the landscape, including the wildlife that depends upon it. Although the disease is likely to persist throughout the UK for years, efforts are now underway to combat its spread and mitigate its impact through:

- Research and monitoring
- Forest management and felling
- Diverse enrichment planting
- Public awareness and involvement



Before and after clearance



What we've achieved so far

3,300
trees planted

1,007
visits

601
participants

21
tree species

Ash isn't the only species currently at risk in the UK – oak, spruce, and larch are all under threat due to other biosecurity issues. Through research conducted at Westonbirt, The National Arboretum continues to play a positive and important role in wider efforts to understand threats from climate change, pests and pathogens.

Part of Westonbirt's Silk Wood, once a flourishing and dense woodland of ash trees, was devastated by Chalara ash dieback beginning in 2015. Due to the extent of the infection, and to ensure the earliest opportunity for replanting, Forestry England had to take decisive action by felling over 6 hectares completely. In addition, Westonbirt's Tree Team meticulously thinned infected ash trees spanning 23 hectares. It was then left for a two-year fallow period to allow the soil to recover from the machinery's impact.

Over this period, the site became almost completely covered in herbs, ferns, grasses, rushes and sedges. After conducting a flora survey, the Westonbirt team identified that the natural habitat type is likely a lowland ash woodland, allowing for the perfect tree species selection that would thrive in this environment; oak, field maple, sweet chestnut, and small-leaved lime.

The survey serves as a baseline measurement, allowing us to keep track of biodiversity changes with the addition of new trees, ensuring the optimal health of Silk Wood.

January 2024

Planting finally began! With local communities as the driving force, we are thrilled to announce that the first stage of planting is now complete!

The Community Woodland is still a busy place with groups coming back to care for their trees by laying mulch and maintaining the tree guards. Alongside this continued maintenance, the team were excited to monitor the floral and faunal inhabitants of the woodland throughout the summer.

Next phase of planting: November!

What made it all possible



Credit: Alison Whaley

Through the support of funders, the Project Team at Westonbirt were able to contract a forestry mulcher.

Monitoring tools including wildlife cameras



“ Stuart McLeod, Director of England - London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund

It's fantastic that we've been able to support this important project thanks to National Lottery players. It will not only restore lost habitats but also engage new audiences in the outdoors and the work at Westonbirt. We're incredibly proud to be playing a role in ensuring our natural heritage is safeguarded for generations to come, but also that the projects we fund give people the chance to connect with the nature and wildlife on their doorsteps – this project is a great example of this.



“ Oscar Adams, Project Manager of the Silk Wood Community Planting Project

This funding has brought our vision to life, allowing us to engage the community in restoring this beautiful woodland for future generations.

We are thrilled to share the impact of this support, which has provided our groups with essential tools and allowed us to plant 3,300 saplings using biodegradable tree tubes. Additionally, we're delighted to have improved accessibility and interpretation, enhancing visitors enjoyment and understanding of Silk Wood.



3,300 saplings to begin the reforestation effort, plus biodegradable tree tubes and stakes



A full suite of tools for woodland maintenance including spades, shovels, hammers, wheelbarrows, and PPE

We were also able to secure:

- **Equipment storage shed**
- **Training for staff and volunteers (FSC ID courses)**
- **Educational items including books, ID guides, soil testing kits, measuring tapes, relascopes, and clinometers**
- **A forestry mulcher to initially clear the area**
- **Furniture to facilitate our groups including a gazebo, tarpaulins, seating, and a welfare unit hire when necessary**
- **Minibus and coach hire for groups to enable greater access to the project and the arboretum**
- **The funds have also supported new roles at Westonbirt to help further the community woodland's impact**

Having fundraised for over a year and a half, the Silk Wood Planting Project would not have been possible without over £600,000 of funding secured from the remarkable generosity of our members, donors, and partner organisations to date.

Our Community Woodland

8 schools | 2 colleges | 1 university | 6 youth groups
107 volunteers from community groups in neighbouring counties

Restoring a woodland is no easy feat, but it has provided a prime opportunity to teach vital forestry skills as volunteers are recruited. Westonbirt has put community at the heart of the Silk Wood Community Planting Project by centring young people, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those with neurodiverse conditions across a broad range of ethnicities. This means that the arboretum's beautiful new woodland will be designed, planted, managed, monitored, and cared for in the future not only by Forestry England staff but also by community groups, schools and other volunteers. Beyond reforestation, the project has enabled hundreds of personal connections with nature, and created countless treasured memories at Westonbirt.

Despite the occasional frost (and the not so occasional torrential rain), community groups put their all into making sure each tree got the best start and will be there in years to come. So far, a huge range of participants of all age groups have been hosted, from primary school children to retirees. We are particularly proud to have welcomed individuals with mental health issues and learning disabilities. And we are delighted to have encouraged impassioned young environmentalists with the involvement of youth climate groups!

After a walk through Silk Wood, each group arrived at the planting site raring to restore the woodland. Many of Westonbirt's volunteers had never planted a tree before, but they learnt quickly with the demonstration, including safe tool use, and insights into the impact of tree diseases, reforestation, ancient woodland habitats, and the work we do to protect it. It was a pleasure to witness the younger children develop their team working abilities, as they cooperated with enthusiasm, enabling new friendships to blossom.

The volunteer days were specially tailored to provide the most value to each group. While certain groups learnt tree bud identification or did scavenger hunts for winter wildlife, others were coached in mindfulness activities using the NHS's 'five ways to wellbeing'. What's more, no matter what extra activities they took part in, every participant received a personalised certificate to commemorate the day. This included the species of trees they had planted and their exact location, enabling the participants to come back and visit their trees when they've grown big enough to take shade under!



“ We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and genuinely came away feeling glowing and that we had done something positive for this planet! ”

Participant

Autumn & winter seasonal highlights

In autumn, the maple (*Acer*) collection we have here at the arboretum, comes into its own, showing a fantastic array of autumnal colour that is well worth a visit. Many of the deciduous trees put on a show-stopping display, so remember to pre-book during key dates to see the autumn colours for yourself.

Seasonal map

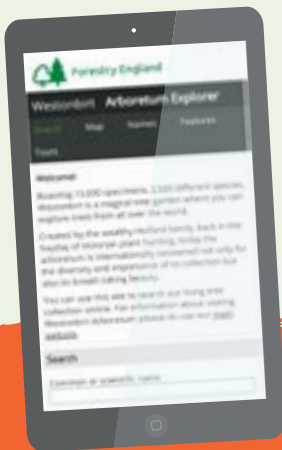
You can use this pull-out map to identify and locate where each of the trees in the highlights article can be found in the arboretum.

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

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

Pull out map

The coloured dots mark some of the 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

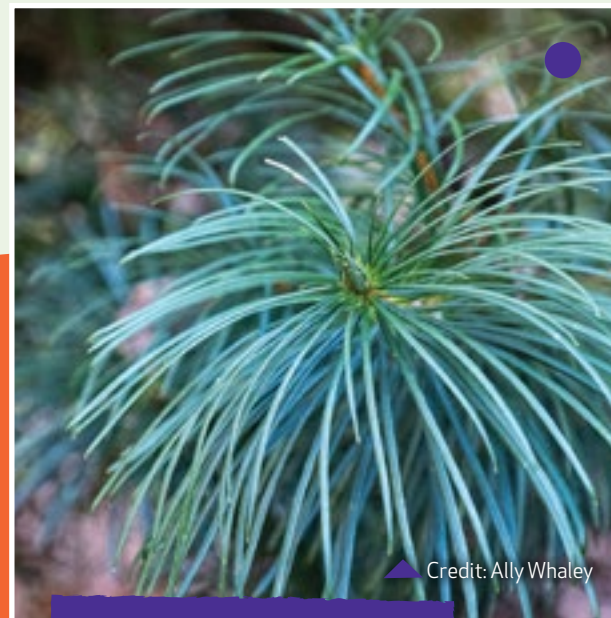
Tree guide

Autumn

- Grey-budded maple (*Acer rufinerve*)
- Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*)
- ★ Yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*)
- ★ Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
- Seven-son flower (*Heptacodium miconioides*)

Winter

- Cathay silver fir (*Cathaya argyrophylla*)
- Japanese toothache tree (*Zanthoxylum ailanthoides*)
- Autumn cherry (*Prunus x subhirtilla 'Autumnalis'*)
- ★ Coffin tree (*Taiwania cryptomerioides*)
- ★ Sargent spruce (*Picea brachytyla*)



Cathay silver fir:
Cathaya argyrophylla



Grey-budded maple:
Acer rufinerve



Japanese toothache tree:
Zanthoxylum ailanthoides



Coffin tree:
Taiwania cryptomerioides



Seven-son flower:
Heptacodium miconioides



Credit: Ally Whaley



Autumn cherry:
Prunus x subhirtilla 'Autumnalis'



Credit: Ally Whaley

Yellow birch:
Betula alleghaniensis



Credit: Ally Whaley

When crushed the twigs of the yellow birch release a minty, aromatic scent, caused by a compound called methyl salicylate and were traditionally used as toothbrushes.

Guelder-rose:
Viburnum opulus



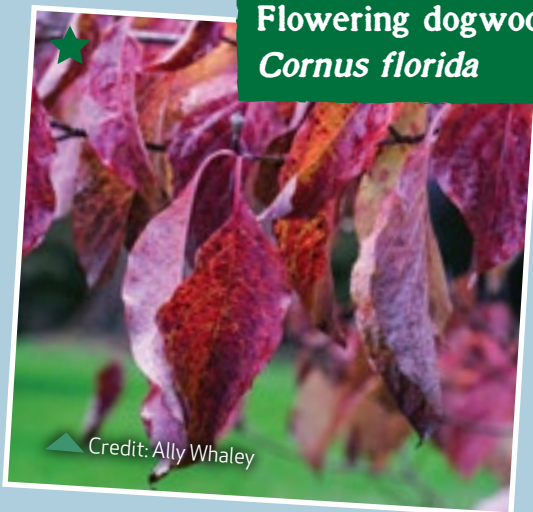
Credit: Dan Crowley

The specific epithet *opulus*, means 'maple', because the leaves share a resemblance to those of some maple species (*Acer*).



Credit: Ally Whaley

Sargent spruce:
Picea brachytyla



Credit: Ally Whaley

Flowering dogwood:
Cornus florida

Autumn highlights

- Grey-budded maple:
Acer rufinerve

Leaves of this striking tree from Japan transform from dark green to vibrant reddish-yellow in autumn. The delicate, winged fruits are highly ornamental and hang throughout the tree in magnificent swathes. The distinctive white striping on the young green bark and the characteristic diamond-shaped lenticels mean that, even once the leaves and fruits have fallen, this species is still worth a closer look.

- Guelder-rose: *Viburnum opulus*

Abundant among our hazel coppice in Silk Wood, this species blazes crimson in autumn. Glossy, red berries are reliably produced and edible when cooked, traditionally used to make jams and jellies. A UK native, this shrub is an indicator of ancient woodland.

- ★ Yellow birch:
Betula alleghaniensis

One of Westonbirt's earliest trees to change colour in the autumn, the foliage of the yellow birch puts on a spectacular, but often fleeting, golden display. This North American tree has distinctive shimmering, bronze-tan coloured flaky bark, which glows gloriously in the autumn sun.

- ★ Flowering dogwood: *Cornus florida*

While quite rightly prized for the showy, petal-like bracts that frame its flowers in late spring, this charming, small to medium sized tree has plenty more to offer as autumn rolls around. The leaves of this eastern United States native, transform to a deep crimson and its attractive bright red fruits are a favourite of birds and other wildlife. Elegant, decorative clove-shaped buds form in autumn and can be admired throughout winter.

- Seven-son flower :
Heptacodium miconioides

Named for the seven white flowers that form pyramid-shaped clusters on the end of its branches, the seven-son flower is a favourite with garden designers for its late season interest. Not only does this deciduous shrub bloom much later than most, from late summer long into autumn, but it transforms again after flowering. After warmer summers, once the petals have fallen, the remaining sepals (the protective leaf-like outer part of the flower) turn red, giving the appearance of red flowers. While being a popular garden shrub, in its native China only nine small populations are known.



Credit: Dan Crowley

Winter highlights

- Cathay silver fir:
Cathaya argyrophylla

Fascinating and beautiful, this tree native to China is an ancient member of the pine family. Fossils found from the Cretaceous period, 140 million years ago, show that it was a contemporary of the dinosaurs!

Sadly, it has been dubbed the 'panda of the plant world' because of its rarity. Along with the coffin tree and the seven-son flower, the Cathay silver fir is featured in our very own 'Little Book of Disappearing Trees', where you can learn more.

- Japanese toothache tree:
Zanthoxylum ailanthoides

Winter is a good time to observe the prickly bark of this East Asian tree, which has a pungent, citrus-like scent. The tree produces small, round fruits that are used in Chinese cuisine for their unique flavour and numbing effect hence the common name – the Japanese toothache tree! In fact, this tree is closely related to orange and lemon trees.

- Autumn cherry:
Prunus x subhirtilla 'Autumnalis'

Prized for its early (or late depending how you look at it) blossoms, it can bloom anytime from autumn to early spring, depending on its situation and the weather. You may recognise the autumn cherry – it's a popular ornamental tree, found in gardens nationwide. Don't let the name fool you though, here at Westonbirt it tends to flower in January, a welcome sight during colder months.

- ★ Coffin tree:
Taiwania cryptomerioides

The coffin tree is the national tree of Taiwan, the island which it was named for. It was originally thought that this species only grew on Taiwan but additional populations have since been discovered in Vietnam, Myanmar and China. The wood of *Taiwania cryptomerioides* is highly valued for its durability, and is used in coffin production which is where the common name originates.

Taiwania has two different types of foliage – juvenile and mature. It makes the switch when it reaches around 15m but as this is rarely seen in the UK, most people who grow it have never seen the mature foliage!

- ★ Sargent spruce: *Picea brachytyla*

The Sargent spruce, is a majestic tree species native to the Himalayan mountains. Its needles are a vivid shade of green, with two distinctive white bands on the undersides of the needles. The species has suffered significant decline due to extensive logging in its native range.

The specific epithet *brachytyla* comes from the Greek for short – *brachy*, and swelling – *tyla*, which refers to the peg-like structure at the base of the needles.



Credit: Ally Whaley

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



“ Molly found the wild garlic in the woods at the arboretum. She smells wonderful! ”

Barbra Knapik



“ Bailey loves to run through the leaves and find a muddy puddle! We got engaged at Westonbirt and married at Westonbirt House, we have [sponsored] a bench on The Link, it's our special place to unwind. ”

Rich Garner

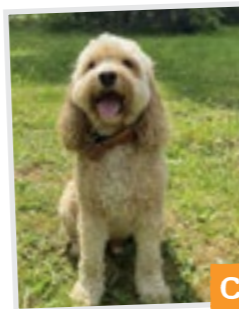
Westonbirt walkies

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! Remember to use the #WestonbirtWalkies hashtag on social media.



“ My two golden retrievers Puzzle and Cuilan posing at Westonbirt in January. ”

Gaye Doig

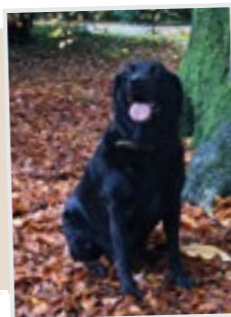


“ Dougal loves all the good sniffs at Westonbirt, but his favourite part is going to the café at the end for a dog ice cream! ”

Charlotte Coyle

“ A tribute to Saba who sadly passed away in June. Saba loved family walks, snuffling in the rusty leaves in autumn and finding the biggest sticks to carry proudly along Willesley Drive. ”

Sarah Green



“ An ode to our 350th walk: Buster and Riley are black and white, running around Westonbirt they are quite a sight. They are known for being well behaved, I'm their chauffeur... or is it their slave? Known at the restaurant as "a sausage for Greg", they sit patiently and never beg. Man's best friend as the saying goes, they certainly keep me on my toes. If you see us on your walk, please take time to stop and talk. ”

Greg Townsend

Paws on the doors

There's a reason that furry pals love Westonbirt, and it's not just the paw-some walkies. Our dog-friendly shop receives five paws on the doors, so is a must-stop with your dog. Here's our top picks for the wiggliest of wags:

Green & Wilds Treats

Purveyors of a wag-tastic range of eco-friendly dog toys, as well as a delicious selection of treats, Green & Wilds are a Westonbirt Shop staple. They are located just thirteen miles from the arboretum, so they couldn't get much more local.

Pooch's

An incredible carbon-neutral business using locally-sourced ingredients that are lovingly baked into delicious, nutritious snacks. As a bonus, as well as planting 30 trees a month in the UK, their packaging is made from renewable resources and is fully biodegradable.

1



2



5



6



3



4



7



8



1 Healthy chicken liver heart shaped treats. 2 Air-dried goose treats with nothing added. 3 Bready, steady, go, this natural jute toy with suede overlay is tough. 4 Delilah the Duckess has a suede head and beak filled with natural jute fibres. Her body consists of a recycled plastic bottle covered with braided jute rope. Non-toxic for chewing. 5 Irresistible biscuits made with Norfolk Venison. 6 Wag-tastic cheesy snacks that also make the perfect training aid. 7 Pure chicken fillet, gently dried to lock in nutrients and flavour. 8 Turkey & cranberry bones, a festive flavour, just for Christmas.

Woof woof... our team members love dogs, which is why we have a bucket of dog treats behind the counter, just waiting for your woofs to get their paws on...

Creating positive change

As a Grade One registered landscape, caring for a tree conservation collection, it is only natural that the ethos here at Westonbirt Arboretum extends to incorporate environmental preservation.

We're shining a sustainability spotlight on some of the positive changes that have been made in the last few months:



Renewable energy

Did you know that the Welcome Building has been heated by two air source heat pumps since 2014?

Thanks to DEFRA net zero funding, we hope to install the first solar PV panels to the Machinery Store roof this summer. We are aiming to install over 70 panels to generate more than half of the energy used by the main Forestry England office and Tree Team buildings. They should generate 30kwp per year, saving 13,185kg of CO² each year which is the equivalent to a petrol car driving 33,722 miles. This is a fantastic step towards Westonbirt's transition away from fossil fuel energy.

Public transport



We are delighted that Gloucester County Council have launched a new zone for a bookable public bus 'The Robin' which includes the arboretum!

Working in partnership with the University of Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership and Gloucestershire County Council (who operate the bus service), it vastly improves public transport access to the arboretum, thereby improving accessibility and reducing car use. Thank you to everyone who completed the recent travel survey.

The arboretum is located in the South Cotswolds zone of the route. The service is available 7am to 7pm, Monday to Saturday and can be booked via the Gloucestershire County Council Website: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/transport/the-robin

Better recycling options

Thanks to DEFRA net zero funding, this summer new recycling collection points were launched across the arboretum.

Based on feedback from visitors and members and using data from our waste audit and action plan Westonbirt will be trialling more recycling options and signage.



Clear signs for specific items should help us reduce recycling contamination. Please take a look at the new signs and if in doubt either take home your waste or put it in the general waste bins.

We are also introducing cup recycling points which have tubes for liquids, lids and cups. Members are encouraged to bring reusable cups to save 30p off a hot drink or enjoy a sit down coffee with a fantastic view from the restaurant.

For more information on the waste programme at Westonbirt, please visit: www.forestryengland.uk/westonbirt-sustainability-waste



New bins under construction

Piloting a plastic reduction



As well as eliminating single use plastic in the visitor experience (such as coffee stirrers and sachets), plastic across the whole site is being looked at.

Did you know that it is common practice in the UK to use plastic tree guards for saplings, protecting the plants from herbivores and acting as a mini greenhouse. Unfortunately, they are also commonly forgotten which means that they are left on the tree and never recycled.

Forestry England is currently conducting an informal trial in Silk Wood, testing a model of traditional plastic tubes – with scheduled removal and reuse where possible – biodegradable tubes, and our preferred approach which is to use small fences around the trees instead.

The most important factor is our scheduled establishment checks which ensure every solution is removed at the correct time.



The pine marten

Category: Part of a diverse family of mammals called *Mustelidae* (also including otters and weasels).

- **Length:** 46–54cm
- **Tail:** 18–27cm
- **Weight:** 0.9–2.2kg
- **Average lifespan:** up to 8 years

Similar in size to a domestic cat, with slim bodies, brown fur and a distinctive cream ‘bib’ on their throats, they have long, bushy tails and prominent rounded ears. Pine martens are protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 and outlined as a priority species under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.

Pine martens were once common in the British landscape but ultimately became Britain’s second-rarest native carnivore, thanks to extensive hunting and the loss of their woodland habitat throughout the 1800s. Up until very recently, their only remaining stronghold was in the north-west Highlands of Scotland, but more recently, reintroduction initiatives have seen them establish in Wales and the Forest of Dean.

Pine marten monitoring project

Could this elusive creature soon call Westonbirt home?

Imagine the excitement when Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust alerted us to confirmed sightings of the endangered species at Westonbirt’s doorstep!

In 2019, the Forest of Dean became home to 18 pine martens, reintroducing the species

to England. Today, their population has blossomed to over 40, with at least two broods of kits and hopefully more to come. With the perfect habitat here at Westonbirt, and ample wildlife corridors between us and their current home, we’re hopeful of a natural stronghold here at the arboretum at some point in the future.

Recently, a pine marten was spotted in the Stroud Valley, prompting Ross Martin, Wildlife and Conservation Ranger at Westonbirt Arboretum, to spring into action with new practices to encourage the precious species and monitor for any sightings of our own! Ross set up a wildlife camera, which is checked weekly, watching over a spread of pine marten favourites including pilchards, strawberry jam, and hen’s eggs.

With the help of the Tree Team, Ross erected special den boxes in the tranquil, more diverse habitat areas of Silk Wood. These boxes will offer pine martens a safe haven to rest, weather the storms, evade predators, and raise their young. Built with help from some amazing pupils at Malmesbury School working towards their John Muir Award, these boxes not only provide a temporary substitute for natural dens but also offer us prime monitoring locations. These are crucial steps in creating an enriched ecosystem that is primed to nurture not just pine martens, but a myriad of endangered species.



“ Unfortunately, as of yet no pine martens have been seen on the wildlife cameras, however we have spotted lots of other wonderful wildlife such as deer, stoats, foxes, badgers, owls, ferrets and even a goshawk.

I am continually monitoring our wonderful, diverse habitat hoping for a glimpse of this wonderful charismatic creature. Hopefully, any passing pine martens will love the arboretum as much as we do! ”

**Follow our social media for updates:
@FriendsOfWestonbirt on Facebook
and Instagram, @WestonbirtFOWA on X**



Promise something wonderful

One of the most powerful gifts you can give a charity you care about is a future that outlives you. Can you include the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum in your Will?

Take advantage of our Free Will service with The Goodwill Partnership. To book an appointment, visit fowa.org.uk/free-will or call **01492 510 340**

Credit: Johnny Hathaway

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 upfront so that you can make the best choice to suit your circumstances.



Welcome Building celebrates 10 years

The 23 June marked a decade of welcoming millions of visitors to the site through the Welcome Building, replacing the original ticket shed. The building was opened by the then Duchess of Cornwall, now Her Majesty The Queen, and Royal Patron of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum. To read the full history, please visit www.fowa.org.uk/10-Years



Westonbirt meets Wentworth



The Westonbirt Shop is excited to announce the launch of a brand new, exclusive collectable puzzle featuring the arboretum's iconic Treetop Walkway.

This stunning Wentworth Puzzle is the perfect way to bring a piece of Westonbirt's magic home and relive the breathtaking views from the comfort of your living room. Find it in the shop. **10% member discount on spends over £10**

Run for the Trees raises over £3,000

Runners raised a staggering £3,321.95 including Gift Aid – surpassing our target with flying colours! Their

extraordinary efforts, with unwavering support from our community, will help safeguard Westonbirt Arboretum for future generations and help us preserve nature's legacy. The funds raised will go towards critical conservation projects, educational programmes, and ensuring our trees continue to thrive. To everyone who contributed towards this remarkable achievement, your dedication and generosity means the world to us. **Thank you!**



Run for the Trees team taking part in the Westonbirt 10k.

The nice list...

We're pretty excited about what's in store at the shop this festive season.

Everyone deserves to be on the nice list, which is why we've handpicked some incredible gifts and Westonbirt exclusives to fuel your festive celebrations. Everything you see here will be in store late-September/early-October, but if you can't wait, staples like the calendar are already available...

- 1 Westonbirt calendar
- 2 Amica felt Christmas decorations
- 3 Walnut gifts
- 4 Angela Harding notebooks and journals
- 5 Tracklements Christmas collections
- 6 Seasonal mugs
- 7 Noble Isle collection

1



2



5



3



6



4



7



The shop is jam-packed with great gift ideas from children's books, toys and games, to gorgeous homeware, plants, books and much more. Pop into the shop to see the full range, and find the Westonbirt exclusives.

Don't forget to take advantage of your member discount for 10% off when you spend over £10.

The shop is a vital source of income with profits reinvested into arboretum activities. Thank you for shopping with us.

The beauty of the arboretum is rivalled only by the memories created within it..

Which is why we so love receiving your letters and emails.

Your experiences here highlight the profound impact of the natural world on every individual, and remind us of the deep bond between Westonbirt and those who ensure its legacy continues to grow. Thank you to everyone that has taken the time to share your story.

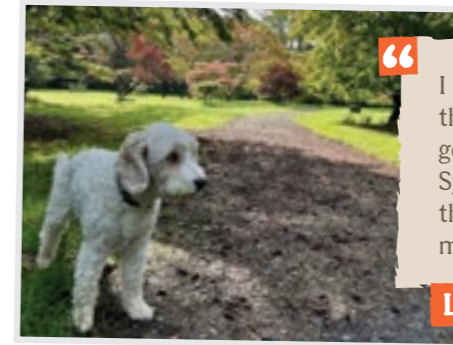


“ In the last few years, I've grown fascinated by the life of trees. How they communicate, how they provide a home to so many species even after they die. And of course, how much we as humans depend on them to survive. [the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum] are doing vital work and need our support to continue doing it. ”

Cal Fedash

“ [My partner and I] enjoyed many walks where we discussed our plans for our future. This year, we lost our baby girl the day after she was born, and Westonbirt has become even more important to us. We visited on a perfect autumn day after her interment, and it made a heartbreaking day so much more peaceful and mindful. We were able to take a moment in nature and feel connected with our daughter and each other. ”

Kat Tudor



“ I have had many mornings where I feel so tired that a dog walk isn't always front of mind. But getting to Westonbirt is always the perfect tonic. Sybil can explore, my little girl can look out at all the beautiful colours, and I can take a moment for myself. When in doubt, get out into nature! ”

Laura McCarthy

“ When I had my first baby, Westonbirt became my sanctuary [...]. Suffering with postpartum depression, I was able to wander peacefully through the trees and clear my head. Ever since then I have been a member. With my daughter (now 3), we go with a different outlook - one of adventure and wonder as we explore. Westonbirt seems to fit each stage of my life and as I grow older so do those anchored trees. ”

Bethan Waters

Ourbo return

“ Westonbirt is a great asset to all generations and is a place I would like to see my future grandchildren enjoy when they enter this world! ”

Ruth Musgrave

“ The arboretum brings happiness to all, whether they be an adult, a baby or a dog. Thank you, Westonbirt Arboretum, for giving us the best family memories. ”

Sofi Hill

“ [Westonbirt] holds a special place in my heart. If ever things get too much, retreating to the trees can bring much comfort and perspective. ”

Jamie Saunders

“ Westonbirt has been my calm zone since becoming a mum last May. I was gifted my membership just before I had my little girl and have had such a wonderful time seeing in the different seasons, whilst getting some much needed fresh air, peace and quiet. ”

Lucy McCarthy



If you'd like to share an experience, give us feedback on what you're reading, or make a suggestion for the magazine, please email marketing@fowa.org.uk

Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum AGM



This year's AGM was an opportunity for a summer celebration with arboretum tours led by Forestry England staff whose roles are funded by the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum.

After a welcome by Neil Sachdev MBE (Chair of Trustees), Emma Griffiths (CEO) presented the highlights of the Annual Report explaining how the charity enables our Forestry England colleagues to maintain and enhance the arboretum and contribute to vital global tree conservation.

The brand new shuttle bus (funded by The Friends) was on display as members set off on their tours. Westonbirt's Tree Conservation Manager, Dan Crowley told fascinating stories about the challenges of bringing the rare Wollemi pines to the arboretum.

Community Coordinator, Mandy Leivers, took a group to the Community and Green Woodworking Shelters to talk about the Community Programme and activities which have a huge impact on young people as well as adults from under-served communities.

Meg Walder-Hills showed another group the Silk Wood Community Planting Project where thousands of new trees have already been planted to regenerate an area of clear-felled ash.



We are grateful to members for attending the event and for their lovely feedback:

“ Just a note to say how much I enjoyed the AGM (yes really!!!) and then the walk to the tree planting areas, and the special treat of travelling back in the new shuttle. You guys do an absolutely wonderful job, and it is so impressive. Well done and thank you. ”

Scan the QR Code to read our Annual report



We look forward to celebrating the 40th year of the charity with you, our members, next year.

New trustees and a renewed focus

We are delighted to announce the appointment of new trustees, Sarah Bryars and Sam Addadahine. Sarah brings extensive experience in PR and communications, as the former chief executive, co-owner, and director of an award-winning PR agency. Sam, a software engineer, has a background in the Telecoms and Construction industries, with notable achievements in driving key digital transformations.

These appointments come at a pivotal time as we develop our strategy for the next 5 years. Our goals are to widen enjoyment for more people with membership that provides value, to develop creative fundraising approaches, and enhance the Westonbirt experience through our retail operations. We will continue to award grants according to the needs and priorities of the site and inspire new communities by working with partners to support inclusion and participation.

Neil Sachdev, MBE, Chair of Trustees says:

“ I am delighted to have such talent joining the Board. Fresh thinking, and challenge to what and how we do things, ensure our sustainability and help us preserve the arboretum for generations, enabling access to all and funding research to protect trees not just here but across the world. ”

Sarah Bryars



“ I have known and loved Westonbirt for many years as a glorious place to immerse yourself in nature, and I'm only now beginning to understand its

significance in tree conservation, climate, and habitat research. The Friends has a loyal and enthusiastic membership, and every single member is part of Westonbirt's story, helping to fund its work. It's a privilege to support the team in its charitable mission. ”

Sam Addadahine



“ I am thrilled to join the Board, driven by a deep passion for both digital innovation and conservation. My goal is to help enhance the charity's digital capabilities, making nature more accessible and engaging for everyone. I look forward to contributing my expertise to support the charity's mission and to enrich the community's connection with our natural heritage. ”



Her Majesty The Queen affirms her patronage

We are delighted to confirm that Her Majesty The Queen has announced her continued patronage of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum. Having been a longstanding supporter and Royal Patron of our charity, we are ecstatic that the partnership with Her Majesty will continue.

Following The Coronation, a review was undertaken of all the patronages held by the King and the Queen, in addition to the patronages inherited from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This process resulted in some patronages being rescinded and others taken on anew.

Speaking of the news, Emma Griffiths, CEO of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum said "We're absolutely thrilled to have Her Majesty's continued support as our Royal Patron. Her endorsement will undoubtedly amplify our efforts to raise awareness about our vital conservation work and secure future funding for the arboretum."



A royal garden party

We're thrilled to share that the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum had the incredible honour of attending His Majesty's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace!

Emma Griffiths and Jo Murray represented The Friends at this prestigious event, where members of the Royal Family connected with individuals from all walks of life who have made a positive impact in their communities. It was a true celebration of volunteers and voluntary organisations. Decked out in their finest day dress and hats, Jo and Emma soaked in the splendour of the Palace gardens, visiting the collection of London plane trees, the famous chamomile lawn, and the stunning rose garden.

Celebrating growth



Credit: Paul Box

As we approach 2025, we are delighted to commemorate two significant milestones in the history of Westonbirt Arboretum:

40 Years of the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum

Since 1985, Friends like you have been at the heart of our charity.

Your dedication, passion, and support have been instrumental in preserving and enhancing this remarkable landscape. As we approach our 40th anniversary, we look forward to celebrating the crucial projects funded, conservation efforts supported, and the development of this world-class arboretum, all made possible by your collaboration.

25 Years of the Great Oak Hall

Reflecting the beauty and tranquillity of the arboretum, the Great Oak Hall stands as a symbol of our shared commitment to preserving and celebrating the natural world.

For the past 25 years, this wonderful, traditionally-built structure has hosted countless events, having established itself as an integral community hub and home to The Friends.

As we approach these milestones, keep an eye out for more details about the celebrations we are planning and how you can get involved.

Your support has been vital to our success, and as we embark on new projects and initiatives, your continued involvement will be more important than ever. From new conservation projects and educational programmes, to enhancements in accessibility and visitor experience, there's a myriad of exciting opportunities on the horizon.

Thank you for being a part of Westonbirt's story.

Making the most of your membership

As a member of The Friends, you have access to a canopy of tree-top quality benefits. Are you really making the most of it?

Here's the best opportunities for you to maximise the season ahead:

Guided walks

Endless discovery, fresh insights

94%

rate the walks as very enjoyable.

72%

strongly agree that the walk offered them a greater understanding of the significance of landscape and botanic collection.

▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway



AUTUMN COLOURS (October–November)

The most popular season at Westonbirt, the arboretum's trees become ablaze with colour, offering the most spectacular views. To ensure your entry, we recommend you pre-book a time slot during this period.



CHRISTMAS AT WESTONBIRT

With illuminated trees, this festive event is a truly magical, must-see experience. With a Christmas Village and Father Christmas too, there is something for all the family. Free event parking for one car (worth £8) included in your membership. Admission not included.



MEMBER TUESDAYS

From 19 November 2024 to 25 March 2025 inclusive, you can bring a family member with you for **FREE** every Tuesday.



DISCOUNTED AUTUMN/WINTER GEAR

Your membership includes **15% off Cotswold Outdoor** and **15% off Snow and Rock** for camping and snow sports clothing and equipment.

CODE: AF-FOWA-MI



STOCK YOUR CHRISTMAS AND BIRTHDAY GIFTS

Our shop has a wealth of locally sourced, artisanal products and handcrafted gifts that make the perfect Christmas presents, ready for you to take advantage with your **10% discount** (minimum £10 spend).

Top Tip: Your membership starts saving you money from your third weekend visit a year, and even less if you take advantage of the shop discounts, partner discounts and free event parking. Not to mention the magazine and partner gardens. After that, you're enjoying entirely free visits for the other 361 days a year.

Think you know Westonbirt?

Think again!

Even if you've been visiting for years, there's always more to discover.

Westonbirt's tours delve deeper into the arboretum's secrets, offering fresh insights and hidden gems you won't find on your own. We'd love to see more people taking part in the guided walks, with additional discovery walks being hosted every week.

“

From start to finish the guides were knowledgeable, engaging, and friendly. This made a casual visit into a truly memorable visit.

”

Member quote

No two walks are ever the same...

Our passionate guides bring the arboretum to life with their extensive knowledge and engaging storytelling. Each guide develops their own walks based on their interests, exploring off the beaten track.

“

We thought we knew the arboretum, but we discovered we really don't - we should have done a guided tour years ago!

”

Member quote



▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

Could you be an Expert Volunteer?

Join our team! This winter we are recruiting new guides. You don't need to be a tree expert - just a tree lover, with an interest in sharing your passion with others. Extensive training and mentoring will be provided so no prior experience is necessary. Email volunteer.westonbirt@forestryengland.uk for more information.

Throughout autumn, we run daily walks in the Old Arboretum, each lasting about 1.5hrs. For more details, see Westonbirt's events web pages at www.forestryengland.uk/westonbirt-the-national-arboretum. From mid-November, reduced winter service times will be observed.

The Friends' quiz

Many of the answers can be found by getting out into the arboretum. The combined use of Westonbirt's 'Arboretum Explorer' and the map references should help to pinpoint tree locations. Trees should all be labelled but sometimes the squirrels get there first!

Of course, there may be a few questions that are not so easily answered but usually there is someone around in the know. Nothing wrong with picking the odd brain.

By Malcolm Potter and fellow Volunteer Guides: Alan, Helen, Liz, Sue and Pauline



To help you locate individual trees, plants, and facts, simply scan this QR code to access the Arboretum Explorer or visit westonbirt.arboretumexplorer.org

We have grouped the questions geographically:

- 1 The Old Arboretum
- 2 Silk Wood
- 3 The Downs and around

This issue, we are offering a 500-piece Westonbirt Wentworth Puzzle worth £63.99 to the first person who emails in all the correct answers to magazine@fowa.org.uk



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

▲ Credit: Johnny Hathaway

The Old Arboretum

1. There are 13 different types of Hickory. A fine specimen can be spotted about half way between Spring Gate and Duke's Cut (Map ref: E18). Which of these is it?
a. Shagbark b. Shell bark c. Pig nut
2. In 1829 Robert Stayner Holford planted a few trees in the area now known as Savill Glade. Take a look at dates on the tree labels there. Which of these did he plant?
a. Scots Pine b. Magnolia c. Rhododendron
3. Just west of Main Drive there are two Winter's Bark (*Drimys winteri*) (Map ref: F18) which bear white flowers in autumn. Bark from these trees was used medicinally by seafarers, for what purpose?
a. As a disinfectant b. As anaesthetic
c. To prevent scurvy
4. A small bushy tree found on Mitchell Drive, opposite the junction with the path to Acer Glade (Map ref: G23), produces tiny red peppercorns that are used for creating '5 spices'. What is the common name of this tree.
a. Szechann Pepper b. Winged prickly ash
c. Condamine spice

The Downs and around

9. The Great Oak Hall was built in 1999/2000 by craftspeople using age-old traditional methods and tools. Each part was prefabricated ready for assembly. How did they ensure that they all fitted together correctly?
a. By colour coding/painting the adjacent parts
b. Making distinct cuts in matching pieces
c. No obvious method can be detected
10. The young conifer growing on the grassy area to the left of the path from the Welcome Building to Down Gate (map ref: H/21) was planted in 2015 and is already bearing cones. Was it:
a. Bought from a plant nursery?
b. Grown from wild collected seed?
c. Propagated on site?

Silk Wood

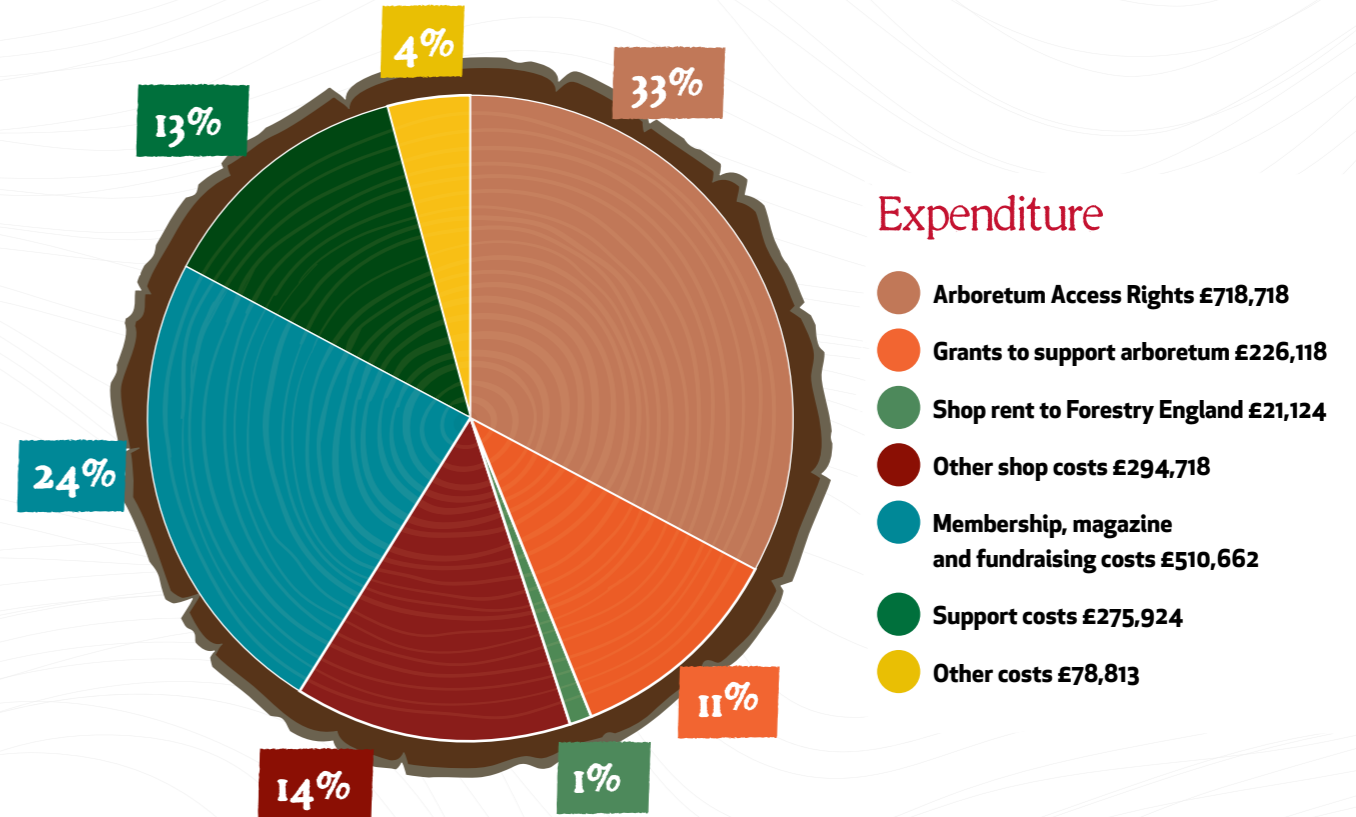
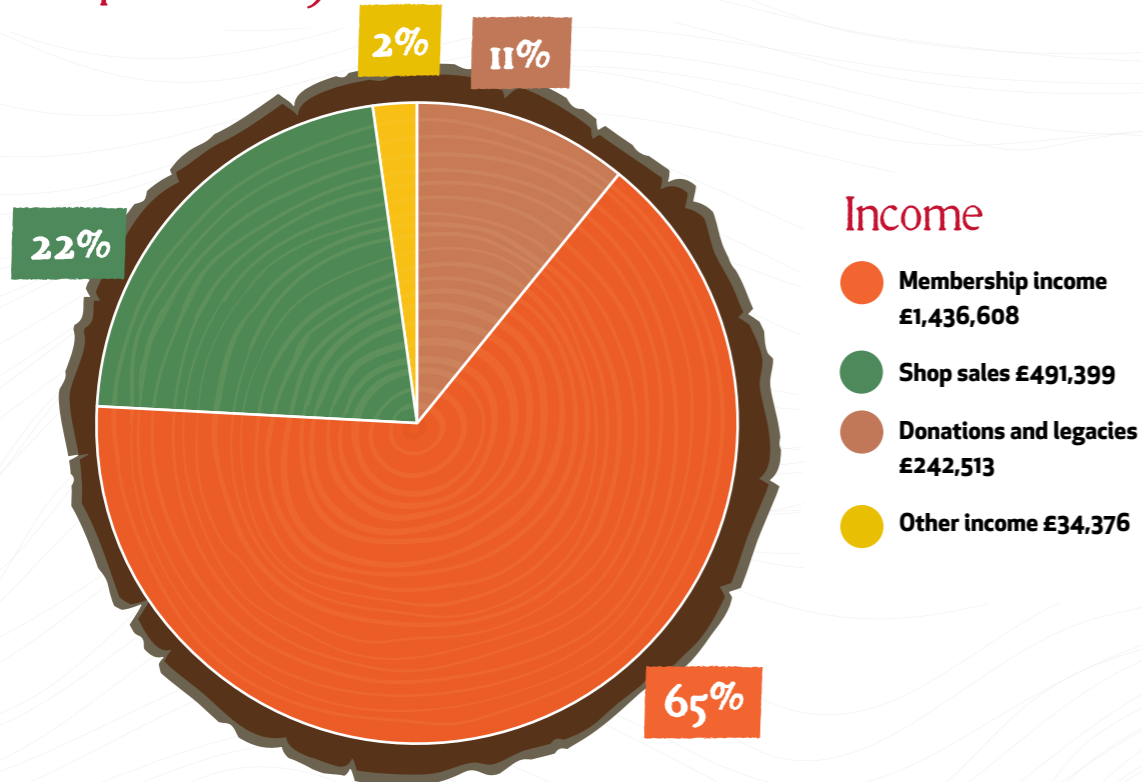
5. Just before the path to Palmer Ride from Willesley Drive there is wooden seat, (Map ref: M17). From this, a tall, elegant, and very slender conifer can be spied. Its unusual shape sets it apart from its neighbours. What is it?
a. Norway Spruce b. Sitka Spruce
c. Serbian Spruce
6. The sunken play area in Silk Wood just west of Palmer Ride (Map ref: L16) has a special nickname. What is it?
a. Palmer Bottom b. Rich's Repose c. Ted's Fright
7. Approaching the Treetop Walkway from Willesley Drive one is greeted by a 'comical' little pine tree (map ref: L15) that appears to wave to passers-by. What is it?
a. Armands pine (*Pinus armandii*)
b. Jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*)
c. Pine (*Pinus montezumae* var. *hartwegii*)
8. When Westonbirt won its Heritage Lottery Fund bid for The Westonbirt Project it also included funding to develop a Community Programme. Approximately how many organisations engaged with the community programme in the first four years?
a. Fifty b. Ninety c. One hundred and fifty

11. Devil's Bit Scabious is a beautiful blue wildflower seen in early autumn at Westonbirt. Why is it so called?
a. It was thought that witches used it to summon the Devil, so picking it was bad luck
b. Its protruding reddish anthers were thought to resemble the Devil's horns
c. The Devil was said to be angry with it, so he bit off its root

12. Which of these trees has a special meaning this year (2024) (and why)?
a. Oak tree 28.0284
b. Birch tree 26.1082
c. Magnolia 28.0325

Financial overview

Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum and Enterprises (2023)



Income:

Overall income for 2023: **£2,204,896**

Membership income for 2023: **£1,183,292**

Gift aid on membership in 2023: **£253,316**

Overall membership income: **£1,436,608**

Including gift aid, membership income accounts for **65%** of our total income in 2023.

Expenditure:

Overall expenditure for 2023: **£2,126,077**

The biggest item of expenditure was the Arboretum Access Rights payment of **£718,718**, accounting for **33%** of total expenditure.

Grants

New grants awarded during 2023 amounted to **£226,118** and is broken down as follows:

Play project: **£187,500**

Replacement shuttle bus: **£26,000**

Other small grants: **£12,618**

Grants paid out during the year in relation to previous commitments brought forward and new grants awarded in the year amounted to **£297,650** and is analysed as follows:

Community Shelter: **£47,522**

Coppice Shelter: **£19,599**

Quarantine House: **£2,168**

Signage Project: **£3,100**

Carpark Project: **£22,801**

Trainee Arborist: **£11,281**

University of West England PhD Student (jointly funded): **£8,332**

Silk Wood Regeneration: **£5,500**

Interpretation Project: **£5,525**

Westonbirt Community Co-ordinator: **£36,000**

Westonbirt Tree Conservation Manager: **£60,000**

Westonbirt Play Project: **£9,600**

Silk Wood Community Project: **£38,450**

Small Grants: **£27,772**

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Finance Director
Helen Turner

Finance Officer
Maureen Nisbet

Finance Assistant
Natascha Castell

Retail & Buying Manager
Graham Edmonds

HR & Office Manager
Debbie Dawkins

Supporter Operations Manager
Julia Bartlett

Brand & Marketing Manager
Jo Murray

Supporter Services Coordinator
Rachel Raggatt

Supporter Services Administrator
Anne-Marie Tennison

Supporter Services Coordinator
Hannah Morgan

Assistant Retail Manager
Sarah Vernon

Board Secretary
Jo Cummings

Keep in touch

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membership@fowa.org.uk

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LinkedIn:
[@friends-of-westonbirt-arboretum](https://www.linkedin.com/company/friends-of-westonbirt-arboretum)

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Her Majesty The Queen
Ambassador
Hon Beth Rothschild
Trustees
Neil Sachdev (Chair)
Martyn Smith
Rachel Walker
Sian Troupe
Owen Forster
Paul Isherwood
Christian Walker
Nigel Frost
Sarah Bryars
Sam Addadahine

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

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

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