**Community Tree Scheme Guidance and Assessment Criteria**

**Planting and aftercare guidance**
Good site selection, species choice, careful planting and regular aftercare are essential if trees and hedgerows are to establish successfully and thrive for the long term.

Right tree. Right place. Plant it well. Protect it. And, if it's really dry weather, water it.

The success of the scheme will not simply be measured by how many trees are planted, but by whether they survive, establish and become healthy mature trees and hedgerows that provide benefits for people, nature and communities for many years to come.

**1. key information**
**Eligible area:** All planting must take place within the Shropshire Council and/or Telford & Wrekin Council administrative areas.
**Available bundles:** Trees are supplied in **bundles of 20**. Applicants can choose from:

- **Lowland woodland mix:** English oak 20%, sessile oak 20%, small-leaved lime 20%, wild cherry 10%, hazel 15%, hawthorn 5%, crab apple 5%, dogwood 5%.
- **Upland woodland mix:** Sessile oak 50%, silver birch 20%, beech 10%, hawthorn 10%, rowan 5%, blackthorn 5%.
- **Wet woodland mix:** Common alder (35%), downy birch (20%), crack willow (10%), grey willow (10%), aspen (10%), goat willow (5%), guelder rose (5%) and alder buckthorn (5%). One native Black Poplar will be included per bundle for appropriate locations (to be specified by the applicant).
- **Native hedgerow mix:** Hawthorn 35%, field maple 20%, blackthorn 15%, hazel 15%, dog rose 5%, dogwood 5%, wild privet 5%. Standard trees will be provided to be planted at 25m intervals.

**How many can I request?** There is no upper limit, but requests must be realistic. You will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient suitable space and the capacity to plant and care for the trees.
**Planting deadline:** All trees must be planted by 21 February 2027. By this date, you must also send photographs of the completed planting to tree.scheme@shropshire.gov.uk.
**Tree collection:** Trees need to be collected from one of 3 locations,

- Prees Heath Forest Nursery, Mill Lane, Higher Heath, SY13 2LR
- John Holliday, Lower Hayton, Ludlow, SY8 2AY
- Small Woods, Station Rd, Coalbrookdale, Telford TF8 7DR

**Monitoring:** A random selection of sites will receive a compliance visit to confirm that planting has been completed as agreed.
**Please note:** This is a competitive scheme, and an application does not guarantee an allocation. Please give your answers careful consideration and clearly explain what you intend to plant, why it is appropriate for your site, and how you will ensure successful establishment.
**Application submission deadline:** Applications must be submitted by **6th December 2026.**

## 2. Right tree, right place

Before planting:

- Make sure you have the landowner's permission.
- Think about how large the tree will become, both above and below ground. Allow enough room for its mature height and spread and sufficient soil rooting volume to sustain it to maturity.
- Avoid planting where mature trees could conflict with buildings, utilities, roads, paths or other infrastructure.
- Consider local conditions including soil, drainage and exposure.
- Do not plant trees on existing valuable habitats, such as species-rich grassland, where planting could cause ecological harm.
- Where there may be ecological or other constraints, seek advice before planting. This link contains some helpful information.

## 3. Plant carefully

Good planting gives your tree the best possible start.

- Keep tree roots cool and moist before planting. If your trees are bare rooted, keep them in a windproof, tied bag until immediately before planting. Do not allow bare roots to dry out.
- Prepare the planting area and remove vegetation that will compete with the young tree.
- Dig a hole large enough for the roots to spread naturally without bending or bunching them.
- Plant the tree at approximately the same depth at which it was previously growing in the nursery. Avoid planting too deeply or too shallowly.
- Spread the roots out, refill with soil and gently firm the soil around the tree.
- Mix a soil improver such as biochar or a non-peat based compost into the backfill, where it would benefit soil structure and quality.
- Water thoroughly after planting, if practicable.
- Apply a layer of mulch around the tree to help retain moisture and reduce competition from grass and weeds, while keeping mulch away from direct contact with the stem.

Young trees are particularly vulnerable while establishing.

- Use sustainable guards, stake or other protection where there is a risk of damage from livestock, deer, rabbits, machinery, mowing or strimming.
- Protection should be appropriate to the site and should not restrict the tree as it grows.
- Check guards and stakes regularly and adjust or remove them when they are no longer required.
- Take particular care when mowing or strimming around trees. Damage to the bark at the base of the tree can seriously affect its survival.

## 4. Aftercare: give your trees the best chance

The first few years after planting are particularly important. Before applying, make sure you know who will look after the trees and that this responsibility can be maintained over the longer term. This scheme requires applicants to identify who will be responsible for ongoing care and includes a minimum five-year commitment to

tree maintenance and monitoring, with annual monitoring intended to identify issues including drought stress, damage, vandalism or disease.
Applicants should:

- Water during dry periods where practicable, giving a thorough watering rather than a small amount frequently.
- Keep an area around the tree free from competing grass and weeds.
- Maintain mulch where appropriate to help conserve moisture.
- Check trees regularly for signs of drought stress, damage, disease or poor growth.
- Check guards, stakes and ties and repair, adjust or remove them as necessary.
- Prune only where necessary and use appropriate techniques.
- Continue managing the tree as it matures, rather than regarding the job as finished once it has established.

**5. Planting a new hedgerow**

For new hedgerows:

- Prepare the planting line and control competing vegetation.
- Plant closely enough to create a continuous hedge as it develops.
- Plant tree standards approximately every 25m in the hedge and put the necessary safeguards in place to ensure they are identifiable during hedgerow management.
- Protect young hedge plants from browsing where necessary.
- Keep the base of the newly planted hedge free from excessive competition from grass and weeds while it establishes.
- Water during dry conditions where practicable, particularly during establishment.

**6. Managing hedgerows for the long term**

- Avoid cutting during the bird nesting season, from March to September.
- Where possible, delay cutting until January or February, allowing autumn and winter berries to remain available for birds such as redwings, blackbirds and fieldfares.
- Avoid cutting the whole hedge every year. Flower buds often develop on second-year growth, so cutting too frequently reduces flowers and berries. Cutting on a two or three-year rotation where appropriate, managing different sections in different years. This helps ensure there are always flowers for pollinators and berries for birds.
- Keep machinery away from the base of the hedge wherever possible to avoid damaging the hedge and associated habitat.
- Maintain a buffer strip alongside the hedge. Where space allows, leave at least 2 metres of uncut or less frequently cut grass to provide nesting, feeding and overwintering habitat for birds, insects and small mammals.
- Retain mature hedgerow trees and allow suitable young trees to develop into future hedgerow trees. As a general guide, aim for approximately one hedgerow tree every 20 metres where appropriate.
- Retain dead or damaged trees where it is safe to do so, as these can provide valuable habitat for insects, bats and hole-nesting birds. Ancient, veteran or over-mature trees of all species are particularly important.
- Plant up significant gaps where appropriate to maintain a continuous, healthy hedgerow.
- Consider traditional management such as hedge laying where appropriate to rejuvenate older or declining hedges and encourage dense new growth.

**Scheme Assessment Criteria**

**Stage 1: Essential criteria**
Applications should only progress if all the following are met:

- **Landowner permission:** The applicant owns the land or has permission from the landowner to plant.
- **Deliverability:** The applicant is certain that the planting can take place and photos submitted to tree.scheme@shropshire.gov.uk by 21st February 2027.
- **Suitable location:** The proposed planting is appropriate for the site and follows the right tree, right place principle. Where planting is proposed on or close to a designated or sensitive site, further checks may be required.
- **No harm to important habitats**: Planting will not damage an existing priority or wildlife-rich habitat, for example species-rich grassland, heathland or wetland.
- **Historic environment:** There are no known historic environment or archaeological constraints that would make the proposed planting inappropriate, and any necessary checks have been undertaken.
- **Space for trees to mature:** There is sufficient space for the proposed trees or hedgerow without foreseeable conflict with buildings, roads, paths, utilities or other infrastructure.
- **Commitment to aftercare:** Someone has been clearly identified as responsible for looking after the trees for a minimum of ten years.
- **Sharing information:** Acceptance that location and non-personal project details will be recorded and may be shown on a publicly accessible map.

**Stage 2: Assessment criteria**
Applications will be prioritised against the following criteria:

| Criterion | What we are looking for | Score |
|---|---|---|
| **Suitability of planting site** | Appropriate planting is being proposed. Including site conditions, space, species choice, location, existing habitats. | 0-3 |
| **Contribution to Local Nature Recovery Strategy** | Planting will connect, extend or provide stepping stones between existing hedgerows, trees, woodland or other habitats. | 0–3 |
| **Long-term management** | There is a convincing and practical commitment to watering, establishment, monitoring and longer-term management. | 0–3 |
| **Public accessibility** | The planting will be publicly accessible or visible, providing opportunities for people to experience and enjoy trees and nature. | 0-3 |
| **Community benefit** | The project will benefit the local community, for example through access to nature, improved green space, education, volunteering, learning or community involvement. | 0–3 |