



**Plymouth Tree People
Volunteer Tree Warden**

Professional Development

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The Tree Council and Plymouth Tree People have a shared mission to care for our trees and our planet's future. We aim to inspire and empower organisations, governments, communities and individuals with the knowledge and tools to create positive, lasting change at a national and local level.

One of Plymouth Tree People's aims is to invest in our volunteer Tree Wardens to help them learn and gain experience, but volunteers are also encouraged to extend their tree knowledge independently, both for interest and for building confidence in their role as a Tree Warden. There is a wide range of topics and although everyone will have different interests and you are not expected to know it all, we have compiled a list of topics and resources to help you along.

- [Read the Tree Council basic guide for Tree Wardens](#)

Know Your Patch

One of the most useful things you, as a new tree warden, can do is to get to know your patch. Only by knowing your area well, the people who live there and what already exists, will you be able to understand what is needed. You will know not only the trees and green space in the local area but also the people and groups you may be working with, or who may be useful contacts in your work. This may then give you ideas for what to do next, perhaps even the beginnings of a plan!

While walking or cycling around your patch there are various issues to look out for or look up:

- Threatened trees and new trees requiring maintenance.
- Proposed development.

- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Conservation Areas.
- All the parks and green spaces.
- Possible planting areas.
- Historic background and historic maps.

Tree biology

Volunteer Tree Wardens are encouraged to continuously develop their knowledge of the biology of trees. The areas where learning can be achieved are (but not limited to):

- Understanding the differences in growth habit across and within species.
- Understanding the growing conditions needed for good health.
- Understanding the annual growth pattern – girth and twig extension.
- Understanding how a tree develops from seedling to standard tree.
- Identification of the parts of a tree and internal structures.
- Understanding the binomial system and naming of cultivars.
- Being able to identify common trees in the winter and summer.
- Recognising and knowing the impact of common diseases and other threats to tree health.

Resources

- Try the [Picture This](#) app to identify tree species
- [The Tree Council's guide to identifying a tree in the winter](#)
- [TDAG have a number of helpful and in depth guides on urban trees](#)
- [The Tree Council's guide to recognising blossom](#)
- [The Forest Research list of pests and disease](#)
- The Observatree pest and disease resources [by pest/disease](#) and [by tree species](#)

Tree management

As well as the biology of trees, the role of a Tree Warden will involve the practical aspects of planting, caring for and establishing trees. The areas where learning are encouraged are (but not limited to):

- Understanding how to use tree ties to avoid bark rubbing.
- A knowledge of formative pruning. Recognising natural growth patterns and how pruning will enhance or alter them.
- Understanding when to prune, when not to prune and why.
- Understanding where and how much to cut, and why.
- Understanding what is required when planting standard trees and whips.
- Being able to recognise the signs of drought stress and knows how to water trees effectively.
- Being able to recognise whether a tree has rooted.
- Understanding the importance of allowing trees to flex while roots are anchored.

Resources

- [The Tree Council's guide to protecting young trees](#)
- [The Tree council's guide to growing trees from seed and starting a Community Nursery](#)
- [The Tree Council's guide to protecting young trees from unsettled weather](#)
- [The Arboricultural Association's Guide to Young Tree Establishment](#)

Wider Knowledge

We encourage Tree Wardens to gain a broad knowledge of aspects related to tree maintenance and management, issues such as:

- Understanding biosecurity measures and how to implement them.
- Knowing where to find information about tree diseases and how to report them.
- Understanding the general responsibilities of landowners.

- Understanding the purpose and general application of Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and Conservations Area (CA) legislation.
- Having an understanding of how to run a community engagement programme.
- Knowing what constitutes an ancient tree and ancient woodland and how to record them on the Ancient Tree Register.

Resources

- [The Tree Council's information about Young Tree Champions](#)
- [The UK Government information on biosecurity](#)
- [The Arboricultural Association's information on biosecurity](#)
- [The Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory](#)
- [The People's Trust Hedgerow Survey website](#)

Health & Safety and Legal Issues

Being safe is obviously of the utmost importance when carrying out your duties as a Tree Warden. We encourage all out Tree Wardens to extend their understanding of safe working practices. If you would like to carry out a working in the outdoors first aid course, we can often offer Tree Wardens a free place on a 1 day course. Please contact the Tree Warden Co-ordinator to arrange this. We encourage Tree Wardens to:

- Have a thorough knowledge of requirements for safe working.
- Be able to carry out a generic and a site-specific risk assessment and implement precautions.
- Achieve a formal first aid qualification.

Resources

- [The Tree Council guide to 'Trees and the Law'](#)
- [Link to the Plymouth City Council Tree Preservation Order \(TPO\) map](#)