



Parish Councils: You and Your Tree Warden

For our contact details and further information about tree wardens in West Sussex, visit our website: www.westsussex.gov.uk/treewardens.

Appointing a Tree Warden

If you are still at the stage of considering appointing volunteer tree wardens, the guidance notes below may help. We can also help you devise an advertisement and provide leaflets and posters.

Background information, including the value of having tree wardens, is available on the [Tree Council](#)'s website.

It is important to find the right person or people for the role – someone who will be able to work with the clerk and councillors for the benefit of the whole community. Being a tree warden is a position of responsibility based on trust.

As with all relationships, it needs to be worked at and will develop over time!

Guidance Notes

There are a number of characteristics that make a suitable tree warden. These characteristics have more to do with their attitude rather than their knowledge, which can be improved through training.

- A warden should be RESPONSIBLE and willing to CO-OPERATE. Wardens have no special powers, and they should not trespass or get bogged down in tree disputes. They should not interfere with the work of their District Tree Officers (who provide advice and training) but try and work with them. Tree wardens are not experts, and are not expected to be, but they can be a focus for actions, assist the Tree Officers as well as initiate their own projects.
- Wardens need to be PROFESSIONAL. This quality will enable him/her to see matters in a balanced way, so if a tree does have to come down, e.g. for safety reasons, they won't overreact or let their emotions rule their reasoning.
- Wardens must genuinely CARE for their environment and the trees in it.
- Wardens need to have enough TIME to give to their duties. There is no minimum amount set, but clearly Wardens need to be living in the area. Many Wardens who work find time in the evenings and weekends, or combine some duties with their normal routine, e.g. tree surveying while walking the dog.
- Wardens should be WILLING TO LEARN. Those who "know it all" or who are extremely narrow-minded will be difficult to work with.
- Ideally, Wardens should have some prior KNOWLEDGE of trees, e.g. a basic recognition of our native trees and where they grow. However, this knowledge can be learnt.

- People who could **COMMERCIALY GAIN** from being a tree warden, e.g. working tree surgeons, should preferably **NOT** be appointed since they could unfairly exploit their position.
- Age is not a limiting factor since although the elderly may not be able to undertake physically demanding tasks, e.g. tree planting, they can help gather information or give talks.
- If parish councils prefer, they can appoint people on a **TRIAL BASIS** e.g. for an initial six months before they confirm the appointment. If demand is high, **SEVERAL WARDENS** can be appointed (either to cover different geographical areas or to undertake different aspects of the Scheme). **ASSISTANT WARDENS** can also be appointed.

Local tree champions

As local tree champions, tree wardens are the eyes and ears of their neighbourhoods; community involvement is a central aim of the scheme. Local people will often see what needs to be done before council officials or landowners – tree wardens can be the focal point for such issues and will usually know who to contact. If they don't, they will know someone who does!

They can be the link on tree matters between the community and the parish council, and can also be the catalyst for getting tree projects started and supported.

Working together

Don't expect too much of your tree warden too soon – they need time to settle into their role and also absorb a lot of information. Often the best start is to survey the local area – get to know it and the landowners and map all the relevant features on a plan. Certain things may become evident – dead, dying trees that might become hazardous; stakes and ties on recently planted trees that need attention; potential sites for new trees, etc.

By working together, you should be able to decide what the priorities are in a particular area, and then draw up a simple plan to tackle them, step by step. For example:

- new hedgerow trees are needed;
- Tree Preservation Order maps need updating;
- a commemorative tree planting event needs to be organised;
- a brownie pack needs help with their tree badge;
- local, seasonal walks need to be planned to help everyone appreciate trees more and why they are important;
- stakes and ties needing to be removed;
- trees needing to be weeded at the base;
- checking trees on sites planned for development; and
- looking for areas where new trees can be planted and maintained in the long term.

Suggest things that your tree warden might like to get involved in but be open to their ideas too. Tree wardens are volunteers and it is important that they enjoy their role and can see the benefits themselves.

Parish councils should be able to put their tree wardens in touch with other local groups that they may be able to work with, for example, a parish action group, guides, scouts or a local practical conservation group.

Offering support

What does offering support mean? It need not necessarily be cold, hard cash but you may be able to offer some of the following:

- a meeting room;
- maps of the parish;
- photocopying facilities;
- access to planning applications;
- a list of Tree Preservation Orders in the parish;
- travel expenses to attend training events;
- funding for tree planting projects;
- a spot in the parish newsletter (for promotion, requests for help, seasonal highlights and so on);
- purchasing tree identification guides;
- helping to understand parish council procedures and protocol;
- encouragement and building confidence!

In return for your support and guidance, tree wardens should be accountable to the parish council and ideally submit regular reports of their tree-wardening activities. This will give the opportunity for assessing progress, checking that the overall aims are being met and everyone is happy!

As county co-ordinators of the West Sussex Tree Warden Network, it is important that we maintain an up-to-date database of contact details. Please tell us if your tree warden's contact details change, if they resign and a replacement is appointed, if you have additional recruits, or if your parish clerk changes.

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