

JULY 2021

NEWSLETTER



BRIDPORT TREE PLANTING

Let's help double tree cover



Elm Trees in Bridport. By John Hinsley.

Among the varied trees of Bridport there is one remarkable specimen, a survivor from a native species decimated by disease; an impressive Wych elm. {*Ulmus glabra*.} (See photo left)

Prior to the 1970's Dorset was adorned with elms, often huge billowing trees dominating the landscape, especially the English elm. Dutch Elm Disease, a virus spread by the elm bark beetle, started killing these trees and within 10 years they were almost wiped out. Nowadays large elms are extremely rare locally although there are plenty of suckering stems which usually die before they reach 15ft.

Where is this rare and special tree??

Walking up behind Mountfield House, to the Millennium Park, a beautiful and undervalued green space, find the pedestrian gate on the eastern side. Twenty yards down the slope is the Wych elm consisting of six or seven dark stems rising from ground level to a height of about 70ft.

The tree appears to be in reasonable health, although most of its crown is hidden by lime, sycamore and sweet chestnut trees.

The Park was originally a woodland pleasure park created in the late 18th C for William Downe and how this big tree has survived and thrived is a mystery.

As well as this fabulous rarity which appears to have remained largely unnoticed, there are two other beautiful elms beside the path up to the green. These both have elegant straight trunks and look like Smooth-leaved elms, *Ulmus minor*, being in good health and about 60ft. in height.

Also known as the Scottish elm, *Wych* are more often found further north and at higher altitude, being a hardier tree. Very few big specimens survive in the south

Unfortunately none of the elms produced viable-looking seed this year (common in this species), so other propagation methods will have to be used. Can anyone think of a suitable site for a new grove planted to celebrate this special tree ?

With several tree diseases taking a hold in our countryside affecting ash, oak, horse chestnut and larch, plus a rapidly changing climate, the possibility of the return of the native elm with all its associated wildlife is a wonderful prospect.



View south from Millenium Park. The Wych Elm is on left, with the better known Lucombe Oak on the right.

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Would any of our readers like to participate in creating a sculpture celebrating trees?

Bridport Sculpture Trail 2021

Come along to Asker Meadows on the 30th and 31st July to create a new sculpture for the Bridport Sculpture Trail.

Artist Vik Westaway is inviting members of the local community to collaborate on the creation of a willow installation in Asker Meadows. Over two days we'll create 'Treepods' an installation created around two large ash trees near to the East St entrance to the meadows.

The willow 'Tree Pods' represent a seed and the trees their emerging seedlings, the delicate woven shape, circles and envelopes the trunks; forming a fragile shell. Withies will be twisted, looped and tied to create these protective shields, encouraging us to cradle and respect our green environment.

Artist - Vik Westaway

Title - Treepods

Material - Willow

Workshop installation date - 30 and 31st July

Workshop time - 10am -4pm

Maximum 10 people per day

Contact for more details and booking: cleo@theartsdevelopmentcompany.org.uk



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New Partnership

Bridport Tree Planting now have a new and promising partnership with the Rotary Club of Bridport, who are hoping to plant 400 saplings from the Woodland Trust when they can find a site. They are talking to a parish council out of town who are keen, and we hope to be able to help this new initiative.

THANK YOU GROVES NURSERIES! WE ARE VERY HAPPY TO PASS ON THE NEWS THAT GROVES NURSERIES ARE ONCE AGAIN GOING TO MAKE US THE FABULOUS OFFER OF A GIFT OF A TREE FOR EVERY TREE THEY SELL THIS YEAR. THEY MAKE AN IDENTICAL OFFER TO OUR FRIENDS TO THE NORTH, THE BEAMINSTER ECO GROUP, WHO LIKE US HAVE THEIR OWN TREE NURSERY AND AN AMBITIOUS PLANTING PROGRAMME.

OUR SEARCH FOR NEW SITES

In recent weeks we have made visits or had contact with different possible planting sites for the autumn/winter. Magna Housing have offered us four possible sites in the Flaxhayes area, where we already planted in Dibden View, and near the river at Skilling. They are even talking about planting some fruit trees for community use - plums, apple, pears. Watch this space! We are hoping to plant trees and add to hedges in St. Mary's Fields, maybe on both sides of the river subject to Environment Agency approval. We are shortly going to visit the Hyde nursing home in Walditch, where the gardener is keen to plant trees. We have other sites too and meanwhile have been kept busy weeding to look after previously planted trees. Here is a picture of a group having a snack and a drink (free!) after one weeding session in Asker Meadows.



Continuing the story of managing a local fourteen acre wood, the owner writes about a big problem - Fallow Deer.

Two large herds, each of thirty plus deer, roam freely in the area. These large animals will stampede through newly planted trees and guards as if they were mere twigs on their flanks, beautiful to see but destructive in their numbers because of their herding nature. We looked at all our options and felt strongly against the idea of ring fencing all of our land. This we knew would restrict the deer's movement and general freedoms of all species of wild animals in the area, so instead we decided on planting groups of 3-12 trees of the same species together. By spacing them 4-6 meters apart we are giving them the best chance to grow into proper mature trees. Securing deer fencing enclosures around these small groups of trees, with a bit of luck, we hope will be effective protection against the deer, who particularly love the new shoots of young trees.

Also, planting the trees between the dead fallen Spruce and upturned stumps we chose to leave on the ground, we think will discourage the deer, and got us away from planting the trees in formal lines, like you so often see in larger new tree plantations.

If you choose to eat meat, then local venison is about as wild and as healthy as it gets. So, we chose to allow a professional stalker to reduce the numbers of Fallow deer crossing our land. Shooting a deer is a fine art, the conditions and landscapes have to be closely considered and the shooter needs to be accurate, with a single shot. Times in the season have to be adhered to before mating season. There were rumours around the area that individuals were poaching at night using crossbows, leaving the deer wounded and dehydrated. This was extremely distressing news. There are strict rules and licencing around stalking and processing the meat for good reasons, so we were pleased that it was conducted professionally, for a short period of time. The weakest and oldest animals are selected to protect the overall health of the herd.

You don't buy a woodland and field for profit, there is little to be made, but it gives us some hope for the future to share with family and friends a sacred space. To nurture organic grasslands and wild flowers for bees and insects. To encourage grasshopper havens which in turn brings more birds. We already have two visiting pairs of Woodcock from Finland arrive and yes sometimes difficult decisions have to be made, that not everyone will agree with. But on the whole if you follow your heart and values towards a healthy and nature filled future, while at the same time listening closely to the brilliant people involved in nature, that you meet along the way, perhaps we can achieve something small? A protected corner of the world, that we can pass forward to the next generation, to continue to learn from.

Lastly in this July newsletter, here's a piece from our Latvia Correspondent!

It shows that across Europe people are waking up to the climate crisis and the need to plant more trees. This young man, British by birth, has made a home there to be able to do his bit for the world. Well done!

Here in Latvia, we are focusing on sowing trees for food security. As the recent pandemic has reminded us, the world hangs in a precarious balance. Since most of our food is derived from fossil fuelled powered agriculture and transportation, what would happen if the supply of ancient sunshine were to break down? We need to think of our children, and our children's children. One of the most life-affirming and practical solutions, is surely to plant trees that can provide food.

Here we are sowing the following, locally grown species:

Apples, plums, pears, cherries, cornelian cherries, big berry hawthorns, walnuts, hazelnuts, oaks, pine nuts, sweet chestnuts and more. Seeds are carefully overwintered and kept away from rodents. Some take two years or more to germinate!

Whilst of course these seedlings may not come true to the parent tree, we can also think of this work as a breeding experiment – expanding genetic diversity and possibly creating exciting new cultivars along the way. If you know of an orchard where all of the trees are of good stock, then you have a great opportunity to create your own unique varieties of fruit trees!

If we are planting new woodlands, why not make them edible woodlands?

If you'd like to learn more or get involved in planting edible tree seedlings, don't hesitate to contact Charlie at natureastherapy.org@gmail.com



A stork visiting young trees in Latvia. We don't get these wonderful birds yet in West Dorset, although they have been re-introduced at Knepp Rewilding Project in Sussex by Isabella Tree, and one was seen in South Dorset recently by Roly, the forester at Symondsburry Estate.

“The White Stork Project is led by a pioneering partnership of private landowners and nature conservation organisations, who are working together to restore a population of at least 50 breeding pairs in southern England by 2030 through a phased release programme over the next five years.”

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As ever, if you want to be INVOLVED rather than just get this newsletter, which goes out to 180 subscribers, do let me know. Help always needed! Many thanks to all weeders and mulchers - and look out for news of another working party soon

Joe Hackett - Co-Ordinator, Bridport Tree Planting

