



The Tree Council's Tree Warden Scheme

**in partnership with National Grid and supported
by the Government's Cleaner, Safer, Greener initiative**

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT

What do tree wardens do?

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1. **Introduction: Common Goals**

The Tree Warden Scheme was launched nationally by the Tree Council in 1990. EFDC has coordinated a Tree Warden Scheme within the district since 1994. Our goal is to work together with the wardens to:

- encourage more tree planting;
- improve management of trees;
- raise public awareness of the importance of trees; and celebrate trees.

By doing so we hope to be able to pass to future generations the legacy of trees, hedgerows and woodlands, which we have inherited.

In this document we will set out the framework of the scheme within the district to be of assistance to our tree wardens. However, it is also intended as a guide for Town Councils, Parish Councils and other amenity organisations. Tree wardens can only be effective if they are supported by their local community. The framework, which is a revised and updated version of the scheme agreed in 1998, sets out the support which tree wardens should receive.

2. **The Role of Tree Wardens**

What follows is our guidance on what the tree wardens can aim to do. However, they should not feel limited by these suggestions.

A recent survey by the Tree Council has found that tree wardens on average contribute just over three hours a week of their time to tree wardening. However, it is acceptable to do as much or as little as circumstances allow. The joint efforts of Tree Wardens add up to a very significant contribution to improvement of the environment nationally.

The Tree Council has defined four main roles for tree wardens: 'eyes and ears', data collection, local liaison and practical projects.

'Eyes and Ears'. The tree wardens are in a position to report back on many things locally that would otherwise be unnoticed by the authorities. This can be invaluable in protecting trees locally. Tree wardens may:

- alert us to possible unauthorised works to trees;
- look out for pests or diseases and alert the authorities;
- report on dangerous trees, or street trees needing pruning or replacement;
- keep an eye on trees where there may be a threat and, if necessary, ask for a Tree Preservation Order or other measures; and
- keep an eye on tree planting and protection on development site.

Data Collection. To build up a picture of the local treescape, how it was evolved and factors affecting it can help the work of the tree warden and form a useful database for the local community. It may well be possible to support projects which are happening district-wide. Possibilities include:

- collecting a local reference database of information sources, grant aid, reputable tree surgery contractors, tree contacts etc;
- researching and recording the history of local trees and woodlands;
- building up records of Tree Preservation Orders, landmark trees, Conservation Areas, planting schemes etc, (we can supply these); and
- undertaking recording projects of hedges, woodland or landmark and veteran trees; and
- undertaking photographic surveys.

Local Liaison. Without having to be an `expert' wardens can play a vital role by giving accurate information to those who need it and by acting as a contact between the community and the Council or other authorities. They may:

- act as a `signpost' directing the community to relevant experts, sources of grants etc;
- pass on information to the community from other bodies (e.g. recent permissions for tree work, new planting schemes , local initiatives etc);
- give general answers to questions from the community (e.g. who do I go to for tree surgery or advice? How do I find out in my tree is preserved? etc);
- act as representatives for the local council or group on tree issues and coordinate local responses to tree applications etc;
- publicise tree issues locally by articles in parish magazines, exhibitions etc;
- give talks to schools or other local bodies;
- make contact with organisations or individuals whose work may affect trees (e.g. cable tv contractors, farmers, developers) and “speak for the trees”; and
- promote good standards of tree surgery.

Projects. Tree wardening gives the opportunity, particularly to wardens who are part of a team, to help arrange or coordinate projects, which encourage tree planting, promote better care of existing trees or celebrate trees in the life of the community. Specialist advice and assistance is available from EFDC's Epping Forest Arts Team, as well as Countrycare. Funding is often available from external sources, even for ambitious projects, providing they are seen to arise from the needs of the community.

Tree Planting. Tree wardens will find national events coordinated by the Tree Council helpful in planning projects and gaining publicity. National Tree Week happens regularly in late autumn and Tree Love Care in early spring. Tree wardens may:

- survey the parish for tree planting needs and opportunities;
- arrange for planting of individual trees in important locations, particularly where the new tree will have a local meaning;
- coordinate local schemes to encourage tree planting by the community, e.g. fruit trees in gardens, or as community orchards; and
- cooperate with landowners to undertake planting schemes on private land from individual trees to hedges or woodland.

Looking After Existing Trees. Many of the possibilities mentioned above help protect trees but possible projects include:

- recording the local `landmark trees' and contacting their owners;
- recording veteran trees;
- recording `heritage' trees, including the related stories;
- conserving important trees by finding funding for pruning; and
- propagating important trees and planting them in suitable places.

Celebrating Trees. The value of imaginative projects should not be underestimated. The Tree Council will organise a “Walk in the Woods” campaign each year in early summer and a “Seed Gathering Sunday” each autumn; these will provide useful publicity and information material. Projects which have been undertaken with success include:

- establishing a community orchard;
- establishing a seed bank from local trees;
- publishing local leaflets (e.g. tree trails);
- arranging a tree dressing event or a guided walk, particularly if “illustrated: or “illuminated:”;
- arranging a competition (e.g. poetry or painting);
- propagating seed from important local trees and using the saplings to create a new generation of heritage trees from local sources.

Looking After Street Trees. We recognise that in our towns care of street trees is a crucial issue. We value the role of tree wardens in reporting tree problems or opportunities to us and will do our best within existing financial resources, to respond to all such requests.

We also know that tree wardens may wish to make their own practical contribution to looking after their local street trees on a more regular basis than is possible for us. Therefore we have agreed that tree wardens may undertake minor pruning of street trees and removing stakes and ties, subject to the direction of the Council's Landscape Officer and provided that they have received training from him and give him notice of works beforehand.

Wardens also can make a crucial contribution by organising "Adopt a Tree" schemes for new planting and we will make the information available for them to do so.

3. Local Support for Tree Wardens

For tree wardens to succeed they need support from other local bodies. These include local societies, the Town or Parish Council and the District Council.

In the Parish. Where numbers permit, tree wardens are encouraged to work together as a group. Within the framework of the scheme they then decide their own priorities. It is up to them whether they meet regularly and how they organise themselves. Larger groups may find it beneficial to constitute themselves as a bone fide local group, attached to a parent group, which may be the Town Council, Parish Council or amenity society. They will make it easier to attract support for projects, including grant aid.

Because tree wardens are volunteers the local council must respect their independence. Nevertheless the support of their local council, particularly with publicising the role of tree wardens and active cooperation in tree warden projects will be vital to a successful local scheme. The Town or Parish Council or other nominating organisation should:

- invite tree wardens to all relevant meetings and introduce an item in each relevant agenda for tree business;
- invite the tree wardens to be involved in local tree issues, including responses on planning applications, Tree Preservation Orders etc;
- offer assistance to the tree wardens with publicity, funding and insurance;
- agree any specific tasks;
- review the progress of the scheme with the tree wardens on an annual basis; and
- unless the tree warden group undertakes to do this, inform the District Scheme Coordinator of any changes to the list of tree wardens.

District-Wide. The scheme is coordinated by the District Council's Countryside Manager with assistance from the Tree and Landscape Team. We recognise that we have a crucial role if the scheme is to succeed in our district. In fact we see tree wardening as part of a wider range of community partnerships, which the Council wishes to promote. District wide projects include;

- putting in place a series of community tree strategies, to cover the whole district;
- playing an active role in recognising landmark trees and veteran trees;
- recording flagship species and ancient hedges under the Biodiversity Action Plan;
- involving the community in tree planting initiatives;
- ensuring that newly planted trees are looked after; and
- publicising locally the importance of trees.

To enable this to happen we will:

- continue to coordinate the scheme within Epping Forest District;
- involve local group coordinators with management of the scheme;
- hold at least three meetings for the whole group per year;
- provide information on a regular basis to the whole group;
- support local initiatives; and actively respond to requests for information training and help from tree wardens.

4. **The Tree Council**

The scheme is coordinated Nationally by the Tree Council, in partnership with the National Grid. Since its launch in 1990 the scheme has grown under the Tree Council's guidance to more than 8,000 wardens in 135 networks across the country.

The Tree Council has set out its vision for the scheme in this way:

“The treescape of the British Isles is a fundamental part of our national heritage and worthy of our protection. This requires a sense of “stewardship”, which will best happen at a local level where people value and understand their trees and have the knowledge and skills to take action. To achieve this each community should have an advocate for trees, a “warden” who will promote and defend, survey and record trees and initiate local action. Only then can we rightly say that our trees have a secure future”.

To achieve this vision the Tree Council has undertaken to:

- maintain the leadership of the tree warden scheme through national coordination and the management of regional networks;
- establish long term sustainable involvement of local authorities and other organisations;
- work towards complete coverage of the British Isles, whereby every community has a tree warden, where it is thought locally appropriate;
- continually enhance the role of the tree warden through the development of national projects and partnerships, sustaining existing tree wardens into the future;
- communicate with tree wardens through “Tree Warden News” and other Tree Council publications;
- increase and strengthen links between local authorities and their tree wardens;
- set up regional management of tree warden schemes with staff employed to coordinate action across several districts/counties;
- encourage local authorities to expand numbers of parishes and communities involved;
- promote the relevance of the tree wardens by providing direction, through projects, either national or local;
- encourage the inclusion of the tree warden scheme into local and national Agenda 21 Strategies and hence raise the profile of trees and community involvement; and
- work with our partners to continue to develop tree warden training as the key mechanism for building the capacity of wardens to make an effective contribution.