

Tree Warden: Report to the Parish Meeting 17th April 2024

A network of tree wardens has been in place in Suffolk since at least 1990. Tree wardens are usually appointed by Parish Councils but not all parish councils have any. However Suffolk does quite well with over 200. I have been a tree warden for about 20 years.

The tree wardens receive training and support from the Tree Council and also the Woodland Trust. There are several websites and regular online training and discussion. For example, Hedgelinek.org.uk gives detailed advice on maintenance of farm hedges. These organisations also organise a supply of trees for new planting projects.

Duties of tree wardens vary but usually include advising on tree health and management, the law around Tree Preservation Orders. Some organise opportunities such as walks to visit local trees and appreciate them, and seed collecting.

In the past year I have occasionally been involved in advising on planning applications where these affect trees.

Planning applications for new build also give the opportunity for the parish council to ask for mitigating features such as screening by planting hedges and more trees. There is the potential to advise on increasing biodiversity for example by planting hedges with a variety of species bearing fruit and flower as opposed to a monoculture of for example laurel or plain fencing. We can suggest where more trees and hedges can be incorporated to enhance the landscape and improve the microclimate. Trees provide shade, cooling and stabilisation of temperatures, and also may have nectar bearing flowers for insects and seeds and fruits for birds and animals. They reduce run off and soak up excess rainwater. They also require looking after such as formative pruning and watering in dry spells especially if newly planted.

Tree preservation orders are put on trees perceived to be at risk by the local authority, East Suffolk District Council. It then requires planning permission to carry out any pruning, removal of branches or felling.

For the past three years, tree wardens in Suffolk have been growing a variety of trees from local seed and cuttings. These are used within the parish and swapped around on our tree warden network. In Waldringfield volunteers have been helping with this for the last two years. I am also able to obtain larger numbers of trees for woodland and hedge planting, all of native species.

We have been extending the hedges locally with tree planting and hedges in various places in the field network around the village.

It used to be the case that all the tree wardens were appointed by the pc but now other relevant organisations can appoint them and so we have two appointed by Greener Waldringfield in the village. We are all working together towards extending the hedge network and tree cover where possible, bearing in mind that tree cover in Britain as a whole is pretty low compared with other countries in Europe at around 13%..

Christie Fisher Kay