

Chairman's Announcements

Subject:	Ash Dieback
Web/ Email contact:	Email queries: Communications@wiltshire.gov.uk

Key messages:

- This is a serious public safety issue and landowners are responsible for dealing with it on their land.
- There is an urgent need for all landowners to identify ash trees growing alongside the highway, public rights of way and in public spaces that are showing signs of this disease and take action.
- Trees on private land away from public access can be left, the resulting dead wood, will continue to provide essential habitat for a range of wildlife including insects, nesting birds, roosting bats and a whole range of other small mammals.
- It is important that we replant our woodlands, hedgerows and parklands
- There is a range of local and national funding opportunities available for replanting
- Our ecologists and landscape officers can offer advice to landowners on tree management and replacement, including replacement funding opportunities.

Video:

The Ash Dieback [video](#) explains why ash dieback is an issue that ALL landowners in Wiltshire need to take action to address. It outlines the help available from Wiltshire Council and signpost to other national organisations that can offer advice and funding to plant replacement trees.

Background:

Ash Dieback or Chalara Dieback of Ash is a disease which is expected to lead to the decline and death of most of the ash trees in Britain. 90% of woodland Ash trees nationwide are likely to be affected over the next five to 15 years.

Ash Dieback is already affecting trees in all parts of Wiltshire, and the council, along with other large landowners is working to address the impacts of the disease. The council has already carried out an assessment of all trees that are our responsibility along our A and B road network and has embarked on works to remove infected trees.

Our current focus is to address the immediate safety issue, but we will be replanting native species to replace the lost ash trees and this will support the goals set out in the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for the county as well as the objectives of the Nature Recovery Strategy that the council is developing.

In trees alongside the highway, rights of way and in public spaces, this can pose a risk of injury to people and damage to property. There is an urgent need for all landowners to identify Ash trees growing alongside the highway, public rights of way and in public spaces that are showing signs of this

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disease and remove or significantly reduce these trees in order to avoid risks to the public or to property.

Once infected, trees decline quickly, often dying within two growing seasons. Trees rapidly lose timber strength, leading to branches and trees falling.

The loss of so many ash trees will have a dramatic impact on our landscape, both visually and from the numerous benefits they provide. It will affect our carbon cycling and water cycle, will leave crops and housing more exposed to the effects of weather and result in a direct loss of wildlife species that rely on trees and woodland areas.

It is important that we replant our woodlands, hedgerows and parklands with the most appropriate, alternative species of native trees and shrubs, in order to maintain the unique landscape character of Wiltshire, and to ensure that sufficient habitat continues to support the varied range of wildlife species that rely on these for food and shelter.

There is a range of local and national funding opportunities available for planting whole woodlands, or just sections of hedgerow with standard trees, or small copses.

Our ecologists can help landowners with land that could accommodate trees, to assess its suitability for planting and the most appropriate tree species.

The council is developing a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for the county as well as a Nature Recovery Strategy. They will identify the existing natural areas of high value for people and wildlife, but also where further planting would be of most additional benefit.

Our ecologists and landscape officers are available to offer advice to landowners on tree management and replacement, including replacement funding opportunities.

Other useful sources of information are available from:

Wiltshire Council, www.wiltshire.gov.uk/recreation-trees-forests

The Tree Council, www.treecouncil.org.uk

Woodland Trust, Woodland Trust www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Forest Research, www.forestresearch.gov.uk

The Arboricultural Association www.trees.org.uk

The Forestry Commission, particularly their regular blog

www.forestrycommission.blog.gov.uk

All these sites have information on managing the disease and avoiding the risks to people and wildlife.

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What does an Ash Tree look like?



How to identify Ash Dieback:

Among the first symptoms that an ash tree might be infected with Ash Dieback is blackening and wilting of leaves and shoots in mid- to late summer (July to September). These months are the best time of year to survey ash trees for symptoms in the foliage. This is because once autumn begins in late September or October, the normal seasonal change in the colour of the leaves can be mistaken for symptoms of the disease.

Further information on identification can be found here:

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/pest-and-disease-resources/ash-dieback-hymenoscyphus-fraxineus/>