



Northumberland County Council

Northumberland Free Tree Scheme – Tree Guidance

As your tree grows it will need different amounts of care and support. *(This information is adapted from the [Woodland Trust website](#).)*

Where to plant:

Before you plant, think about the size of your tree when it reaches maturity. Be careful not to plant too close to buildings as although small now, this could become a problem as it grows. Also be aware that the roots grow and spread as the tree grows. This might cause structural damage, so be aware of building foundations and underground services like water pipes and broadband cables.

Make sure it's the right conditions for your tree. Avoid planting under existing trees or shady spots and make sure to give your tree enough space to grow (1-5 m apart from other trees).

How to Plant:

- Plant when trees are dormant – November-March.
- Prepare your site: mark out where you are going to plant, cut the grass short and remove the weeds.
- Plant your tree with enough space: recommend 2meter apart from other trees (1-5 meters is a good range).
- Dig a hole deep enough for all the tree roots (see this video: <https://youtu.be/yBqGVIURa9o>)

Year 1-3:

- **Weeding:** keep 1-meter diameter around your tree free of weeds and grass as these will compete with your tree for moisture and nutrients. Manual weeding is great or using mulch (such as bark chips or straw). Chemical-based products can be used if necessary
- **No need to water:** this will help the tree adapt to your garden and natural conditions. It will encourage roots to grow downwards in search of water (instead of up to the soil surface). This will increase the trees stability. Only water if there are long dry spells, if so, saturate the ground so the water sinks deep down to the roots.
- **Beware of mowers:** make sure everyone knows where the sapling is to stop it being damaged or mowed over!

Years 3-10:

- **Remove the tree guard:** remove guard as soon as it starts to break or disintegrate (usually around 5 years+), as it has done its job now and might hamper further growth.
- **Pruning:** Not essential but encourages upwards growth (instead of outwards). Make sure to research your tree type to know when the best time of year for pruning is.
- **Coppicing:** cutting the tree near its base to encourage new growth. This is after 7-10 years. Again, make sure to research depending on the species of tree.

How do I know which tree species to pick:

We have separated the offerings into different size gardens. Whilst this is useful you might like to have a look at the Guide to Native species and their care: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1168/twigged.pdf> by the Woodland Trust. This will give you a better idea on how big these species can grow.

Further advice from the Woodland Trust: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/advice/choose/>