



# Tree Friend Toolkit

**Bromley**  
THE LONDON BOROUGH





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## Introduction

With approximately 36,000 trees, comprising over 200 species, we have the largest street tree stock of all the London boroughs. The vast majority of these are deciduous, though we do also have a number of coniferous species. The stock is generally made up of a combination of large forest type species such as lime, oak, ash and horse chestnut; and smaller ornamental trees such as *Sorbus* species, hawthorn, ornamental plum, apple, pear and cherry - we have over a thousand *Prunus* 'Kanzan' trees alone!



The reason we like to keep a diverse range of trees is twofold; firstly in order to maintain amenity interest for the streetscene, and secondly to build in resilience in terms of maintaining a healthy overall tree stock when faced with the threat of pests and diseases. Planting and maintaining a variety of trees not only protects the stock, but also builds in a range of ages which enhances biodiversity.

In addition to our street trees, we also have a wide range of tree species within our parks, school grounds and 1,300 acres of conservation sites. Interestingly Bromley has around two thirds of London's woodlands in both public and private ownership within its borders, making it a hugely important borough in the context of the capital's biodiversity targets.

Whilst our contractor, under the guidance of our Tree Team, maintains our impressive tree stock, the contribution of our Tree Friends who volunteer to look after trees in their neighbourhood, provides a valuable support to supplement this.

## London Borough of Bromley's Tree Team

Our Tree Team comprises five qualified and experienced Tree Officers who manage public trees in streets, parks, educational sites, allotments, cemeteries and woodlands across the borough. As a Local Authority we have a duty of care to people visiting land in our ownership, our employees and to those using the Highways within our control. One of the Tree Team's main responsibilities is to manage trees in relation to public safety by undertaking a cyclical programme of tree inspections. Over many years, the team has developed a robust system in order to manage the risk trees within the borough pose. This includes a clear audit trail to demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that the public are as safe as they reasonably can be.

In addition to surveying work, an equal amount of the Tree Team's time is dedicated to addressing enquiries from members of the public of which they process around 2,500 per year. As well as serious issues of potential structural damage, they have to deal with tree nuisance problems such as natural light issues and provide an internal consultancy service to other council departments such as the Highways, Street Lighting, Insurance and CCTV teams.

Along with new tree planting projects, some of the Tree Team's most rewarding work is carried out with our communities. The Tree Team provides a dedicated resource of specialist leadership in woodland works days with several partnership groups. This includes the planning of work days, delivery of equipment, health and safety responsibility, and the implementation of woodland management works.

Supporting Friends groups on work days provides an important contribution towards improving biodiversity, public access and maintaining and/or reviving silvicultural practices, including operations such as thinning and coppicing. Officers also provide 'walks and talks', specialist fruit tree pruning workshops, tree risk workshops and guest speaker provision for planning seminars and residential group meetings.

There are also other staff and teams within the council and affiliated to the council who manage trees; these include a small planning team specialising in protected trees and trees in relation to new construction, and a busy Conservation Team. Their primary aim is to maintain a healthy, diverse tree stock in the present whilst ensuring that future generations will experience its benefits.



## The Tree Maintenance Contractor

The current contractor, Gristwood and Toms, is directed by the Tree Team to undertake remedial works identified in our condition surveys. There are several arboricultural operations people will commonly see the contractor performing, including:

- Crown lifting – removing lower branches causing an obstruction
- Crown reduction – reducing the overall size of the tree
- The removal of dead wood
- Basal growth removal
- Felling trees – for reasons of public safety and in insurance mitigation
- Planting new and replacement trees
- Watering newly planted trees during their first year

There are three ways in which the contractor's work is programmed:

1. Emergency callout works, which the contractor is duty bound to attend within 1 hour (the majority of these are clearing fallen privately owned trees from the highway)
2. Remedial works to address issues of public safety e.g. trees infected with pests and diseases or structural defects, as identified in condition surveys
3. Pruning cycles to mitigate potential insurance claims from subsidence related damage on shrinkable clay subsoils



## What Tree Friends do



Below is a list of things that you can do to help look after street trees, to supplement the work of our contractor:

- Monitor the health of existing trees
- Remove basal growth and low side shoots
- Water trees during dry conditions
- Suggest where a street could be enhanced by the addition of trees
- Loosen ties on staked young trees
- Identify missing trees/empty tree pits and assisting in the selection of replacement trees
- Report dangerous trees
- Plant herbaceous plants and bulbs in tree pits.



## What Tree Friend Coordinators do

Rather than liaising with hundreds or thousands of volunteers, the Council operates through a Tree Friend Coordinator for each Residents' Association or community group.

Below is a list of things that Tree Friend Coordinators can do:

- Maintain a database of volunteers within their group that includes the volunteers' contact details and the trees that they help look after
- Act as the liaison person between Bromley Council and Tree Friends within their group, forwarding any emails or newsletters where necessary
- Promote the scheme to their Residents' Association or community group via articles in newsletters or letter drops
- Order any supplies, such as tree ties, spacers or strimmer guards on behalf of their group





## Health and Safety

When assisting Bromley with tree care it is vital that you take some sensible, but necessary measures to ensure that you, and members of the public, remain as safe as possible.

### Health and Safety Checklist

- Check that what you intend to do will not put yourself or others at risk
- Wear protective gloves where necessary, and a hi-vis vest
- Only use secateurs or loppers to remove basal growth or low side shoots from a tree
- Only work on the ground (i.e. not on a chair or up a ladder)
- Do not stand in the road
- Do not create any tripping hazards on the pavement or obstructions in the road

### Reporting an accident or incident

If you are unlucky enough to experience an accident or are involved in an incident, such as being threatened or experiencing verbal abuse, please complete and return a [Neighbourhood Friends accident and incident report form](#).

### Insurance cover

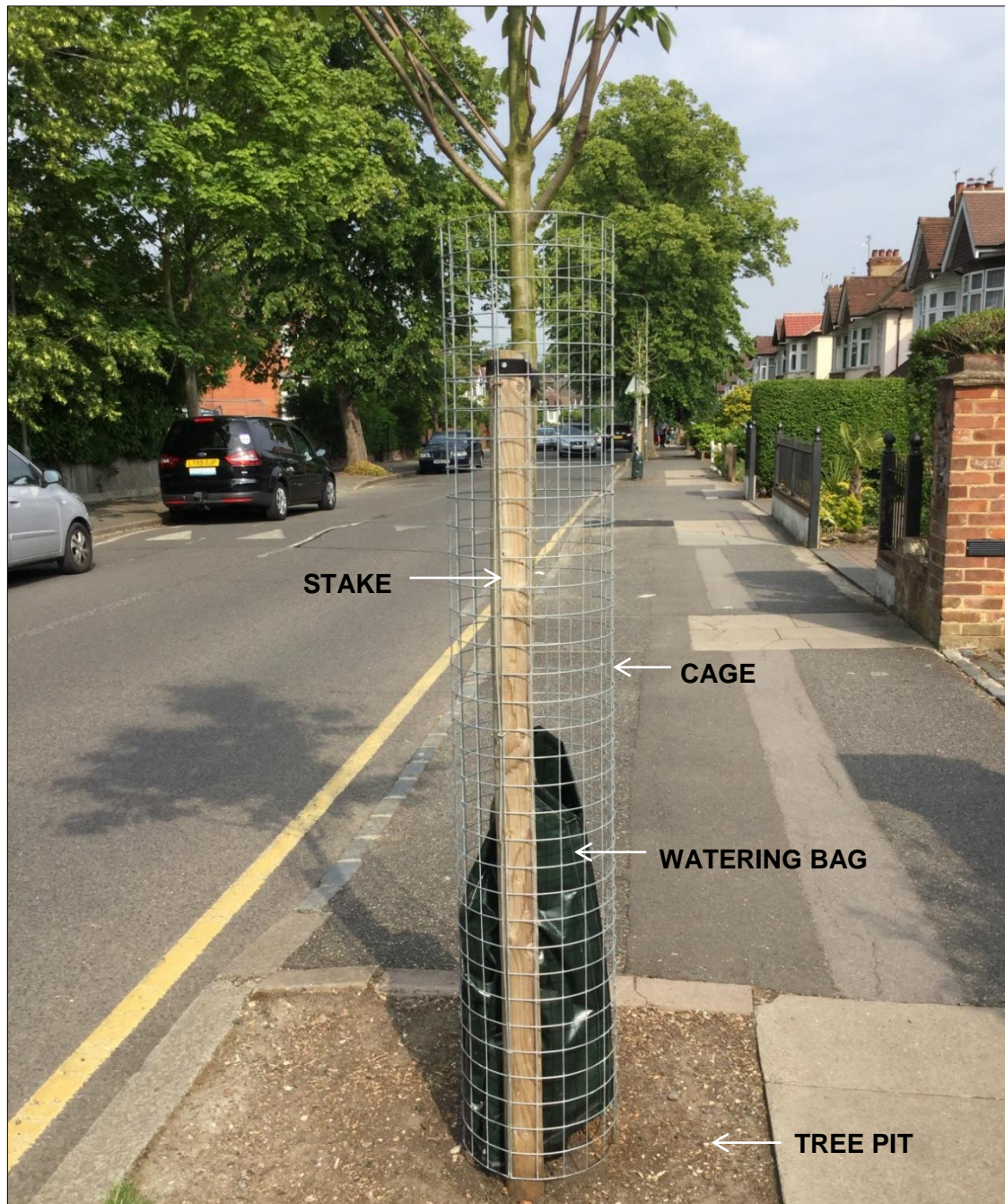
Provided you adhere to the agreed practices there is insurance cover in place to protect you and the general public in the event of an accident or incident.

In the event that something does occur, please ensure that it is reported to the Council's Insurance Team by telephoning 020 8313 4294.

## Young Tree Maintenance

'Young Tree Maintenance' refers to the practice of caring for newly planted trees in their first four years. After this period the tree should have become established and will not require intensive maintenance.

Young trees have a cage, stake, tree tie, spacers, reusable watering bag and a strimmer guard if necessary once the cage has been removed.



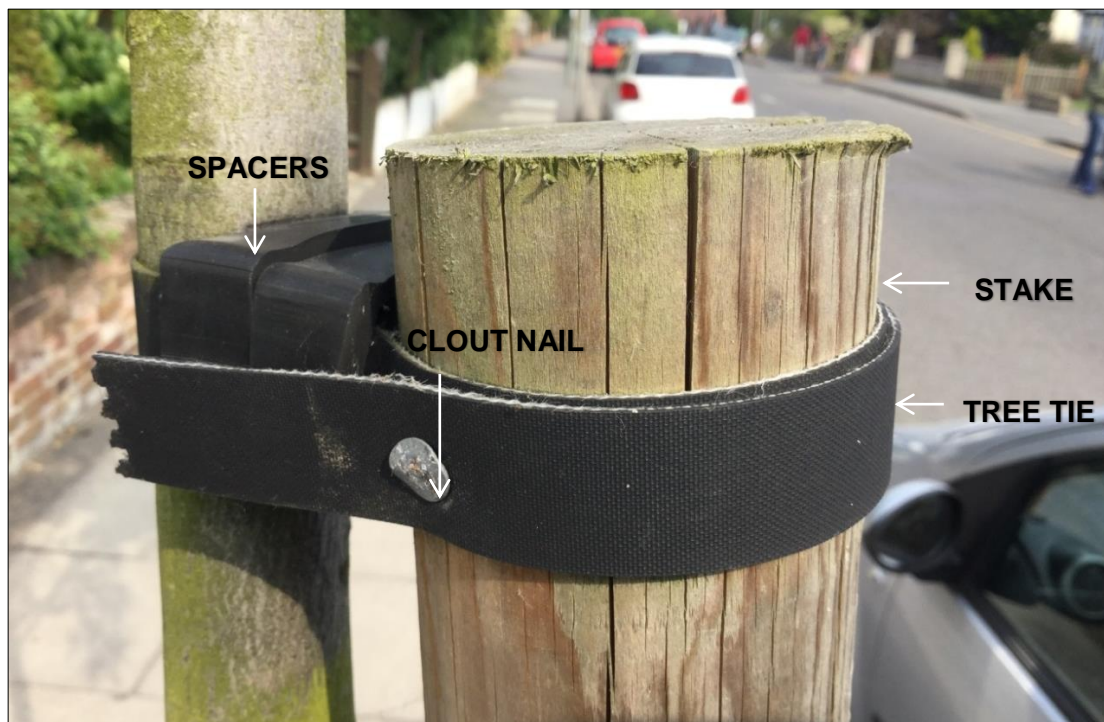


### **Watering bag**

The bag holds 100 litres of water. In the first year our contractor will fill the bag ten times, but you can also assist with this by filling the bag at the top when it is empty, either through the grid, or from the top with lower guards, so the water slowly percolates out through the bottom. Ideally the bag should be filled around once a week for up to three years.

### **Stake, tree tie and spacers**

The stake is required to support the tree until it is around four years old because its roots come as a compact ball with no root system. The tree tie at the top of the stake sometimes becomes too loose or too tight. Tree Friends can either contact the Council to adjust it, or if it is accessible above the cage, they can adjust it themselves. Using a claw hammer, they will simply need to remove the two clout nails that attach the tree tie to the stake, adjust the tree tie and then replace the clout nails.



### **Cage**

The cage protects the young tree from vandals and vehicles. If you notice that it has been pushed into the tree please inform the Council. The cage is usually removed after two to three years to leave the stake and the tree tie.

### **Strimmer guard**

Once the cage has been removed, if the tree is in a grass verge or park, a strimmer guard will usually be applied to protect it from mechanical damage.



### **Damaged lower branch removal**

If you notice a small lower branch that is hanging off, you can remove it, as close to the union as possible using secateurs or loppers. It is important that you do not leave any sharp points, or expose too much of the tissue of the tree. Always work on the ground.





## Monitoring the health of street trees

A general look at a tree from the ground upwards should be sufficient for you to check for any problems such as:

- Whether the bark is intact
- If the limbs and branches are fully attached
- Whether the leaves appear healthy.

Look out for trees that are dangerous, for example when a branch has died, which could be a hazard, especially in strong winds.

There are a number of pests and diseases which affect leaf condition, however many of these do not harm the tree. If in doubt you should check with a Tree Officer.

Pests and diseases that can threaten the life of a tree include the following:

- [Chalara dieback of ash](#)
- [Horse chestnut bleeding canker](#)
- [Massaria disease of plane trees](#)
- [Oak processionary moth](#)

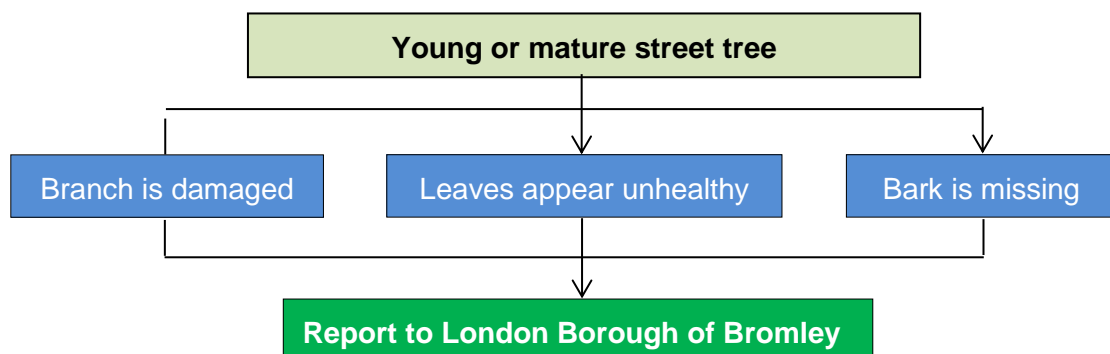
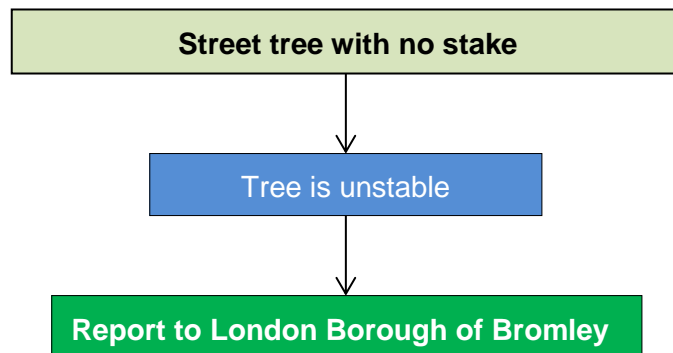
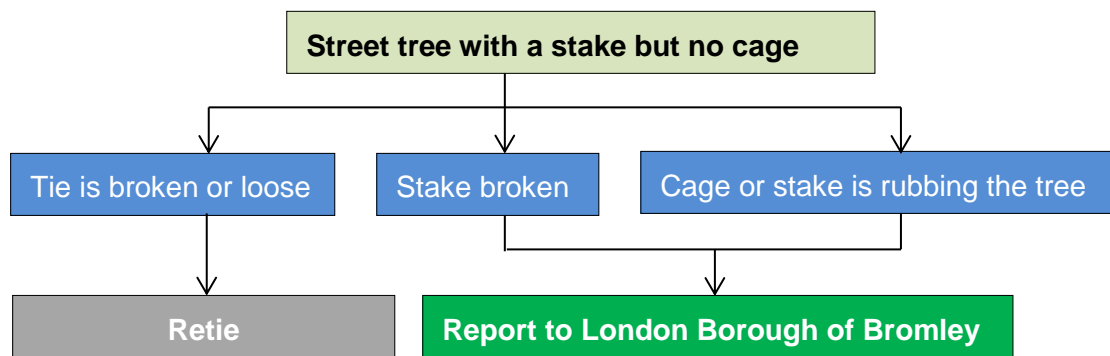
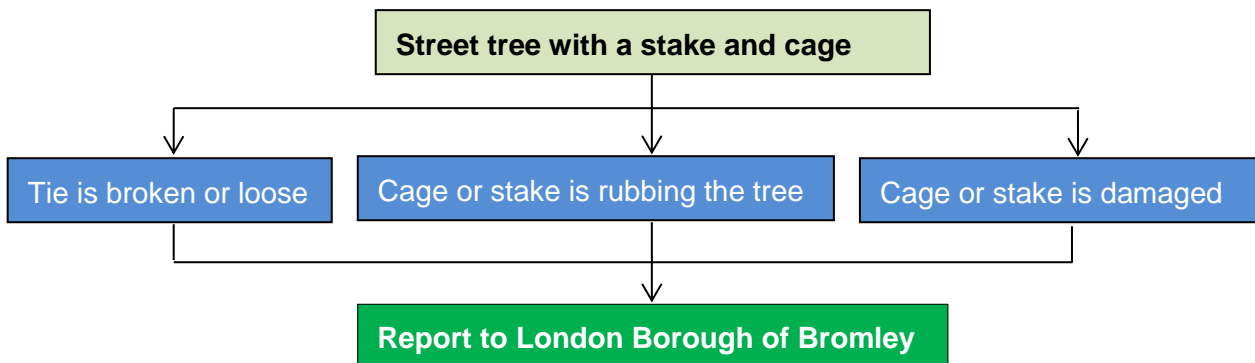


Oak processionary moth is a particular threat in Bromley at the moment. It arrived in the borough in 2012 and although efforts to control the spread have been relatively successful, it is highly likely that infection will occur outside the original outbreak area.



Chalara dieback of ash is a problem we are likely to see the impact of for many years. The Forestry Commission survey identified two privately owned woodland sites in the south east of the borough towards the end of 2014 showing symptoms of Chalara dieback of ash.

# Street tree checklist





# How to report a dangerous or diseased tree

## Online

Wherever possible, we would like you to report trees on public land that you consider diseased or dangerous to the Bromley website, by clicking on the [www.bromley.gov.uk/report](http://www.bromley.gov.uk/report) link and then clicking on the 'tree problems' link. It is possible to flag exactly where the tree is in the street or park and even upload a photo to show exactly what the problem is.

## Telephone

If you are not on the Internet, you can ring Bromley Council's Customer Contact Centre on 0300 303 8658.

## Postal address

The Tree Team  
London Borough of Bromley  
Civic Centre  
Stockwell Close  
Bromley  
BR1 3UH

## Reporting trees on private land

If you consider a tree on private property to be diseased or infected please contact the Forestry Commissions Plant Health Service:

Email: [plant.health@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:plant.health@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

Tel: 0300 067 5155



## Removing basal growth and side shoots

Basal growth is the term used to describe the growth from the base and/or stem of a tree in the spring and summer. This growth occurs on a range of tree species, however, it is usually most pronounced on lime trees. We have over 2,200 lime trees in the borough and it is therefore an ongoing issue for us to manage. If it is left unchecked it can cause a problem by causing injuries, obstructing pavements, blocking vehicular movement or damaging vehicles at the side of roads.

As this problem is growth related, it often means that all trees will develop the problem at the same time. This is usually in late May/early June although it is dependent on weather conditions. If a growing season is particularly favourable, it is possible that some trees may have to be treated 2-3 times within that calendar year.

Our contractors will remove basal growth from lime trees at least one a year, but as regrowth is particularly prolific on lime trees you can really help us with this.

- Wear protective gloves where necessary and a high-vis vest
- Do not stand in the road
- Work on the ground (i.e. do not stand on a chair or a ladder)
- Only remove shoots that are up to 10mm thick using secateurs or loppers.
- Trim the shoot close to the trunk so that you do not leave any sharp edges but so that you do not expose too much of the tree tissue





## Provision of equipment

Whilst Tree Friends can use their own equipment, if required, the Council can supply things like:

- Secateurs
- Spacers
- Clout nails
- Tree ties
- Strimmer guards



## Disposal of arisings

### Garden waste temporary sites and reuse and recycling centres

Arisings can be taken to your local [reuse and recycling centre](#) which is open all year round (excluding Christmas Day and Boxing Day) and, depending on the time of the year, to one of the [garden waste temporary sites](#) located around the borough.

### Composting

Alternatively, arisings can be [composted](#) at home if appropriate.

### Green Garden Waste Wheelie Bin Collection Service

If you subscribe to the [green garden waste wheelie bin collection service](#), you may also use this for the disposal of arisings up to 25mm (1") thick..

### Tree Friend Arisings Collection Service

We are able to supply you with heavy duty purple plastic sacks that can be collected free of charge via the Tree Friend Arisings Collection Service (see over).

## **Tree Friends' Arisings Collection Service**

The Tree Friends' Arisings Collection Service allows our Tree Friends to dispose of arisings free of charge in heavy duty purple plastic sacks by ringing the Tree Friends' Arisings Collection Service hotline number: **020 8315 0220**.

### **How can I get the purple plastic sacks?**

Purple sacks can be obtained, by ringing the hotline number 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The phone line will usually be answered Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 5.00pm. A message with your name, telephone number, full address (including post code) and the number of sacks you require can be left at other times. The sacks will normally be delivered within a week.

It is important to specify that you are a Tree Friend and intend to use the purple sacks for the collection of arisings, as heavy duty sacks will then be supplied. These sacks should not be used to dispose of domestic waste, arisings collected from private land, or litter and leaves collected from the Highway.

### **Where do I leave the purple sacks full of arisings?**

We would prefer you to leave full purple sacks at the front of your property within arm's reach of the pavement, but not on the pavement. However, if you are working on trees well away from your property, sacks can be left on the pavement/grass verge (against a tree so they do not create a tripping hazard), in a street that is cleaned by the Council. They should not be left within a park or greenspace, or in a litter bin.

### **How do I get full purple sacks collected?**

Preferably leave out the full purple sacks before 7.00am on the day that pavements are swept in the street where the sacks have been left - then immediately leave a message on the hotline stating their exact location. They will then be collected that day without our contractor having to make a special journey just to collect the sacks.

Alternatively, you can ring the hotline at any other time stating the purple sacks' location, and they will be collected by our contractor by the next working day.

If you do not know the day the pavements in a particular street are swept, please refer to our [street cleansing lookup](#).

### **Why are the sacks purple?**

If someone is seen leaving a purple sack in the street, we know they are likely to be a Tree Friend and are not fly tipping.



## Identifying missing trees/empty tree pits and assisting in the selection of replacement trees



Once a tree has been removed from a tree pit because it has died, or it poses a health and safety risk which warrants its removal, normally a tree officer will make a decision whether the tree pit can be temporarily capped if it poses a tripping hazard, or should remain open for imminent planting. If a decision is made for imminent replanting, a thick wooden stake is driven into the ground so the tree pit does not create an unseen tripping hazard for pedestrians, and the site is left clean and tidy. Normally the Tree

Officer would then decide on an appropriate replacement tree, but if you have a particular request, your wishes can be taken into consideration.

Our Highways Inspectors also look out for empty tree pits on their routine inspections, and refer these to the Tree Team, but we would welcome you reporting any empty tree pits that we are not aware of. It helps if we are told whether the missing tree was in a paved area or in a grass verge, if it was in an existing constructed tree pit (i.e. one with edges) and if we are given a precise location, e.g. in the grass verge between number 24 and 26 Bromley Street.

There are a few locations where the name of the street may influence the species of tree that we plant there, such as Oak Tree Gardens, Cherry Tree Walk, and Birch Tree Avenue.

## Planting herbaceous plants and bulbs in tree pits

Planting herbaceous plants and bulbs around tree pits, greatly enhances the street scene; the changing face of seasonal planting heralds the varying seasons and offers different vistas through the year.

However, sometimes planting in tree pits can compromise the health of a tree, particularly with young trees. Shrubs, for example, although longer lasting, tend to drink more water and take more nutrients out of the limited soil available to the trees. We ask you to therefore consult with the Tree Team before deciding to plant in a tree pit, and what to plant.



Most tree pits are composed of dirt, litter and weeds. The first exercise is to carefully dig out all of this rubbish by hand. Any basal growth should be neatly pruned back with a pair of sharp secateurs. The pit should then be re-filled with a John Innes No. 3 soil based compost or a peat free substitute.

Winter bedding planted in October could include just bulbs such as crocus, narcissus or tulips, or a mixture including wallflowers, polyanthus or pansies. Apart from the initial planting, these bulbs and herbaceous plants require minimal horticultural maintenance, unlike wallflowers, that need to be watered well when they are first planted.

Dig out the planting in early to mid-May and store the bulbs for re-use, or leave them in the tree pit if you do not intend to plant bedding plants. Remove any weeds, prune any new basal growth from the tree and consider whether the pit needs topping up with soil. Geraniums (Pelargoniums) thrive in the dry and hostile climate of tree pits, but although they are costly, they can be over-wintered in a sunny position inside as a 'house' plant. The traditional African marigold also delights in dry soil as do Salvias. You will need to water them in well and water them every two to three days. If there is a pipe going to the root ball of the tree, you could give that a good drink as well.

Then sit back and enjoy your efforts. Your neighbours will love you even more and who knows – they may even adopt their own tree pit!



## Useful Contacts

London Tree Officers Association (LTOA)	020 7974 4124 <a href="http://www.ltoa.org.uk">www.ltoa.org.uk</a>
Forestry Commission England	0300 067 4321 <a href="http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england">www.forestry.gov.uk/england</a>
Arboricultural Association	01794 368717 <a href="http://www.trees.org.uk">www.trees.org.uk</a>
Woodland Trust	01476 581135 <a href="http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk">www.woodland-trust.org.uk</a>
British Standards	020 8996 9001 <a href="http://www.bsstandards.co.uk">www.bsstandards.co.uk</a>
The Tree Council	0207 407 9992 <a href="http://www.treecouncil.org.uk">www.treecouncil.org.uk</a>
International Society of Arboriculture	0121 556 8302 <a href="http://www.isa-arboriculture.org">www.isa-arboriculture.org</a>
London Wildlife Trust	020 7261 0447 <a href="http://www.wildlondon.org.uk">www.wildlondon.org.uk</a>
Natural England	Tel: 0300 0603900 <a href="http://www.naturalengland.org.uk">www.naturalengland.org.uk</a>

## Useful links

[How to identify the species of a tree](#)

[How to identify tree pests and diseases by tree species](#)

### Diseases

- [Acute oak decline](#)
- [Chalara dieback of ash](#)
- [Chestnut blight](#)
- [Dutch elm disease](#)
- [Horse chestnut bleeding canker](#)
- [Massaria disease of plane trees](#)
- [\*Phytophthora alni\*](#)
- [\*Phytophthora austrocedri\*](#)
- [\*Phytophthora kernoviae\*](#)
- [\*Phytophthora lateralis\*](#)
- [Phytophthora ramorum](#)
- [Red band needle blight](#)

### Pests

- [Asian longhorn beetle](#)
- [Great spruce bark beetle](#)
- [Horse chestnut leaf miner](#)
- [Oak pinhole borer](#)
- [Oak processionary moth](#)
- [Oriental chestnut gall wasp](#)
- [Pine tree lappet moth](#)

### Threats not yet present in the natural environment in Britain

- [Citrus longhorn beetle](#)
- [Eight-toothed European spruce bark beetle](#)
- [Elm yellows phytoplasma](#)
- [Emerald ash borer](#)
- [Pinewood nematode](#)
- [Pine processionary moth](#)
- [Plane tree threats](#)



# Glossary

**Amenity:** The pleasantness or attractiveness of a place.

**Arboriculture:** The cultivation of trees and shrubs.

**Arisings:** The waste material i.e. branches and leaves left over after tree surgery or which fall from a tree after bad weather or a storm.

**Basal growth:** The growth from the base and/or stem of a tree in the spring and summer.

**Bedding plants:** A plant set into a garden bed or container when it is about to bloom, typically an annual plant used for display and discarded at the end of the season.

**Biodiversity:** The variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat.

**Cage:** A wire cage used to protect the tree, which is secured to a stake and formed around the tree trunk

**Clout nail:** A nail with a large flat head.

**Coniferous:** Used to describe trees which bear cones and needle-like or scale-like leaves that are typically evergreen.

**Coppicing:** To cut back a tree or a shrub to ground level cyclically to stimulate growth.

**Crown lifting:** The removal of the lowest branches, and/or preparing the lower branches for future removal.

**Crown reduction:** The reduction in height and/or spread of the crown (the leaf bearing portions) of trees.

**Deciduous:** Used to describe a tree or a shrub which sheds its leaves annually.

**Felling:** To cut down a tree.

**Herbaceous plant:** A plant that has a non-woody stem and which dies at the end of the growing season.

**Highway:** A footpath or road over which the public have a right of passage at common law, subject to certain limitations subsequently applied through Statute???

**Mechanical damage:** Damage to a tree caused by a mechanical action, such as from a strimmer or lawn mower.

**Resilience:** The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties

**Secateurs:** A pair of pruning clippers used with one hand.

**Shrub:** A woody plant which is smaller than a tree and has several main stems arising at, or near the ground.

**Silvicultural practices:** The growing and cultivation of trees.

**Spacers:** Objects placed between the tree and stake to keep them apart - normally made from rubber.

**Species:** A group of living organisms consisting of similar individuals capable of exchanging genes or interbreeding.

**Stake:** A piece of wood (usually long and slender and pointed at one end so as to be easily driven into the ground), that is used as a support for a young tree.

**Strimmer guard:** A guard wrapped around the base of a tree trunk, designed to protect the tree from mechanical damage, such as that caused by a strimmer cord.

**Subsidence:** The gradual sinking of land to a lower level as a result of earth movements.

**Thinning:** To make something less dense, crowded, or numerous e.g. to remove some plants from a row or area to give the others more room to grow.

**Tissue:** Tree tissues are made up mostly of three basic groups: dermal tissue (bark), ground tissue (roots) and vascular tissue (under bark).

**Tree limb:** A large branch which comes directly out of the trunk and not from any other branches.

**Tree pit:** The hole in the ground in which a tree is planted

**Tree tie:** A type of belt used to tie the tree to the stake and make sure the tree grows upright. Some types can be adjusted as the trunk size increases or some types can stretch as the tree grows.

**Union:** The point where branches join together and to the tree.

**Watering bag:** A reusable bag which is filled with water that slowly percolates out through the bottom into the ground.





## Further information

Email: [tree.friends@bromley.gov.uk](mailto:tree.friends@bromley.gov.uk)

Telephone: Customer Contact Centre – 0300 303 8658

The Tree Team  
Environment and Community Services  
London Borough of Bromley  
Civic Centre  
Stockwell Close  
Bromley BR1 3UH