

# Branching Out application guide



## Grants for planting trees, orchards and hedgerows for schools, community groups, parish councils and Tree Warden Networks, Winter 2021/22.

### General guidance notes for applicants

*This document contains live links so is best not printed out. Click anything in green for supplementary guidance and links to other websites.*

<b>What is the Branching Out fund?</b>	<p>Thanks to the generosity of donors, The Tree Council has funds available to assist schools, community groups and member Tree Warden Networks, proposing to undertake well-planned tree planting projects this winter.</p> <p><b>Key requirements of this fund are that children and/or young people up to the age of 21 are involved in the planting, and ideally the planning of the project, and that thought and care has gone into how it will enhance biodiversity in your local area.</b></p> <p>We are keen to support you through the application process, so if you have any questions or queries, having fully read the guidance, please do get in touch by emailing <a href="mailto:info@treecouncil.org.uk">info@treecouncil.org.uk</a> or phoning 07927 550431.</p> <p><b>We are pleased to announce that this year there will be extra funding available for projects which are planned with specific and special emphasis on wildlife and biodiversity, or which are situated in a location where animals are cared for (such as rescue centres or city farms) as long as they have charitable status.</b></p>
<b>When does the fund open and close?</b>	<p>Open <b>Monday 2 August</b> – we aim to inform you if you have been successful within three weeks.</p> <p>Closed <b>Friday 17 December at 5pm</b>. <b>We would however encourage early applications to ensure availability of stock.</b></p> <p>Claims <b>within four weeks of planting</b>, final deadline 5pm on 31 March 2022.</p>



<p><b>Who is eligible to apply?</b></p>	<p>Schools, community groups, member Tree Warden Networks, parish and town councils.</p> <p>The group that applies can be a registered charity, constituted group, an incorporated organisation, a Tree Warden network or a school - as long as it has a bank account registered in the name of the applicant organisation into which a grant can be paid. If a group does not have its own bank account but is affiliated to a local authority (e.g. the town or parish council) the grant can be paid via them.</p> <p>This list is not exhaustive, so please get in touch if you are uncertain about eligibility.</p> <p><b>We do not give grants to individuals or intermediary organisations.</b></p>
<p><b>How much can we apply for?</b></p>	<p><b>Between £300 and £1,500 (excluding VAT).</b> You are not expected to find match funding but you will need to pay your own VAT. If you are registered for VAT, you can claim this back from HMRC.</p> <p>If the cost of the planned project is likely to exceed the £1,500 limit, we suggest that a funding application is made for a standalone section of the project.</p> <p>The amount of grant offered is entirely at our discretion. Applicants should remember that a smaller percentage may be awarded depending upon how many applications are recommended for support but we would like to reassure you that nearly all well thought through, strong applications are approved for 100% (excl. VAT) of the total.</p> <p>Between application and claiming, we allow for maximum of 3% increase, to take into account price increases and other factors. If you spend less than awarded, we will only pay what you have spent.</p> <p><b>Applications to fund projects which have already been carried out are not eligible.</b></p>
<p><b>What is covered?</b></p>	<p>Trees, hedges and fruit trees, reasonable costs of non-plastic protection and supports and other aids to establishment, such as peat-free compost and/or soil improvers.</p> <p>For those projects which are placing specific and special emphasis on wildlife and biodiversity, or which are situated in a location where animals are cared for (such as rescue centres or city farms), up to 15% of the amount awarded may go towards wider ecological enhancements to support wildlife and biodiversity, such as providing nesting, feeding and roosting opportunities for birds, bee and insect hotels, bat boxes and costs associated with pond creation.</p>



<p><b>What kind of trees/ hedgerows/orchard?</b></p>	<p>We have a strong preference for <b>native trees and hedgerow plants</b>. There are certain hedging plants we will not fund.</p> <p>Trees must be planted in the ground. We will not fund trees in containers.</p> <p>Apple and pears must be grown on semi-vigorous, vigorous and very vigorous rootstocks – see our <a href="#">Planting and caring for apple and pear trees</a> for more details of suitable rootstock. If planting an orchard, a minimum of five trees should be planted.</p> <p>We love hedgerow trees – if appropriate and your site is suitable, you should consider planting a tree every 10 to 20 meters along a new hedge. <a href="#">Hedgerow trees</a> are important habitats for wildlife and offer other important benefits including carbon capture, shade and aesthetic value. By hedgerow trees, we mean trees that are identified and intended to grow proud of the hedge line into mature, full size trees.</p> <p>We prefer bare-root stock. If you plan to use container grown stock, then please explain to us why.</p>
<p><b>What can NOT be funded?</b></p>	<p><b>We will NOT fund:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Applications from intermediary charities or organisations.</b></li> <li>• <b>For fruit trees:</b> dwarfing* varieties, espalier, step-over fruit trees. We may in some circumstances consider dwarfing* rootstocks but only when there is a clear reason for doing so.</li> <li>• <b>For hedges:</b> non-native, ornamental or evergreen species like Leyland Cypress or cherry laurel as these are not best at supporting UK biodiversity. Guidance on hedgerow species to plant for wildlife benefit can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Trees</b> planted in containers (e.g. boxes, tubs).</li> <li>• Tree protection or other materials for trees that we are not funding (e.g. guards for free trees).</li> <li>• Stock proof fencing, expensive guards and cages unless there is a very good reason.</li> <li>• It is important that we all follow a <a href="#">‘right tree, right place’</a> principle. We will not fund projects which plant on existing sites of wildlife or historic interest where tree or hedge planting is potentially damaging. These include (but are not limited to): archaeological sites (check with your county archaeologist if you are unsure); sites with rare or protected species which may be negatively affected by a new planting; grassland that has never been ploughed or marshy grassland; and wetland sites, heathland or scrub. Trees should not be in close proximity to buildings, so research or guidance is essential to ensure correct distance and spacing.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastic tree guards, ties or matting. If purchasing your own plastic guards etc., you should show that you have thought about their eventual removal from the planting to avoid plastic pollution.</li> <li>• Peat-based compost or soil improvers.</li> <li>• Items such as volunteer tools and equipment, protective clothing, or costs of running community events.</li> <li>• VAT.</li> <li>• Costs of contractors or staff time to plan or plant the hedge or trees. To engage and connect the local community, the planting must be done by volunteers, including Tree Wardens, community groups and landowners themselves.</li> <li>• Any work that has already taken place</li> </ul>
<p><b>What aids to establishment can we include in our application?</b></p>	<p>As a conservation charity, we believe strongly in reducing the use of plastic in the environment. We are preparing guidance on alternatives to plastic tree guards which will be available on our website shortly. You can include the costs of the following non-plastic aids to establishment in your application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>mulch</b> – if using bark chippings, you should ask your supplier for chippings that are not ‘fresh’ as there is a danger of nitrogen loss from the soil as they degrade. Also, older (at least a year) is safer, especially if it comes from the cutting down of diseased trees.</li> <li>• <b>mulching mats</b> (non-plastic).</li> <li>• <b>tree shelters /guards</b> (non-plastic guards only).</li> <li>• <b>peat free compost or soil improvers</b> for planting.</li> <li>• <b>canes/stakes or ties</b> (non-plastic).</li> </ul> <p>Ground preparation and weed control should be managed by suppression/mulching rather than the application of chemicals.</p> <p>You may not need everything on this list. Your requirements will depend on the tree stock being planted and the level of protection needed from grazing animals and pests, including rabbits, at the planting site. Remember to consider whether your planting may be vulnerable to other damage, e.g., from strimming, mowing or chemicals being sprayed nearby.</p>
<p><b>Where should we source our whips/trees?</b></p>	<p>With increasing numbers of tree pests and diseases, you should try your best to select trees sourced and grown in the UK. We are currently developing our guidelines about how to source your trees. In the meantime you can read our current <a href="#">Plant Purchasing Guidelines</a>.</p> <p>It is important that <b>local tree nurseries</b> are supported as they provide a vital service, are familiar with the local conditions and are often prepared to provide valuable advice.</p> <p>We are taking the definition of ‘<b>local tree nursery</b>’ to mean ideally from the same county, but this can be extended to mean from the same region, if you are unable to find a nursery locally.</p>



	<p>If you are not able to source your hedge whips or trees from a local nursery, that can satisfy our Plant Purchasing Guidelines, <a href="#">please do let us know</a> and we will see how we can further support and advise.</p> <p>If your nursery is unable to provide you with costs yet as they have not been finalised for this year, you need to ask them for last year's prices. Adjustments to price increases can be made later.</p>
<p><b>Do we need to be very experienced in tree/orchard/hedge planting?</b></p>	<p>Sound advice is fundamental to a well-planned project. If experience does not exist within the school or group, applicants are asked to seek independent local advice from someone with experience in projects of this type. Bear in mind that advice from commercial organisations may well, in some cases, reflect commercial interests e.g. garden centres rather than specialist fruit tree nursery.</p> <p>Recommended sources of advice include local <a href="#">Tree Wardens</a>, local authority arboricultural officers and specialist charities such as <a href="#">The Orchard Project</a> and <a href="#">Hedgeline</a> which is hosted by The Tree Council.</p> <p>The Tree Council's <a href="#">Orchards for Schools</a> programme has fantastic resources for orchard planting. The Tree Council has a range of books to help you getting started – please see our <a href="#">Bookshop</a> on our website.</p> <p>We are currently reviewing our own Tree Planting guidance materials and will provide this to successful applicants nearer tree planting season.</p>
<p><b>When should we plant?</b></p>	<p>The ideal time for planting will depend on the weather. It needs to be cold enough for trees to have entered their dormant stage, and often tree nurseries won't release their stock until this has happened. Usually, planting can take place from mid-November onwards, <b>preferably during National Tree Week – 27 November to 5 December 2021. We strongly recommend earlier rather than later. This is partly due to stock availability, but also because leaving planting until March is risky. The possibility of a warm early spring could mean extra pressure on the young plants to get established.</b></p>
<p><b>Does the grant cover the whole of the UK?</b></p>	<p>Yes – we support planting projects in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.</p>
<p><b>Can we plant on private land or does it have to be public land?</b></p>	<p>Applications should be on public or leased land. However we will, if appropriate, consider planting on private land, as long as it is accessible for the local community to benefit.</p>
<p><b>What permissions do we need from the landowner?</b></p>	<p>You will need a 'Permission to Plant' letter from the person responsible confirming consent to plant on the site and a guarantee that the site will be secure for at least five years.</p>



<p><b>How will applications be assessed?</b></p>	<p>We have limited funding and if we are oversubscribed, we will use an internal assessment process to prioritise the awards.</p> <p>Our assessment will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How children and young people will be involved with the planting, and planning. It may help your application if you include estimated numbers and age groups of the young people involved.</li> <li>• How you source, plant and care for your planting.</li> <li>• How your proposed hedge/ hedgerow trees fit into your local landscape and benefit the local community and biodiversity.</li> <li>• What sort of activities, events or initiatives you might hope to organise or facilitate and anything that might be interest to us.</li> <li>• How your proposal follows the '<a href="#">right tree, right place</a>' principle.</li> <li>• How you've demonstrated that you have thought about not just what your plants will look like next year but in many years' time, so that future generations of people, the planet and wildlife will continue to benefit from them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Do we receive the money up front?</b></p>	<p>No – the funding is paid after your project has been successfully completed and you have submitted a claim form and provided evidence of costs (detailed receipts) and planting (photographs).</p>
<p><b>How do I apply?</b></p>	<p>Please continue to read this guidance in full, then complete the application form. You will need to have the following supplementary materials ready to upload in your application form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Location plan:</b> This must show the planting location in the local area and highlight the land on which the planting will take place. An annotated GoogleMap is ideal.</li> <li>• <b>A site plan:</b> A larger scale plan of the area proposed for planting. It must include positions, numbers and species of the trees to be planted. It should be easy for us to see spacings between plants, show that they will not be in too close proximity to buildings and demonstrate that hedgerows are ideally being planted 5/6 plants per metre.</li> <li>• <b>Photos:</b> Up to four photographs of the site that gives a good idea of what you are trying to achieve – these could be taken from ground level or a window if planting is taking place near a building.</li> <li>• <b>Permission to plant</b> letter.</li> <li>• <b>Costs form:</b> Please ensure your supplier is giving you a quote EXCLUDING VAT. There is no VAT on most fruit trees – see <a href="#">here</a> for full details of exempt trees.</li> </ul>



<p><b>If our project is awarded a grant, what information will we need to submit to claim our grant?</b></p>	<p>By midnight on Thursday 31 March 2022, you will need to have submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A completed claim form.</li> <li>• Digital photographic evidence of your planting taking place, showing the site both pre- and post-planting. These should be good quality images of the children/young people and community actively involved in the planting, with the completed trees/hedges in their setting. You must ensure you have release forms for any 'people' pictures, demonstrating permission for us to possibly use images on our website or share on social media platforms, including parental or guardian permission for any images of young or vulnerable people.</li> <li>• Receipts, which must be scanned or photographed and sent by email at the same time as your claim form. <b>For ease of processing, only plants that are part of the application should be on the receipt.</b></li> <li>• We will only pay the amount of the original application and for the trees specified at application. Receipts must match what is being claimed. If there is a small change in prices, we will adjust accordingly, up to a maximum of 3%, but not exceeding a maximum grant of £1,500.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What happens after our planting is complete?</b></p>	<p>We would like to stay in touch with funded projects to see how your planting progresses. By accepting a grant, you are agreeing that we may contact you occasionally to follow up with some monitoring. This may take the form of a short email with a few questions and a request for a photo to see how your trees or hedges are growing.</p>

**PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE FOR SUMMARY OF SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS.**



# Summary of guidance

## Please read these guides before preparing your application.

Please refer to the relevant guidance below when planning your tree, orchard and/or hedgerow / hedgerow tree planting scheme. It will help you decide how to choose your site, what species to plant, where to source locally grown trees and how to look after your plants.

[Plant Purchasing Guidelines](#) – with increasing numbers of tree pests and diseases in England, it's important you select trees, sourced and grown in the UK. See also the [Tree Warden Handbook](#) link below.

### Trees

- **Planting guidance:** We are currently updating our guidance, and this will be available to successful applicants nearer tree planting season.

### Fruit Trees

- [Planting and caring for apple and pear trees](#): These notes are written to assist you with the practical aspects of planting and taking care of apple and pear trees, including basic pruning instruction.
- [RHS Guide to Rootstocks for fruit trees](#): A helpful supplement to the guidance above.
- [School Orchards - from Learning Through Landscapes](#): A school-friendly step-by-step guide to planning an orchard as a whole-school project, explaining how fruit trees can enrich learning, encourage wildlife and enhance school grounds.
- [The Orchard Project](#): Whether you're looking to grow your community groups, improve fruit tree health or just produce more fruit, they have lots of advice and tips for you here.
- [Orchards for Schools](#): The Tree Council's own Orchards for Schools programme.
- [Right tree, right place](#): How to make sure you plant in the right place and avoid damaging precious sites.

### Hedges

- [Hedgerow planting](#): Answers to common questions.
- [Hedgerow trees](#): Answers to common questions.
- [hedgeline.org.uk](http://hedgeline.org.uk): The Hedgeline website has lots of useful information about hedgerows and their management.
- [Best native shrubs for hedges](#): Don't just google hedges! Make sure you choose the best species to encourage wildlife.

