

# Branching Out Fund Application Guide



## Grants for planting trees, orchards and hedgerows for schools, community groups, parish/town councils and Tree Warden Networks, winter 2022/23.

*This document contains live links so is best not printed out. Click on anything underlined in green for supplementary guidance and links to other websites. The application form (link at end of document) contains more guidance and information relevant to each section.*

### What is the Branching Out fund?

Branching Out is an umbrella term for all The Tree Council's Community Tree, Orchard and Hedge planting grants.

We are hugely grateful to our generous partners and supporters who make our Branching Out grants programme possible. From our [Jubilee Partners](#) who are supporting tree and hedgerow planting in celebration of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022, to [Animal Friends](#), and other corporate partners and generous individuals who donate to The Tree Council. It is because of their generosity and desire to support community planting that we are able to help your group to fulfil your vision to undertake well-planned planting projects this coming winter planting season.

You can apply for trees, hedges, orchards, or any combination of these.

Key requirements of this fund are that there is strong community involvement, and that children and/or young people up to the age of 21 are involved in the planting, and ideally the planning and aftercare of the project.

We particularly favour projects which are planned with specific and special emphasis on wildlife and biodiversity, and we look forward to reading about how your project will enhance your local natural environment.

We expect applicants to have considered the suitability of the planting location to the type of trees/hedges/orchard you are planting.

We are keen to support you through the application process, so if you have any questions or queries which are not covered in the guidance and the relevant links at the end of this document, please do [get in touch](#) or phone us on 020 7407 9992.



## Application opening and closing dates

Monday 18 July to Sunday 4 December – the end of National Tree Week.

We review applications as they come in and aim to inform you if you have been successful within two to three weeks of submission, however this may be longer around the final deadline and around the Christmas period. If you are successful, we will inform you by email and send you a 'funding agreement' which will need to be signed and returned to us.

**We advise that you try to make a provisional securing of stock with your local tree nursery at application stage, or before if possible. We encourage early applications to ensure availability of stock and to avoid delays to processing applications around the deadline period.**

Other funding possibilities may be available after 4 December and we will re-advertise the grant if there is sufficient interest so if you think you may not be in a position to apply until after 4 December, please do [get in touch](#).

Claims must be submitted to us within 2 weeks of planting. The final deadline is 5pm 17 March 2023.

## Who is eligible to apply?

Schools, community groups, parish and town councils and Tree Warden Networks.

Typical applicants are Community Groups, residents' groups, small, registered charities, community interest companies, constituted groups, incorporated organisations, Tree Warden networks or schools. The group must have 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.

This list of suitable groups is not exhaustive, so please get in touch if you are uncertain about eligibility.

**We do not give grants to individuals or intermediary organisations, nor do we give grants or make payments to Local Authorities (City, District or County Councils).**

## How much can we apply for?

You can apply for a between £200 and £2,000 (excluding VAT). You are not expected to find match funding but you will need to pay your own VAT. If you are registered for VAT, you may be able to claim this back from HMRC, so please check with whoever handles your accounts and is responsible for the group's tax affairs.

If the cost of the planned project is likely to exceed the £2,000 limit, we suggest that a funding



application is made for a standalone section of the project and that the wider project is in keeping with the spirit of the Branching Out Fund.

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 almost all carefully planned strong applications are approved for 100% (excl. VAT) of the total.

### **What if prices change between applying and claiming?**

We can allow for a maximum 3% increase to take into account price changes and other factors. If you spend less than awarded, we will only pay what you have spent. Prices can go down as well as up, so you are encouraged to keep in touch with your local tree nursery during the whole process.

### **We've already planted – can we put in an application in retrospect?**

No. Applications to fund projects which have already been carried out are not eligible.

### **What is covered?**

Trees, hedges and orchards, reasonable costs of non-plastic protection and supports, and mulch (weed suppressant – usually bark chippings). We will also fund other 'aids to establishment', such as compost but you must explain why these are necessary.

### **What kind of trees/ hedgerows/orchard can we plant?**

We have a strong preference for bare-root stock of native trees and hedgerow plants. For more information about what to plant, please see our Tree and Hedge Planting – a Step by Step Guide in the links below, and our Hedgerow Learning Guide. Section 4 of the Hedgerow Learning Guide has some excellent guidance regarding which species to choose, depending on what kind of a hedge you want.

Be careful about using standard mixes of hedgerow plants available from nurseries or garden centres – they are unlikely to meet your specific needs.

We encourage a variety of species to aid resilience – e.g., an orchard with just one variety of apple may quickly all succumb to a disease should one tree become infected as it is more likely to spread quickly to other trees of the same variety.

We love hedgerow trees – if appropriate and your site is suitable, you should consider either planting or identifying a suitable hedge plant that you will allow to grow on to become a mature,



full-size tree that stands proud of the hedgerow. See the Hedgerow Learning Guide for more information.

Non-natives in the right place: as our climate warms, it is worth considering planting non-native trees which may better tolerate the new climate. In the right places like streets and urban parks, non-native species can also add colour and diversity to a landscape.

Apple and pear must be grown on semi-vigorous, vigorous and very vigorous rootstocks – see our Planting and Caring for apple and pear trees guidance below for more details of suitable rootstock. If planting an orchard, a minimum of five trees should be planted.

## **What aids to establishment can we include in our application?**

As a conservation charity, we believe strongly in reducing the use of plastic in the environment. Please see a link to our Protecting Young Trees at the end of this document for our guidance as to type of protection we can fund.

You can include the costs of the following non-plastic aids to establishment in your application:

- Tree shelters /guards (non-plastic guards only): don't assume you always need them – do your research into local conditions and potential threats to your plants
- Mulch: 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
- Mulching mats (non-plastic): you must provide a solid reason for wanting to use them as opposed to other mulching methods
- Peat-free compost or soil improvers for planting: these are not needed or recommended except in the case of really infertile soils - unless you want to spend lots of time weeding!
- Canes/stakes or ties (non-plastic)

**Ground preparation and weed control should be managed by suppression/ mulching rather than the application of chemicals.**

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 wildlife, including rabbits and voles/mice, 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.

## **What can NOT be funded?**

- Applications from intermediary charities or organization
- VAT
- Any work that has already taken place
- For fruit trees: 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, e.g., in an infant school



- For hedges: non-native, ornamental or evergreen species like Leyland Cypress or cherry laurel as these are not best at supporting UK biodiversity. We discourage single species hedge plantings unless very appropriate for the setting. It may be appropriate in some urban areas to plant a variety of non-native conifers especially when removing air pollutants is a key objective
- Container grown stock, rather than bare root, unless appropriate and an explanation is provided
- Trees that will be planted in containers (e.g., boxes, tubs)
- Tree protection or other materials for trees that we are not funding (e.g., guards for free trees)
- Stock proof fencing, expensive guards and cages unless there is a very good reason
- It is important that we all follow a 'right tree, right place' principle. You may find the guidance [here](#) from Cornwall Council interesting and helpful. 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; 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
- 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
- Peat-based compost or soil improvers
- Items such as volunteer tools and equipment, protective clothing, or costs of running community events
- Chemicals for weed removal or suppression
- 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

## Where should we source our plants from?

With increasing numbers of tree pests and diseases in the UK, you should try your best to select trees sourced and grown in the UK. Please see our Plant Purchasing Guidelines below. You will need to confirm at application stage that you have read them and have done your best to abide by the guidance.

It is important that local tree nurseries are supported as they provide a vital service, are familiar with the local conditions and are often prepared to provide valuable advice.

We are taking the definition of 'local tree nursery' to mean ideally in the same county, but this can be extended to mean from the same region, if you are unable to find a nursery locally. Ideally, your local tree nursery would also be sourcing and growing from local seed stock.

If you are not able to source your hedge whips or trees from a local nursery that can satisfy our Plant Purchasing Guidelines, [please do let us know](#) and we will see how we can further support and advise.



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.

## **Do we need to be very experienced in tree/orchard/hedge planting?**

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. We are happy to provide a limited amount of support and guidance ourselves, but it may be more appropriate for you to find that help locally from people who understand local conditions and suitable species.

Recommended sources of advice include local [Tree Wardens](#), local authority arboricultural officers and specialist charities such as [The Orchard Project](#) and [Hedgeline](#) which is hosted by *The Tree Council*.

The Tree Council's [Orchards for Schools](#) programme has fantastic resources for orchard planting. The Tree Council has a range of books to help you get started – please see our [Bookshop](#) on our website. Our publication *Trees in your Ground* is a great place to start if you don't know how to start choosing what kind of trees you would like and how you should plant and take care of them, but this publication is nearly out of stock.

## **When should we plant?**

Ideally during National Tree Week which is 26 November – 4 December. Tree planting season is usually mid-end November until January/February and possibly early March, but the best time for planting will also depend on the weather and local knowledge and conditions. 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. We strongly recommend earlier in the season 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.

## **Does the grant cover the whole of the UK?**

Yes – we support planting projects in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



## **Can we plant on private land or does it have to be public land?**

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.

## **What permissions do we need from the landowner?**

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.

## **How will applications be assessed?**

We have limited funding and if we are oversubscribed, we will use an internal assessment process to prioritise the awards.

### **Our assessment will consider:**

- How the community, children and young people will be involved with the project planning and planting. It may help your application if you include estimated numbers and age groups of the young people involved
- How you source, plant and care for your planting
- A sound management plan. We will really need to see evidence that you have considered carefully how to ensure that your plants will thrive
- How your proposed planting fits into your local landscape and benefits the local community and biodiversity
- What sort of activities, events or initiatives you might hope to organise or facilitate around planting day/s and aftercare and anything that might be of interest to us
- How your proposal follows the 'Right Tree, Right Place' principle
- How you've demonstrated that you have thought about not just what your plants will look like next year but in years to come, so that future generations of people, the planet and wildlife will continue to benefit from them

## **Do we receive the money up front?**

No – the funding is paid after your project has been successfully completed and you have claimed your grant. Information on how to claim will be sent to you with your offer letter. If this causes great difficulty for you, please do [get in touch](#) to discuss.



## How do I apply?

Please continue to read this guidance in full, then complete the application form (link below). You will need to have the following supplementary materials ready to upload in your application form:

1. Complete [Application Form](#) and [Costs Form](#)
2. Location plan: this must show the planting location in the local area and highlight the land on which the planting will take place. An annotated Google Maps is ideal
3. A site plan: a larger scale plan of the area proposed for planting. It must include dimensions of the site, 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. For hedgerows you must demonstrate that hedgerows are ideally being planted 5/6 plants per metre, depending on how many rows, and should be at least 2 rows (some hedges might be 3 rows)
4. Photos: 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
5. Permission to plant letter from the landowner
6. Please ensure your supplier is giving you a quote EXCLUDING VAT. There is no VAT on most fruit trees – see [section 3.5](#) of this Government Guidance for full details of exempt trees

## How do we claim our grant?

By midnight on Thursday 17 March 2023, you will need to have submitted:

- A completion report, which includes a claim form
- 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. Some more guidance regarding the photographs will be provided later  
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
- Receipts, which must be scanned or photographed and sent by email at the same time as your claim form. For ease of processing, only plants that are part of the application should be on the receipt. Receipts must match what is being claimed
- We will only pay the amount of the original application and for the trees specified at application. We understand that this is not always possible, but all changes must be discussed and agreed prior to claiming. You don't need to contact us re. minor changes, e.g. the size of a whip or a small change in proportions of species in a hedge, but funding may be withdrawn if the final claim is significantly different to the original application



## **What happens after our planting is complete?**

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 in the first five years after planting to follow up with some monitoring. This may take the form of a site visit, short progress report, and a request for a photo to see how your trees or hedges are growing.

Please see next page for summary of supplementary guidance documents.

## **Key Dates and Application documents:**

Opens – 18 July 2022

Closes – 4 December 2022

Deadline for claims – 17 March 2023

[Application Form](#)

[Costs Form](#)



# Supplementary guidance

## Links to guidance documents and websites

Please read these guides before preparing your application. They 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.

### Trees & Hedges

- [Plant Purchasing Guidelines](#) - Tree Council guidance - with increasing numbers of tree pests and diseases in England, it's important you select trees sourced and grown in the UK.
- [Hedgerow Learning Guide](#) – Tree Council guidance
- [Tree and Hedge Planting](#) – a Tree Council step-by-step guide
- [Protecting young trees](#) – Tree Council guidance
- [Drought and Tree Care](#) – Tree Council guidance
- [Tree Care in Unsettled Weather](#) – Tree Council guidance
- [Right tree, right place](#): How to make sure you plant in the right place and avoid damaging precious sites. This article was written for Cornwall, but has some very useful general guidance.
- [hedgelink.org.uk](http://hedgelink.org.uk): *The Hedgelink website has lots of useful information about hedgerows and their management.*

### 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.
- [Planning and Planting Guide](#): from our own Orchards for Schools programme. There are also several videos on our [YouTube Channel](#) relating to orchard care
- Our Worcestershire Tree Warden Network Co-ordinator Wade Muggleton from the Three Counties Orchard Project looks at how to plan and plant your own orchard – Wade has many wonderful videos on YouTube – [take a look](#)
- [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.

