

HOW TO FIND A SITE FOR YOUR NURSERY

When looking for somewhere to start your tree nursery, there are many factors to consider. No site will be perfect so potential sites should be visited.

A tree nursery can be a space in your back garden, it could be an allotment site, or a corner of a farmer's field. There is often land available that is not being used and so it's worth asking your local authority, parish council, local tree warden or other groups using outdoor spaces if they're aware of any potential sites.

No site will be perfect, so expect to have to compromise, but here are some of the most important selection criteria:

Soil is particularly important if you're not using containers to grow trees see [page 140](#). It is easier to grow trees directly in open ground and requires the least expenditure. A deep loam is ideal but even heavy clay or sandy soils can be re-worked to improve fertility, drainage or water retention.

Elevation and aspect will influence growth and practicalities. If the site is at a high altitude, you should expect slower growth. If it's on an open, sunny, south-facing slope, shade netting will be crucial. Exposure to wind, frost and heavy shade can also be a problem. Steep slopes are hard to work on: to get machinery onto and to erect polytunnels, for example.

Water is essential. Using mains water is not ideal, and can be expensive. Harvesting rainwater requires impervious surfaces and channels to collect run-off, such as rooftops with drainpipes. Not all sites will have this option, if there are no buildings nearby. Small tree nurseries are unlikely to get a boreholes license, and this is not a sustainable source of water. Open water such as a large pond can work, but be careful of water-borne plant diseases, such as *Phytophthora*. A simple irrigation system is best and will save a lot of time.

Size will define how many trees you can grow.

- For container production, you will grow approximately 130–240 plants per square metre.
- For bare-root production, you will grow approximately 40–80 plants per square metre.

Storage is important, as you'll need a secure space for your plant pots, tools, seed, as well as somewhere to work in inclement weather.

Access is something to consider, especially when taking delivery of compost, bulky materials or transporting your trees to customers. 🌱



It may be hard to find the perfect site for your tree nursery, but word of mouth can help.