



Press Release
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BACK TO OUR ROOTS

The Tree Council launches annual Tree Care Campaign on 21st March

As Britain recovers from the recent heavy rainstorms, The Tree Council is urging everyone to spare a thought for young trees battling against the elements and take part in its annual Tree Care Campaign.

Running from 21st March to 21st September each year, the campaign encourages communities to spend a little time on regular tree care activities to help trees withstand hazards such as extreme weather or pests and increase the number reaching maturity.

Mature, sturdy trees can reduce flooding and calm fast gusts of wind. However, for trees to grow strong enough to shield us from unsettled conditions, they need a little protection themselves. Trees that have been planted in the last three years are particularly vulnerable to stormy weather because their roots have not yet grown deep enough to firmly anchor them in the soil.

This year's Tree Care Campaign theme, 'Back to Our Roots', also highlights how caring for trees they have planted together over the years can help communities to preserve and strengthen their roots. The initiative reminds people to revisit young trees to check for signs of damage or stress and take action if necessary.

For example, a waterlogged tree can be helped out by digging a channel to drain excess water away, while one that has been battered by strong winds may need its ties and stakes adjusting or replacing. Trees may also benefit from tree care activities such as mulching, weeding and pruning.

Pauline Buchanan Black, Director-General of The Tree Council, says: 'Planting trees is one of the best things that a community can do together but joining forces to care for and conserve those trees is even better.'

'Many young trees will have taken a beating in the recent heavy rains and strong winds and may desperately need to have their supports replaced or adjusted. And, as spring gets underway, trees may find themselves competing with grass and weeds for nutrients, so a spot of grass cutting, weeding and mulching may be in order.'

'These are just a few reasons why The Tree Council is encouraging community groups to "go back to their roots" and ensure that they go on benefiting from all that trees have to offer for years to come.'

More detailed tips on caring for trees can be found on The Tree Council's website: <http://www.treecouncil.org.uk/Our-Work/Tree-Care-Campaign>

Images are available upon request.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. For **further information**, please contact (press enquiries only)

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Visit The Tree Council's website, <http://www.treecouncil.org.uk/> for details on the full community action programme. Event information is also available from the Tree Council info line, 020 7940 8180 (office hours)

2. Mulch

A good layer of mulch will keep weed levels down, reducing competition for water and nutrients; retain soil moisture - a layer of mulch helps to keep the soil moist, reducing the need for additional watering later in the year; protect the soil around the tree from the elements - rainfall can wash away soil from around a tree, whilst the sun can bake the ground dry; improve the soil – as the mulch decomposes it provides extra nutrients and organic matter to the soil; maintain an even temperature – warms the soil in spring and protects the soil from heating up in the sun in summer keeps away the grass cutting machines – if there is no grass at the base of the tree, there is no reason to use mowers or strimmers to cut it, ensuring that the tree is not damaged by mistake.

To be effective, biodegradable mulches should be between 5cm and 8cm thick and should be at least a metre circumference around the tree. Pull up any existing weeds before applying the mulch layer. Note – it is important not to apply mulch directly around the trunk of the tree as this can encourage rot. Too much mulch - a layer greater than 8cm - can generate heat as it decomposes, which can damage the tree. If a deep layer of mulch is too close to the base of a tree, then the increased moisture levels can also cause the base of the tree to rot. Therefore create a lower layer of mulch (less than 2 cm) immediately around the base of the tree.

3. The Tree Council

Environmental charity The Tree Council is the UK's lead charity for trees in all settings, urban and rural, promoting their importance in a changing environment and it works in partnership with communities, organisations and government to make trees matter to everyone. As the canopy body for over 180 organisations working together for trees, it focuses on getting more trees, of the right kind, in the right places; better care for all trees of all ages and inspiring effective action for trees.

It works with its national volunteer Tree Warden Scheme and member organisations to engage people in biodiversity and environmental issues and to promote planting and conservation of trees and woods in town and country. A major part of this is achieved through its annual Community Action Programme that includes Walk in the Woods month, Seed Gathering Season and National Tree Week (first run in March 1975), and through supporting groups organising local events.

It operates a tree-planting grants programme for UK schools and communities to plant trees and create woodland habitats, as well as working on an agenda for change that includes its annual Tree Care Campaign, the Green Monuments Campaign and Hedge Tree Campaign.