



Press Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
21st March 2013

CHANGE YOUR VIEW
TAKE CARE OF OUR TREES

As tree diseases continue to take their toll on the UK's woods, forests, parks and street trees The Tree Council is appealing to everyone to play a part in keeping the trees we have, healthy. Its annual Tree Care Campaign launch message is a stark reminder that if we don't take care of what we've got, we may find ourselves living in a severely denuded landscape with no shade, less wildlife, increased flooding and pollution. Our view will change irrevocably, unless we change our view about tree care.

With spring buds just starting to show, it will be vitally important for everyone to keep an eye out for the telltale signs of *Chalara fraxinea*, or ash dieback, in town and country. Identifiable by the wilt of early leaf growth, infected trees will also show diamond shaped lesions around twigs or branches that will expand as the fungus grows. Young twigs may split around the infected area and the bark may discolour to an orange-brown colour. Any sightings of these symptoms should be reported to the Forestry Commission through their website.

"By helping the Forestry Commission to keep tabs on the spread of this particular disease, everyone can help" said Pauline Buchanan Black, Tree Council Director-General. "However, there are other day-to-day things that all young trees need to maintain health. Tending broken or damaged branches, loosening ties and removing unnecessary stakes as well as clearing weeds and grasses from the base of young trees can make the difference between survival and loss. If it's your tree, then secure its future with a few moments of care; if it's someone else's tree, let them know their tree may need attention."

"Visually check trees in your street if you live in towns, and out on walks in the country, and let the landowner or council know if trees aren't coming into leaf or if you can see other significant problems" suggested Jon Stokes, Director of Programmes at The Tree Council. "Meanwhile, if you have trees of your own, now is the time to administer some basic care so that they have the best chance of a healthy future."

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NOTE TO EDITORS *Chalara infection, tree damage and care images available on request.*

1. Tree Diseases

Chalara fraxinea was recorded for the first time in the UK in 2012; it is likely to devastate the ash population in countryside and town alike. Early detection could help slow the spread of the disease. For visual assessment, see The Tree Council website treecouncil.org.uk/press-and-news/item/4025-see-our-informative-video and for more detailed information consult:

www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara . You can report suspected sightings at forestry.gov.uk/website/treedisease.nsf/TreeDiseaseReportWeb#

The new *Chalara* action plan is expected to be published by Defra in late March. Along with this disease, other diseases are affecting our trees and we need to be aware of them.

forestry.gov.uk/pestsanddiseases has a run-down of the main ones currently known.

2. Tips to ensure Healthy Young Trees

Check that young trees are alive. If there are no leaves, look for green under the bark of twigs (scrape the surface with a fingernail or knife) and living buds. Replace any plants that have died.

Newly planted trees may be vulnerable to damage by grazing animals or clumsy humans and need protection. Fences and tubes need to be checked in the first year to ensure that they are effective. If they are not, change the method of protection.

Brambles, nettles, weeds and grasses will compete with young trees for nutrients, moisture and light, and will reduce the growth rates of the tree. Check that your mulch layer is effective and cut back any competing vegetation. More straw, composted bark or woodchips over the surface of the ground will suppress fresh weed growth.

3. The Tree Council's Tree Care Campaign

21st March – 21st September annually, highlighting the need for better care for all trees, in order to ensure their survival and increase the numbers reaching maturity. In particular, anyone who has planted trees in the past 5 years is reminded to revisit them and carry out a few simple tree care tasks that can save young trees from dying and allow them to develop into the mature trees that enhance our urban and rural landscape, provide shade and local climate change, and support biodiversity.

4. About The Tree Council

Environmental charity **The Tree Council** is an umbrella body for over 180 organisations working together for trees – planting, caring for and enjoying them – and a forum for tackling issues relating to trees and woods. It focuses on making trees matter to people; 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 also includes **Walk in the Woods** month, **Seed Gathering Season** and **National Tree Week**, and through supporting groups organising local events.