

# Looking after a new woodland

## Green Recovery Challenge Fund



### Planting trees is the first step in a much longer process. To successfully manage newly planted trees and woodland over the early years of establishment, aftercare is vital.

This guide explains the key steps you can take to help your new woodland thrive.

If you are planting trees yourself follow our guide to planting trees first:

[www.ydmt.org/tree-planting-guide](http://www.ydmt.org/tree-planting-guide)

### 1 Awareness

Make sure people accessing the trees or woodland know the trees are there. It seems obvious but more and more planting is taking place without traditional plastic tree guards, making it difficult to spot young saplings especially in long grass.

### 2 Watering

Trees are very adaptable to their environment, even during long dry spells. If watering is needed make sure the area round the tree is totally drenched, light watering is the worst thing as it encourages roots to grow upwards.

### 3 Weeding

Weeding is important to give trees a head start by reducing competition for moisture and nutrients.

**Hand weeding** can be effective where a limited number of trees are planted, to remove competing long grasses around and within tree guards.

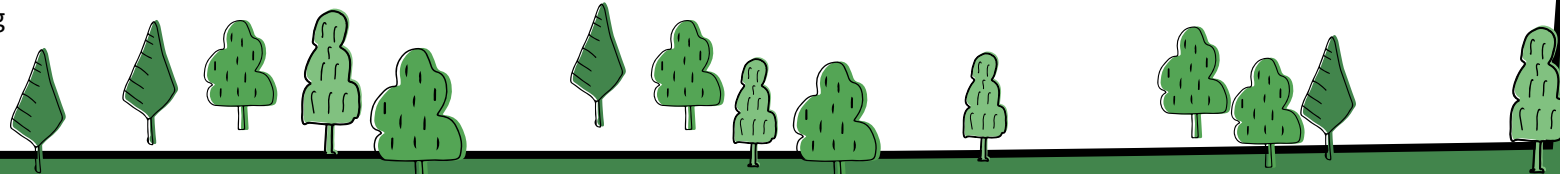
**Mulching** - placing wood bark or a biodegradable material around the base of the tree suppresses weeds and can work well for small numbers of trees.

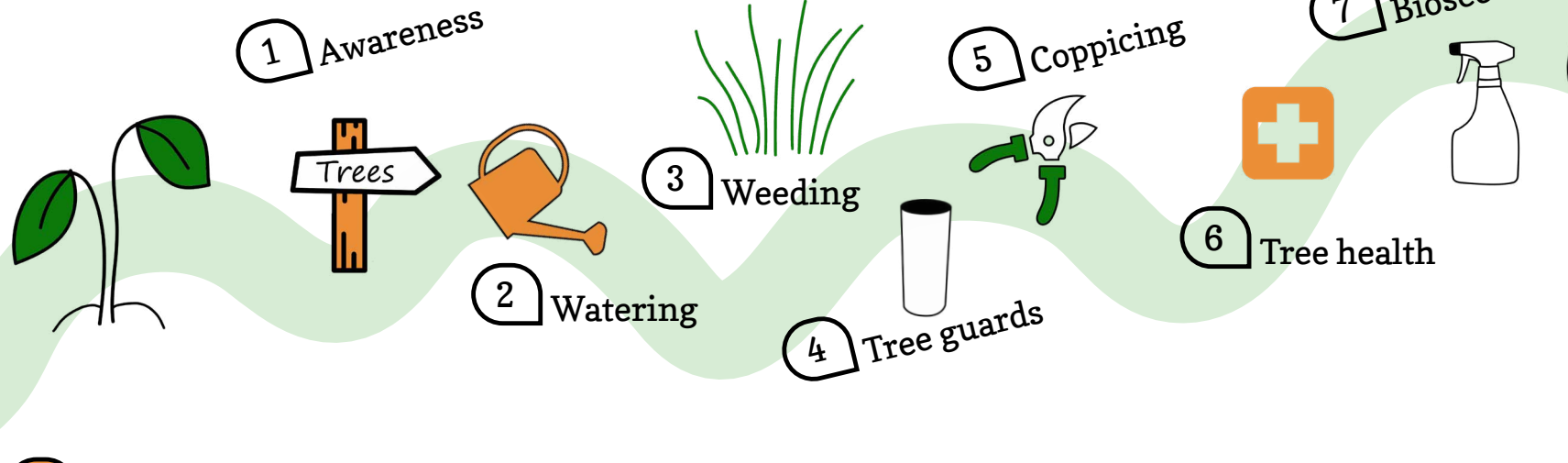
**Strimming and mowing** is an option, but great care must be taken to avoid damaging young trees or preventing new habitats from developing. If a newly planted area has been fenced off to exclude grazing animals, such as sheep, rabbits and deer, this will promote the development of new habitats that can enable valuable grasses and other species to flourish. It takes several years for a woodland to develop but a new habitat can form very quickly.

### 4 Tree guards & stakes

Tree guards provide a micro climate to help a tree grow and offer protection against grazing in the first few years.

- It is important to remove any grasses growing inside the guard to avoid stifling the tree. To do this loosen the ties on the guard to allow it to be lifted up and remove grasses at the base, but take care not to pull the sapling out as well!
- Guards need constant maintenance as strong winds can blow them over, which can damage or even kill the tree if not put back straight.
- Trees tend to grow tall and thin in guards so don't have much strength when they get to the top. Use the shortest guard appropriate for the site and where conditions allow, remove it as soon as possible. As a guide the minimum is three years but could be up to ten in poor growing environments or where rabbits or other grazers are a problem.
- Tree guards are usually made of single-use plastic and should split naturally as the tree grows. It is important that guards are regularly checked and vital that redundant guards are removed from site and disposed of appropriately. Many of the biodegradable guards require industrial composting to break down and fossil based plastic guards can be recycled.





## 5 Coppicing & pruning

Pruning can be of benefit but requires knowledge and expertise to avoid harming or even killing a tree. Removing damaged branches can make the tree stronger, allow better access and increase light to encourage ground flora to grow.

If trees are planted for future coppicing, they shouldn't be cut for at least 7-10 years depending on species and growth. Cutting near the base of the tree will encourage new growth for continued coppicing in future years.

## 6 Tree health

You must monitor tree health on a regular basis. New tree diseases are appearing more regularly, so it's good practice to keep up to date with the latest information.

These websites provide excellent advice and guidance:

[www.forestrycommission.blog.gov.uk/category/tree-health/](http://www.forestrycommission.blog.gov.uk/category/tree-health/)

[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wild-life/tree-pests-and-diseases/what-we-are-doing/](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wild-life/tree-pests-and-diseases/what-we-are-doing/)

Standing or fallen dead trees can provide important habitats however if they are diseased then removal from the woodland should be considered to avoid cross contamination with other tree species. Any unsuccessful trees in a newly planted wood should be replaced with new ones to maintain diversity and structure.

## 7 Biosecurity

It is important to avoid the spread of diseases and pests that may be in the environment. This can be minimised through simple steps:

**Be vigilant** - if you are concerned there is an unexpected change to a tree or larger woodland please contact your local woodland officer who will be able to offer advice, alternatively use the Forestry Commission Tree Alert service:

[www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/tree-alert/](http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/tree-alert/)

**Hygiene** - it is always good practice to clean hands, boots, gloves, and equipment when going into or coming out of a woodland to minimise any risk of cross contamination - boot wash, hand sanitiser, clean and disinfect all equipment.

**Visit [www.ydmt.org/tree-planting](http://www.ydmt.org/tree-planting) for more information or call our woodland team us on 015242 51002.**

