



The Tree Warden Scheme in Huntingdonshire

Why are tree wardens needed?

Trees, woods and hedges have been lost due to various causes, including disease, agricultural intensification and development over many years. Action is needed to protect what we have and replace what we have lost.

Who are tree wardens?

Tree Wardens are volunteers who work closely with their parishes to encourage a respect for trees and hedges in the community. They may or may not be part of their parish council but are expected to work closely with them. It is helpful if they produce a short annual report for their parish and for the tree warden co-ordinator. Tree wardens are not expected to be experts at all, but to have a genuine love for trees and the natural environment.

Who runs the scheme?

The local scheme is run by the Tree Warden Co-ordinator Bridget Halford, from the Tree and Landscape section within the Planning Department at Huntingdonshire District Council. The local scheme forms part of a national scheme, which is organised by the [Tree Council](#). There are now over 118 local authorities participating in the scheme with over 8,000 tree wardens.

Contacts within the Tree and Landscape section are:

Chris Thompson	Landscape Officer	01480 388438
Tamsin Miles	Tree Officer	01480 388679

What do they do?

Tree wardens have both a gentle reactive role and a proactive role. A great variety of different types of people become tree wardens. They have different interests and different amounts of time available. It must be emphasised that as the role is voluntary, we are grateful to anyone who is happy to give some of their time freely. Tree Wardens are not expected to take responsibility for the health and safety of trees in their parish or on parish-owned land. They may advise or help the parish select a contractor to do the work, but it is really not expected as part of the role.

Tree wardens are invaluable. By acting as a 'friend of trees' in their parishes they provide added value many times over, complementing and extending the work done by the district council's Tree section.

• Local liaison:

Many people prefer to be able to talk to a local person who can advise them or point them in the right direction. As the level of knowledge amongst tree wardens varies, some tree wardens are able to give detailed advice about, for example, management of trees, whilst others will either ring their local Tree Officer or Tree Warden Co-ordinator or ask their enquirer to do so.

- **Protecting trees:**

Trees, hedges and woodlands need looking after and local people often see harmful activities before council officers notice them.

Damage can be caused by ignorance, such as lighting fires too close to trees, or bad practice by builders and other site contractors, or it may be caused by 'cowboy' tree surgeons. Tree wardens may spot a damaged branch or fungal decay, tight tree guards or ties on a specimen tree and advise its owner on the best way to deal with it.

In other instances, the law concerning trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders, conservation areas or planning conditions is not being observed and the tree officer needs to be notified. The Tree section can provide tree wardens with a list of the trees in their parish which are protected by law. (It is always best to either gently ask the person doing the work if they have received permission or contact the tree officers. Most people do seek advice and get permission to do the work).

- **Practical projects:**

Many tree wardens are keen to work with local groups enhancing local areas of open space, footpaths and bridleways, school grounds or cemeteries by planting trees and hedges.

Trees and hedging are available through the Parish Planting Scheme. Guidance notes and training sessions are available so that the most appropriate planting scheme can be designed for the area and instruction is given about aftercare to ensure survival.

- **Gathering Information:**

From time to time we undertake specific surveys in Huntingdonshire. We have surveyed the Willows of the Ouse Valley, the true native Black Poplar and some of the remaining surviving large Elm trees in the district. Tree wardens play a valuable role in surveying their area and recording the information.

Learning the job:

Any of the people listed above will be delighted to help or advise as needed, though it is usual to contact the tree warden co-ordinator in the first instance if she is available. Our Tree Office deals with queries relating to protected trees or the law.

It is hoped that new tree wardens will work quite closely with the Tree section and their parish council when they first begin so that we get to know them a little. We can then gain an understanding of their interests and work out if they would like training or guidance in some areas.

New wardens will find much very useful information on the [Tree Council website](#). To access all the information available on this site you will need a password which will be sent to you once your name is passed to the Tree Council. There is, however, plenty of interest for all on the general site areas.

A number of training sessions are held over the year, run by both the district council and the region. The regional Tree Warden Forum in the autumn is always interesting and worth attending.