

Notes of the Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens Training event: "How trees survive" on Monday 15 August 2011, 1pm for two hours with Jon Stokes, Tree Council, at Hilsea fruiting hedge.

Line no

Present: Jon Stokes (The Tree Council), Pauline Powell (Coordinator), Jen Davis, John Holland, Tracy Jones, Margaret Judd, John Scott, Peter Smith (Peter's Tree Surgery & Landscaping) (arrived 14:35), Phillip Smith

A good opportunity to learn something about planting trees and looking after them.

5 **Route.** The group began at the north end of the hedge and worked its way down.

Survival rate. Jon Stokes began by commenting that nationally 80% is a good survival rate.

Water, mulch, weeds

10 Water is crucial in the first year. A mulch of wood chippings reduces evaporation and acts as a weed suppressant. Competition with grass in the first few years is the most damaging thing to a tree.

Tracy Jones asked about bark chips removing nitrogen. Jon said that the bark chips should be seasoned, one year old.

Jon commented that the lads have strimmed. Ideally, mulch in winter when the ground is moist. Phillip Smith commented, after rain and before frost.

15 Asked about using weed killer, Jon commented that only a Portsmouth City Council employee can do it. They spot weed an 8 inch circle round the base of the tree.

The hawthorn and blackthorn are strong – they will survive.

Either mulch or spot treat (saves a lot of work).

20 Asked if mulch lasts longer Jon commented that trees will fight off weeds after two years. Only need to mulch once; mulch keeps strimmers away (because it clogs them up); should not heap mulch because it generates heat; have a depression round the tree so it does not cook the stem.

The survival rate of the hedge is phenomenal.

25 **Tree 1. Walnut.** Doing very well. Lost a couple of ends of tips. Take off (black) diseased bits going about 1 inch into good wood. Do a stub cut, not a flush cut, just after the collar to trap any infection. A **tie** holds the tree to the ground. **Stake** no more than a third the height of the tree. Tie at the top of the stake. Jon raised the tie. The plastic guards are **rabbit guards**. Not really needed. The tree thickens where it flexes, so move the tie slowly down then take it off. Halve the height of the stake after one year. This tree does not need a stake; a fine little tree.

30 **Bushes.** Currants looking great. Black currants and gooseberries: leave them be. Can leave them 10 years and they become bigger and bushier. You are not going to come back every year and prune. The white wood on the currant is this year's growth. There is 7 or 8 inches of extension growth; that is phenomenal. Go for wood production this year rather than fruit.

35 **Tree 2. Rowan.** Tie, as before. A figure of eight gives a bung to prevent rubbing. The top had been taken out so it bushed in two places. Now it is a four-leader tree. Jon commented that taking the top out was more likely drunks than youths. The stakes are visual clues. Get them off as soon as possible. Jon cut off a shoot from the bottom of the tree. After discussion the group decided to leave the tree till next year and see what happens. Jon suggested to cut
40 to the stub in October next year and identified a leader.

Jon pointed out a hawthorn with a surgical cut (by the Council he assumed) where it had been damaged. Could take all hawthorns down to 6 inches next year.

- Tree 3. Medlar.** Passed by.
Raspberry. Jon cut down old growth and pointed out new growth.
- 45 **Tree 4. Hazel.** Jon re-tied and cut off a side shoot.
Blackthorn and hawthorn are fine.
- Tree 5. Plum.** Has lost its tie. Should take away the stake. To do so, wobble the stake, lift it, then put decent soil in the hole. A stake costs about £3 so re-use. [Post-meeting note: stake removed on 16/8/11.]
- 50 Bushes fine.
- Tree 6. Sorbus.** Needs re-tying.
- Tree 7. Bullace.** Has been cut off. Still alive 9 inches below cut. Leave it.
- Tree 8. Rowan.** Has bark mite. Re-tied.
- Tree 9. Cherry.** Start of rubbing damage.
- 55 **Tree 10. Pear.** A classic to take away the stake. Doing nicely. Moth damage. 900 species of moth.
- Tree 11. Apple.** Fruit comes out of spurs. Let it grow up for the first two years to get height. The best apple trees are inverted A shaped. Let the tree get to Jon's height (about 6 ft) then cut to chest height. The more branched, the more fruit you get.
- 60 Asked about **pruning** Jon said summer pruning is good, just after flowering, then the tree puts all its effort into fruit.
- Tree 12. Cherry.** Looking good.
- Tree 13. Malus tor Mandarin.** Fruit looks like a strange hawthorn. Does not need a stake.
- Tree 14. Mulberry.** Doing all right. Re-tie.
- 65 **Tree 15. Crab Apple.**
- Tree 16. Damson.** Not looking happy. Couple of buckets of water might make all the difference. 4 litres this week, 4 litres next.
- Water for the first three years. A little now and again has the effect of drawing roots to the surface.
- 70 **Tree 17. Gage.** Had it. Could be competing with hawthorn and elder. Might be worth not replacing.
- Tree 18. Apple.** Move tie.
- Tree 19. Plum.** All right.
- Tree 20. Hazel.** All right.
- 75 **Tree 21. Damson.** All right.
- Tree 22. Quince.** No comment
- Jon commented that he had seen a few hedges planted in the back end of last year. He is planting another 50 hedges in the coming back end. The Hilsea hedge is definitely in the top two of survival. He would give nine and a half out of 10 if judging it.
- 80 **Maintenance.** The group re-tied trees where necessary, cut back blackberries, did some weeding and picked up rubbish
- How apples reproduce.** An apple contains six to ten seeds which have the genetics of the parents. Reproducing by seed you get a new variety. You find new varieties where people eat an apple and throw away the core, as on the railway land alongside (when train windows

85 opened). Propagate a new variety by grafting onto a crab apple. The same with a cherry and with pears. Known as wildings. Wildings fruit in August or September, earlier than other apples. Wildings have a tendency to short fruit life. You can't store them. 99% of wildings are rubbish.

Dates for diary. Jon announced:

- 90
- Thursday 22nd September 2011, at Tangmere, West Sussex Tree Wardens are having an apple pruning, aftercare and grafting day. Jon suggested that Pauline asks Julie if there are any spaces. Worth coming.
 - Some time in October. A formative pruning day for Havant Tree Wardens

95 **Grafting.** A nursery in Herefordshire supplied this hedge. Send them a branch in January and they will return a tree in the following autumn. They will also market a tree and give you a percentage. You choose its name.

Peter Smith (of Peter's Tree Surgery & Landscaping) arrived 14:35. Jon summarised what had been done. Peter commented that he had done a strim the other day. Peter commented it's ok but needs mulch.

100 **Big Tree Plant: Where to plant.** There was discussion about where to plant trees. Jon asked the group their thoughts on the trees in Rugby Camp. He referred to the 'age class problem', where a group of trees are all of the same age and come to the end of their lives at the same time. You should plant three trees for each existing tree because on average only one in three will survive. Jon commented that you could plant three trees in any park. Peter Smith
105 commented that some big old trees were recently felled in the cemetery.

Members of the group thanked Jon for coming.

References:

- Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens
110 <http://www.portsmouthsouthseatreewardens.co.nr>
<http://www.facebook.com/portsmouthtreewardens>
<http://twitter.com/portsmouthtree>
- Frank P. Matthews Ltd, Trees for Life @, Berrington Court, Tenbury Wells, Worcs
WR15 8TH (supplied trees to the Tree Council for the hedge)
115 <http://www.frankpmatthews.com/>