

Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens

Notes of the joint training event with The Tree Council "Hedgerow Harvest Training Day" held on Sunday 24 March 2013 at 2pm for one and a half hours with Jon Stokes, Tree Council, at Hilsea fruiting hedge

Line no

Present: Jon Stokes (The Tree Council), Pauline Powell (Coordinator, Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens), Nigel Armstrong, Tracey Jones, Colin King, John Scott, Phillip Smith

5 Note: The note taker had difficulty in writing because of the cold: the temperature was 2 degrees C.

Jon set out the structure of the event, to be in three parts:

A. The state the hedge is in;

B. Renovation needed; and

C. What is needed to get the hedge through the summer

10 **Part A.** Jon commented that the hedge is two and a bit years old. He asked participants to walk the length of the hedge to look at it to see what state it is in and to comment, before he said anything.

Jon invited comments.

Tracey commented stakes are starting to rub.

15 Nigel commented (a) there were a few split tops; (b) the hedge was taking well.

Phil commented that it was nice to see things coming into leaf at different times

Jon invited marks out of 10:

20 Tracey 7/10; Nigel 7 or 8/10; John 9/10; Jon 8 or 9/10, because of context: the path by the hedge was widely used and there was the pressure of football on the pitch alongside; the growth of plants was pretty darned good for 2 years in; it was wet last year; there was a fair bit of growth and vandalism. Jon had seen 10 hedges so far. The Hilsea hedge was most challenging in respect of social. Snapped tops of fruit trees have taken a hammering and carried on: it is an unconventional urban planting.

Issues:

25 a) Broken branches will let disease in;

b) Stakes need loosening;

c) Grass is the biggest problem – see if Stuart or Pete will get us a big load of mulch; need it for another year

Part B. Renovation

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

Jon commented that the first part is about as perfect as it gets. Pauline mentioned that it had had Gunwharf working on it.

Jon commented that there are three different types of plants:

Type 1 Bushy stuff, such as Mirabel (blue grey) and blackthorn;

35 Type 2 Soft fruit; such as black currant. Rule of thumb – Take out a third each year and aim to open out the centre. Black currant flowers on 2 to 3 year old wood. In a garden, take white

currant down to 3 buds above a spur, but simplify pruning in the hedge. When you cut, don't leave a horizontal surface that water can settle on; cut parallel to a bud.

Nigel asked if this planting is too dense at this stage. Jon replied that it was becoming so.

- 40 For gooseberry, there is a different pruning technique: Take out a third of older wood; cut back by a third of length

Raspberries. Jon commented that raspberries have not taken in this hedge nor in others over the country. They need more nurturing than is possible on a site like this.

Rowan. Take out the dead stump.

- 45 **Rose hips.** Take out everything crossing over.

The next lot looked good to Jon; it needed no work at all.

Hazel. Put the tie higher. Take of the broken branch.

Black currant. Aspire to an inverted A-shape.

- 50 **Rowan** There is a scabby bit. Cut it off above the line where it is protecting itself. It does not like to be vandalised. Fungi on the surface grow through the wood. Jon split the cut-off scabby bit lengthwise to demonstrate the spread of fungus.

Mirabel. A broken Mirabel had been staked and taped. Jon said cut it off below the break.

Red currant is leggy; take one third off the top of the longest branch.

- 55 **Little apple tree** is an example of doing well; fruit producing buds are almost always on the end of a branch; side buds are flowers; cut a bit off the top branch to limit height and generate side branches.

Gooseberry. Take silver tips out.

Pear tree. A classic of what is good and bad. Lots of big fat side buds (flower buds). In as good a nick as you could hope for. Might get two dozen pears.

- 60 **Rooting blackberry branch.** Pull out and cut off.

Moving on, here we can see a problem with weeds.

Little apple tree. Lots of buds.

Red currants. Take out 2 of the biggest stems.

The trees are starting to get covered in lichen – the air is getting cleaner.

- 65 **Cherry** was vandalised.

This bit is the only bit that failed – a gap – I don't know what happened. Will get a dozen more plants.

Mulberry.

- 70 Pauline commented, this is a new one, a butterball crab apple; we have just put in a new cherry.

Jon remarked that everything is about three weeks late.

Remove the stake.

Mirabel. Phil commented that one branch is red. Jon advised to leave it – it might have different coloured fruit and be a sport.

- 75 **Apples.** Jon remarked that apples are grafts and pointed out the grafting point. Another stem was growing from below the graft – that needs to come out as soon as you spot it.

Over pruning. Tracey asked, if a tree has been over pruned, what do you do with the water shoots? Jon replied, take the tops out of water shoots and they will start to grow sideways. Take out some of them.

80 **Walnuts.** Jon demonstrated that walnuts have chambered pith. They hate being pruned. Take out dead wood.

Part C. What is needed to get the hedge through the summer

85 **Mulch.** Ideally, use one year old, one inch deep bark chippings. Would take one day and two bodies to do it. A lorry load. You have a month or two to do it. One mulch saves 10 sessions of weeding.

Trees. Take the tops out at a height of 2m.

Members of the group thanked Jon for coming.

References:

- Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens
- 90 <http://www.portsmouthsouthseatreewardens.co.nr>
 <http://www.facebook.com/portsmouthtreewardens>
 <http://twitter.com/portsmouthtree>