

Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens

Notes of the training event held on Thursday 30 July 2014 at 6.30 pm with Jon Stokes, Tree Council, at Hilsea fruiting hedge

Present: Jon Stokes (Director, The Tree Council), Andrew Knight (Arboriculturalist, Portsmouth City Council), Pauline Powell (Coordinator, Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens), Frances Jannaway (Coordinator, Havant Tree Wardens), Richard Jannaway, Phil Smith, Janet Smith, Heather McDaniel, Nadya and Mark Pearson, Malcolm and Dorothy Reeves, John Scott.

Jon said the purpose of the event was to see how the hedge is faring, to give tuition if we need it on anything we find, and for us to sample jams that Jon has made from fruit he had collected from other hedges. He described the Tree Council project as the production of linear orchards, using public space as fruit producing corridors. It was funded by lottery money. Fifty had been planted around the country, all slightly different. Hilsea Fruiting Hedge was planted in the autumn of 2010 with "random" planting or as he put it, "weird, wonderful and just plain bonkers". But it was good to get soft fruit, medlars, quinces, apples, pears, hawthorn and blackthorn all together in the same hedge. About half way through the project, more money was obtained and is being used to collect foraging stories from members of the public.

He suggested we walk along the length of the hedge observe any problems and then discuss what we might do about them.

Established Hedge

His opinion was that it was in pretty good condition, growth has been remarkable, overall it has done very well and he awarded it 8ish, out of ten.

Some problems were discussed, ie some of the trees look as though they are drying up, Jon didn't think it was a problem in the established part of the hedge, by year three the plants will be pretty well self supporting.

Vandalism - some trees have had their tops broken off and are spreading laterally, Hawthorn - is tending to crowd out other plants. In subsequent hedges, wild plum has been planted instead of hawthorn. It makes very good jam! Jon suggested that the hawthorns, when about 5' high, should be cut down to about 6" above the ground. Maybe this winter or in 18 months time.

Weeds - are still a problem and the strimmers have caused some damage. Jon said there will come a time when the trees will fight off the strimmers but he wouldn't do another trim. Andy Knight agreed with him.

Quince and medlar have done remarkably well; the mulberry has done pretty well. It no longer needs a stake, (it was removed), but the stake hole needs to be filled in. (Janet Smith sprang into action and filled up the hole.)

Recently Disturbed Section

Southern Water have dug up part of the hedge (twice!) and replanted. This replanted section looks a mess and the replanted trees are not of good stock because of their height (too tall) and lack of girth. They are spindly, of peculiar shapes and have been "butchered". Some have died. Younger trees should have been requested.

Denmark is experimenting planting large trees and small trees in public spaces and comparing survival rates. Young trees in bigger holes grow three times as fast and cost 1/3 of the price of larger ones. It pays to plant lots of small trees and then thin out to produce one specimen tree. As a rule of thumb, plant as small as you can. Large trees never get enough roots to support the top; the tree wilts to stop itself drawing water. Southern Water have agreed they will replace the dead trees in the autumn. They must be kept to their promise, Jon advised.

Andy Knight then demonstrated some radical target pruning on the damson. Not flush cutting but “mirror” cutting, known in the vernacular as “the Chinese Moustache”.

When a branch collar is present the final cut should be just outside it. When there is no collar the angle of cut should be the mirror image of the branch bark ridge.

He then described the process of moving larger trees by cutting three deep trenches round it one year and three opposing trenches the second year to allow the release of the rootball.

We then had a tasting session of Jon’s delicious red plum jam and yellow plum jam made from wild plums foraged in Portchester.

Actions

Phil Smith would contact Community Payback teams for help

Andy Knight would provide some mulch to help keep the weeds down.

Pauline Powell to contact Pete Roberts at Hilsea Lines to arrange a foraging expedition in the autumn to include Havant Tree Wardens, and participants would bring some foraging products to the event.

Jon Stokes will be giving a talk to Portsmouth U3A in the autumn.

Jon, Andy and Pauline would have a meeting in the autumn.

The main session closed at 8 pm followed by a short discussion between Jon, Andy, Frances, Malcolm and Pauline.

After Notes

Frank Matthews supplies fruit trees

The Tree Council will run a “Schools Eating Project” in the autumn/spring 2014/15

Jon’s Final Thought

“We are giving trees a bit more purpose than just being trees, ie fruiting.”

Pauline Powell
20 August 2014