



**PERRIE HALE
NURSERY**



Devon's hedge tree crisis – Our new competition will help

There's a crisis looming in Devon's countryside. Many of our hedge trees are mature or moving to the natural end of their lives and there is a lack of young trees to take their place. Diseases such as ash dieback will make the situation much worse – worse even than when Dutch elm disease struck.

Ash dieback disease is starting to spread rapidly throughout Devon. In the next 5 to 15 years it is expected to kill or severely damage most of our ashes, and ash is Devon's second most common hedgerow tree. The impact on our countryside, and towns and cities too, will be severe. The sooner we start encouraging new trees of a range of different species to replace them, the better.

To start to address this, a new competition has just been launched to find and reward farmers who are looking after their hedge trees.

Do you encourage trees in your hedges, or know someone who does? If so, please enter the Devon Hedge Tree competition or encourage the person you know to enter. **First prize is £200, second prize £100 and third £50.** All entrants will receive a free copy of The Hedge Tree Handbook and free tree tags. The competition opens now and closes on 31 August 2016.

Rob Wolton, chairman of the Devon Hedge Group, says "We want to ensure that future generations can enjoy the magnificent hedge trees that currently grace our countryside. They are a vital part of our beautiful landscape and hugely important for wildlife. Through this new competition we hope to recognise the achievements of those farmers and landowners already working to ensure there will be hedge trees around for centuries to come. And we want to encourage others to follow their example".

Jon Stokes of The Tree Council said 'To keep Britain's hedge tree population healthy, we need to grow 15,000 new hedgerow trees each year before ash dieback – a number that will rise as ash dieback spreads. We hope this new Devon competition will encourage farmers to celebrate their hedge trees and plant more. Once again Devon is leading the way nationally in protecting its hedges and hedgerow trees'.

The competition is being organised by the Devon Hedge Group in partnership with Perrie Hale Nursery, The Tree Council and the Woodland Trust. To enter please download a form at the Devon Hedge Group website <http://devonhedges.org/> or ask for one from hedges@devon.gov.uk.



Hedge ash tree, Inwardleigh, Devon

Further information

The Devon Hedge Tree Competition seeks people who show commitment to ensure the long-term survival of hedge trees on their farm. This involves both looking after mature trees on their land and encouraging new ones, whether by planting or letting natural saplings or shoots develop. Short listed entries will be notified by mid September 2016 and judging will take place in early October. There will be an award ceremony for the winners during the autumn.

There are about 7 million trees outside woodlands in Devon and most of these are in our hedges. About 30% of them, or nearly 2 million, are ash trees. Even in urban areas ashes are common – there's an estimated 95,000 in Torbay alone. It is likely at least half of these ashes will either die or be dying back in the next 5 to 15 years, perhaps as many as 90%. Without farmers taking positive action to replace them, tree numbers will fall drastically.

Hedges and hedgerow trees are among the most distinctive and well loved features of Devon's countryside, and are a consequence of farm management. Parish, farm and individual field boundaries are traditionally marked by hedges and ditches, with hedgerow trees being prominent and familiar landmarks on farmland and along roads and lanes, with many standing as impressive sentinels at junctions.

Hedges and hedgerow trees are long-lived features. Many individual trees of species such as oak will be more than 100 years old with some being true veterans bearing the signs and scars of increasing age but still being important parts of the landscape, up to and including their death and decay. As well as being such attractive parts of the landscape, hedgerow trees have many practical benefits for landowners, including providing important shelter and shade for farm livestock.

Hedgerow trees are vital for wildlife, either alone or in association with the hedgerow and other habitats. They are magnets for many insects including beetles, flies, moths and butterflies, and so in turn for their predators like bats and birds. As an example, research shows that the presence of hedgerow trees can increase overall numbers of moths in an area by as much as 60%. Hedgerow trees, particularly hollow and veteran ones, provide vital shelter, food and nest sites. Many plants and fungi live on hedgerow trees including ferns, lichens and the sadly oft maligned ivy. Bats roost and breed in the holes and crevices in older trees and birds including nuthatch, great spotted woodpecker and tawny owl will nest in them.

The Devon Hedge Group is a partnership of organisations and individuals working together to foster support for hedge conservation in Devon, particularly through promoting management that optimises the value of hedges for farming, wildlife, landscape, archaeological and cultural purposes, whilst acknowledging practical farming constraints.

Perrie Hale Nursery has provided quality native trees and shrubs for many planting projects, including new hedges and hedgerow trees, for over 50 years. All our stock is grown from the best UK seed available and grown using the best possible care.

The Woodland Trust is the UK's largest woodland conservation charity and the leading voice for woods and trees. We inspire people up and down the country to visit, cherish and protect woods, plant more trees, treasure wildlife, and enjoy the overwhelming benefits that woods and trees offer to our landscape and lives.

The Tree Council is the UK's leading charity for trees, promoting their importance in a changing environment. The Tree Council works to make trees matter to everyone. It is committed to: More trees, of the right kind, in the right places; Better care for all trees, of all ages; and Inspiring effective action for trees. The Tree Council launched its national Hedge Tree Campaign in 2004.

- For more information on ash dieback (Chalara) in Devon see <http://www.naturaldevon.org.uk/devons-wildlife/devon-ash-dieback-actionplan/>
- For more information on Devon hedges and their trees see <http://devonhedges.org/>
- For free digital photographs of hedge trees, please contact robertwolton@devonhedges.org

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