

BBC
breathing
places



hug **a tree**

pocket guide

BBC Breathing Places is a major BBC Learning campaign to inspire and motivate you to create and care for nature-friendly green spaces where you live.

Getting out and enjoying nature can have great benefits for you and there are lots of exciting ways you can get involved.

Go wild with Breathing Places at:
bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces

“We all need trees... to make our communities greener and healthier places to live. Grey is dull and deadens the soul, green is fresh and makes us feel alive.”

Joanna Lumley
Actress

Tree-mendous

Trees are our oldest and tallest living plants and their role in supporting life on Earth is vital. Trees give us oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. In fact, every tree you see has its part to play and without them our world would be a very different place. So, planting a tree or shrub will really make a difference. And if you choose a species that is native to the UK, all the better because these provide the greatest benefits to native wildlife.

What's also great is that you don't have to travel half way across the world to see fantastic, old trees and magical forests. The UK's ancient woodland is our equivalent of the rainforest, housing more types of creatures and plants than any other parts of our landscape. Unfortunately, today only fragments survive and these need protection because they cannot be replaced.



Old is awesome!

The UK's ancient trees provide homes to some of our most important wildlife, from bats and bugs to birds and fungi. Yet, without cutting them down and counting the rings, it is difficult to know how old a tree is, although there are clues:

- Wide trunks ('girth')
- Hollows in the trunks and deep cracks in the bark
- Fungi growing on the tree
- Looking a bit battered and has a craggy character

How old a tree grows to be also depends on the type or species. A willow tree that reaches 100 years old, for example, would be considered ancient. A 100-year-old oak tree, on the other hand, would be a youngster.

The Fortingall yew in Scotland is thought to be around 5,000 years old – imagine how many people have lived and died during its lifetime!

Branching out

Fancy growing a tree for future generations? Here are some top tree planting tips:

- Plant the right tree in the right place.
- Avoid willow and poplar in small gardens. Instead go for hawthorn, hazel, holly, rowan, crab apple or bird cherry. Smaller hedgerow shrubs also provide valuable wildlife habitat.
- Larger trees are only suitable for more open spaces – try oak, ash, beech, small-leaved lime, Scots pine and yew.
- Provide adequate space for your tree to grow and try not to plant it close to buildings or pipes.
- Leave at least 2 metres between each tree.
- Keep new trees in their containers until the last minute to protect their root systems.
- Dig your hole wider and deeper than the fully extended roots of your new tree.
- For large trees dig a wide, shallow hole to help roots spread.

How to plant your tree

1. Carefully remove the tree from its container.
2. Remove broken or damaged twigs and give the roots a good soak in water.
3. Mark out the planting area and dig a hole for your tree – the depth should be about the length of the root ball plus about 3cm. Go deeper if it appears the roots might bend.
4. Place your tree upright in the hole with the roots just below ground level.
5. Break up the soil and gently fill in around the roots, then firm lightly with your feet.
6. Continue filling the hole, each time treading the soil in more firmly.
7. Any turf that's been removed should be replaced upside down on the soil around the tree.
8. Tidy up and apply mulch around the base of the tree.

TreeLC

Once planted, your tree needs looking after:

1. Try and keep a 1-metre circle around the base of the tree free from grass and plants for at least the first year.
2. Add mulch – it provides nutrients and locks in water. Bark mulch is best, but newspaper or grass clippings are better than nothing.
3. Check the tree regularly and ‘heel it in’ (press firmly round the base with your feet) if it rocks in the wind.
4. If the tree has a stake, firm it in and make sure that the tree is not rubbing against it – loosen any ties as the tree grows.
5. Small trees planted in the winter should not need watering, but larger trees and those planted late in the season may need some watering through the first year and during dry spells.





Tree

bingo



Go on a tree hunt and see how many of these you can identify.



Bracket fungus – Found on lots of different trees, these oddly shaped fungi are so-called because they tend to grow horizontally out of tree trunks like a bracket.

Seen



Earthworm – Easy to find under logs and possessing both male and female reproductive cells, earthworms eat decaying organic matter and help fertilise the soil.

Seen



Holly – This Christmas favourite provides shelter for many animals. The female tree produces berries which provide a great food source for birds like mistle thrushes.



Seen



Horse chestnut – Often referred to as the 'conker', these seeds (or fruit) of the horse chestnut tree develop in prickly cases and become ripe during autumn.



Seen



Rowan – In ancient folklore these fast growing trees were believed to protect against witchcraft and enchantment. The berries can also be used to make great jelly.



Seen



Woodlice – These bugs have 14 legs, love eating rotting plants and living in dark, damp places. You may find them in leaf litter or hiding under the bark of old trees.



Bingo!

Do One Thing

For more inspiration, try these other tree-related ideas:

Recycle! Recycle! Recycle!

Recycle and/or reuse paper and cardboard. Also, wherever possible, check the origins of any wood products you buy – the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label indicates wood from sustainable forests.

Join up

Become a local tree officer and help look after the trees in your area. Check out the Tree Council for more information. Younger tree enthusiasts could sign up to become a nature detective with the Woodland Trust.

Seed up

Collect seeds from your favourite local tree in autumn and help bring on the next generation of trees. Remember to leave some seeds for wildlife that often rely upon them as a winter food source! Organisations like the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and The Wildlife Trusts provide information.

Create your own woodland scene

Plant natural woodland flowers like native bluebells, primroses and snowdrops beneath your tree(s) and enjoy a colourful showing each spring. Try Flora locale and PlantforLife for advice.

Go on an ancient tree hunt

Very old trees are not just restricted to ancient woodland. In fact, your local park may even have a 300-year-old oak or similar waiting to be discovered. Check out the Ancient Tree Hunt to find out how you can take part.

Woodland picnic

Whether you want to relax, improve your fitness or entertain the children, a woodland stroll and picnic is a perfect combination. As well as the Woodland Trust, organisations like the Forestry Commission and National Trust offer great places to visit. Regional guides are also available online and in bookshops – local libraries may also be able to help.

For more details regarding these and other ideas, check out: bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces

**do
one
thing**

For more ideas of what you can
do for nature, why not check out
other Do One Thing activities at:

bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces

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