**District Dispatch**

Planting trees benefits our district in so many ways, from improving biodiversity and boosting carbon storage, to enhancing the natural beauty of our local landscape for everybody to enjoy. As we’re in the midst of tree planting season, I wanted to provide you with an update on our ‘Tree Chichester District’ scheme.

Firstly, a quick reminder that if you’re part of a local community group, school, or parish council and would like to plant a community orchard in the district, you can still apply for funding to help with this. Apply before Friday 31 January by emailing: **treescheme@chichester.gov.uk** or calling: 01243 521161.

Community Orchards are collections of fruit or nut trees — such as, apples, pears, cherries, greengages, and plums — grown in public spaces and shared by local people. Successful applicants to our Community Orchard scheme will receive funding for trees and accessories that will help the trees thrive, such as guards, stakes, and tree ties. To date, we’ve supported the planting of over 200 trees, providing healthy, fresh produce to local communities for decades to come.

This is just one of the initiatives that we’ve been delivering as part of our Tree Chichester District scheme, which is funded by the government’s Shared Outcomes Fund and is part of the Trees Outside Woodland programme. The programme — led by Defra, The Tree Council and Natural England, in collaboration with five local authorities, including our own — aims to trial new methods of establishing trees outside of woodlands, comparing cost effectiveness and tree survival rates.

One way in which we have been testing the success of different planting methods, is through our Miyawaki mini urban forest trial. The Miyawaki method, originally developed in Japan where it was first used to plant trees in the 1970s, involves high density planting in specially prepared soil. Although almost unknown in the UK a few years ago, this planting method has proven to be a great way to establish young trees in areas where the conditions aren’t ideal for planting (for example, in poor soil).

It’s been interesting to see the results of the trial so far, in which the Miyawaki method — both in our district and across the four other local authorities — has produced trees that are fast growing and resilient, with a 79% survival rate compared to 47% for standard planting methods. I’m pleased to say that just before Christmas, the district’s ninth Miyawaki trial plot was planted in Florence Road, Chichester. At this site, we’re trialling the effectiveness of Miyawaki planting for individual trees, rather than a forest. We look forward to seeing how the trees grow and thrive in this new location!

You may remember that a few years ago, we ran two schemes in which we offered residents, community groups, schools, parish councils, charities, businesses, landowners and farmers, the opportunity to apply for trees and accessories that they would receive for free in the first year or at a subsidised cost in the second year. These schemes were very well received, and it was great to see so many new trees planted as a result.

We’ve been monitoring and comparing the survival rates of the trees planted through both of these schemes, and a report is due to be published over the next few months. The results and recommendations will provide useful information that will help organisations — from local authorities to community groups — shape similar tree planting schemes for the future.

Since launching in 2021, ‘Tree Chichester District’ has seen over 50,000 trees planted through 200 individual projects. If you’re interested in carrying out tree planting in your area — whether it’s a community initiative or on private land — please contact our Tree Project Officer on: **treescheme@chichester.gov.uk**. You can also find out more at: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/treescheme**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/treeschemeo).

Best Wishes

Cllr Jonathan Brown

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environmental Strategy at Chichester District Council

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