



Forestry England

Bedgebury

Apprentice Blog

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By Ella

January was another busy month at Bedgebury! While the Christmas lights were being taken down until next year, the new fibre cable was being installed, running all the way from the Forestry Office to the Visitor Centre. Everyone is very excited about this! Sarah and I mainly spent our time in Section 17, carrying out established checks, and in the redwood and cherry tree avenues chipping and banking.

Chipping is the process of turning branches/brush into chips using a woodchipper. Banking a site is where an area needs to be completely or partially closed off for machinery or for a process to be undertaken.

A banksman's job is to stop or control the people coming into the working site. In this instance, when Cat and Harry were felling next to the coast redwood avenue, parts of the site were still open to the public. So, when a tree was being felled, my job was to stop anyone coming into the area until it was safe to allow them through. Diversions were also set up so people could avoid the working site.

This felling work was done to give more space and light to the remaining specimens to help them grow consistently and successfully. Sarah and I chipped the brush (branches) resulting from this process, leaving three-metre length logs in stacks ready for the timber crane.



Established checks involve checking a mixture of established and unestablished specimens. We rely on the instructions Liz and Dan give us on 'Floria', an app which tells us what we need to do with each marked specimen. This involves re-caging, checking tree ties, releasing specimens that are now considered established, removing dead specimens, weeding and pruning.

An established specimen is one that is usually old enough to be without a cage or tree tie, but this can depend on the species. An unestablished specimen is younger, meaning it has a cage and sometimes a tree tie. The re-caging process varies depending on whether we are producing a rabbit or deer cage. At present we are mainly producing deer cages as these give more protection.



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The process of creating a deer cage involves 4 stages...



1. Remove wire and stakes. A pink mark on a cage means the tree needs re-caging.



2. Remove any weeds around the specimen. Prune, if necessary (according to instructions on 'Floria').



3. Take six stakes and place them evenly in a circle around the specimen. Using a post knocker, hit them into the ground to the height of the chicken wire.



4. Using a rope, measure how much wire you need with around 4 inches extra to overlap. Cut and place around stakes; secure by folding wire to wrap around one another.

Once we have completed what needs to be done with each specimen, we mark it off on the 'Floria' app. This sends a notification to Liz, who runs the tree database, so that she can update the tree's record. I've been told that this digital way of recording, which has only become available recently, is a far easier way of marking each change than on paper.

Section 17, where Sarah and I have been completing the established checks, is where specimens from the southern hemisphere are planted. It is one of the most sheltered sections of the Pinetum giving more protection to the specimens from the harsher elements of the English climate. My favourite species in this section has to be the monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*). There is an amazing plot of mature monkey puzzles in an area known as the Plots, around the back of the Forestry Office. The Plots are well worth a visit if you have the time. It is an area where future forestry species are being trialled; there are a large number of sections consisting of a variety of different tree species.

