

We are recruiting for volunteers!

Silk Wood Community Planting Project Volunteer

Since we started the Silk Wood Community Planting Project (SWCPP), we've made great progress in regenerating Silk Wood following the clearing of diseased ash trees. All thanks to the amazing volunteers who've joined along the way. With over 1,000 community participants, we've planted and maintained 3,300 saplings to date, with 5,700 more to come. We have also been busy monitoring the flora of the site, as well as offering learning opportunities and wellbeing-based events. We've also initiated trials on biodegradable tree tubes and different weed control methods to see what works best for helping these young trees thrive.

In the coming months, we will continue to care for last year's trees before gearing up for the next planting season. Our groups range in numbers, ages, abilities and needs, and so having volunteers assisting with supervision is essential to enable these events to run smoothly. By joining us, new volunteers will have the chance to make a real impact on the future of Silk Wood and be part of something special.

If you think this is a volunteer opportunity that interests you, we are having an open morning where you can come and meet the team to find out more. To attend the open morning, please sign-up, using the link to the form below. The open morning is on Wednesday 4th September and you can drop in at any time to meet the team between 09.30am and 1.00pm. Instructions and directions for the day will be emailed nearer the time.

Sign-up to meet the team HERE: <https://forms.office.com/e/t9winfs5XA>

If you have any questions or cannot access the form please get in touch with the volunteer office at volunteer.westonbirt@forestryengland.uk or by phoning 0300 067 4286

Volunteer Role Description

Following the discovery of ash dieback in the Arboretum in 2015, over 5,000 mature ash trees were subsequently felled. The SWCPP is regenerating 5 hectares of previously ash dominated woodland. To do this, the project is bringing together local community groups, schools, and other volunteers to create Westonbirt's very first community woodland.

Community Woodland Volunteers play a key role in supporting session delivery. Practical events, including ground clearance, tree planting, woodland management and monitoring will be attended by a diverse range of community groups. This volunteer role will help run and supervise these group activities alongside a member of Westonbirt staff, while creating a safe and welcoming environment for participants taking part in practical sessions.

When

Practical work on the ground has been ongoing since October 2023 and will continue into 2026. The project is running a mixture of sessions ranging from tree care and maintenance activities to outdoor learning and wellbeing days. These mostly happen on weekdays with the occasional weekend session. Depending on the session these could be half days or full days anytime from 9am - 5pm; dates will be confirmed in advance. As the project evolves, volunteers will have the opportunity to run groups themselves, as well as develop a legacy group to continually maintain the planting area.

What's Involved

- Supporting and working with groups and individuals and participants within group sessions to enjoy and enhance their experience.
- Being a positive role model for appropriate behaviour, use of equipment, health and safety.
- Helping staff to set up and close activities.
- Helping to deliver community group activities, including practical conservation, woodland management and ecological monitoring, alongside a lead staff member.
- Encourage teamwork and problem solving.
- Supporting and maintaining health and safety practices.
- Attending regular work mornings to prepare resources and work with other volunteers.
- Working outdoors in all weathers and rough ground.
- Occasionally helping with administrative tasks (optional).

We'd like you to be...

Enthusiastic, patient, friendly, positive, reliable, a good communicator, flexible and open-minded. We want you to provide support and supervision when working with both groups and individuals.

Prepared to work in all weather conditions as this volunteer role will run through autumn and winter and will be out in the thick of Silk Wood where ground conditions are likely to be uneven and sometimes wet and muddy. The work is often physically demanding (e.g. Lots of walking and weeding thistles and brambles). However, volunteers always work to a pace that they are comfortable with and we will make any adjustments we can to support our volunteers with this.

Knowledge of trees, flora and woodland management would be useful - but these are things that can be learnt along the way...

We will...

- Provide new starter training and ongoing support, help and guidance.
- Not expect you to perform any physical care duties e.g., pushing a wheelchair.
- Provide training covering all aspects of the role.
- Provide tools and equipment with instruction, and personal protective equipment where needed; volunteers do not use chainsaws.
- Advise that terrain may be uneven, rough or muddy and you will be walking on and off paths in ALL weathers, therefore sturdy boots/shoes are needed.
- Provide individual uniform and loan outdoor clothing for inclement weather.
- Give you an on-site radio for communication.
- Pay a contribution to the cost of volunteering travel.
- Help you to complete the required Disclosure and Barring System checks (DBS).
- Advise that large parts of the day are spent outdoors away from the main site facilities. We have portable toilets onsite.
- Advise that the minimum age for this role is 18 years.

To apply

Application details will be made available after the open morning on 4th September.