

Case study Fighting back



A destructive tree disease

Ash dieback (Chalara) is a highly destructive disease which was first identified in the UK in 2012.

The fungus first penetrates the leaves of an ash tree, then starts growing inside the tree until it eventually blocks the water transport systems and causes the tree to die. Spores of the fungus travel in the wind, meaning the disease spreads easily which makes it difficult to limits its impact.

Once infected, many of the trees become unsafe and if left in situ can also help spread the disease further afield. In a bid to stop the disease spreading, many trees have been removed from our landscape.

All the A's - An Ash Archive

As part of the Government's Ash Research Strategy, Defra funded a project called the Ash Archive to help identify trees which are showing signs of being naturally tolerant to the disease.

Trees propagated (cut and grown) from the shoots of trees that have demonstrated some resistance to the fungus have been planted on one site in Hampshire.







Fighting back!

A team of dedicated Forestry England staff battled in stormy, cold and muddy conditions to plant 3000 trees in just three days, an amazing effort and achievement! The end result being the UK's first Ash Archive.

Working in collaboration with Future Trees Trust, Forest Research, Kew Gardens and Fera, the trees will now be used for further scientific research into the disease.

What happens next?

Forestry England will continue to manage the maintenance of the trees, including weeding, spraying and mowing, to give them the best chance to thrive.

The trees will be monitored for their tolerance levels under real-world conditions. The archive will be continually refined by removing any trees that are damaged by the disease and replacing them with newly identified tolerant trees from the wider countryside and other trials.

Keeping our forests healthy



The archive is a major step towards maintaining and restoring ash in the British landscape. It is intended that it will provide the basis for a breeding programme of tolerant ash over time and will enable the development of orchards producing commercially available seed.