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Trees are a traditional and valuable feature in your churchyard. They create character and support wildlife.

We can help you take good care of them.

## Download our guidance

- [A Brief Guide to Works to Trees in Churchyards](#) (165.86 KB)
- [Works to Trees in Churchyards](#) (731.77 KB)
- [Applications for works to trees in Wales](#) (132.4 KB)
- [Advice on trees for Archdeacons](#) (257.83 KB)

Steps up to path in ancient woodland

Jane Willis

## How to care for your trees

You should keep a record of your trees and their condition.

Trees may be at risk. Or they may be a risk to structures and people. A good tree plan will help you take immediate action.

If you are starting from scratch, hire an [arboriculturalist](#) to do a professional survey, which can then be used and updated by volunteers.

Each year, and after any extreme weather, do an inspection of your trees. Look for:

- Trees growing near existing structures (e.g. buildings, walls or monuments). You may need to prune them
- Saplings that have taken root at the base of walls or monuments. They are best removed
- Overhead cables affected by tree growth. Ask a tree surgeon or the power company to deal with this
- One sided trees, perhaps after losing a limb in a storm. You may need to prune them
- Ground level changes or disturbance of soil under or near the base of trees

- Tree trunks with holes, cavities or visible fungi at the base – they may require a professional survey
- Are the tree leaves unnaturally small, sparse or misshapen? Do they fall early and is the entire tree affected? This can be a sign of a tree under stress from age, conditions or disease
- Dead branches or storm damage. Are any branches hanging over paths or car parks?
- Fungi, sap seepage and loose or damaged bark
- Fungi and tree lean in the roots
- Has the ivy growth increased since the last survey? Is it making it difficult to assess the tree?

Use this checklist from Caring for God's Acre

## Permissions

The care and maintenance of a churchyard and the trees in it is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council.

Major works to trees will need a faculty. But certain works on List B can be done with the permission from your archdeacon. Others on List A need no permission at all. Contact your diocese for help.

Remember that secular law also applies to churchyards and you should consult your local planning authority before doing any significant tree works. Especially if it has a Tree Preservation Order or is in a conservation area.

Find out more about permissions

**Don't forget!**

You need a bat-survey if you are felling trees or limbs from trees.

## Caring for ancient yews

Nowhere else in Europe can boast so many venerable yews in its churchyards, with many dating back to the birth of Christ and beyond. They are hugely valuable.

If you think you have an ancient, veteran or significant yew in your churchyard, then get specific advice on how to care for it.

## Get professional help

Doing work on trees can be a dangerous activity.

You should always use a professional arboriculturalist for major works. Get a priced schedule of work from more than one company for comparison.

Find out what to look for when employing a professional

## Emergency works

A tree may suddenly pose an immediate and substantial risk to people or property (e.g. after a storm).

If possible, contact your archdeacon and local planning authority (if relevant) before any work is done. If you need to do the work immediately:

- Take photographs of the tree from a safe distance to show why you needed to take action
- And contact your diocese to see if you need to apply for retrospective permission

Do the minimum necessary to make the tree and its immediate surroundings safe. Often, the best answer is to fence off the area and get professional advice.

Dealing with health and safety is an absolute priority. So you should make sure that felling the tree does not endanger the lives or property of others.

Don't forget that you may need to get permission to do the work.

## Planting new trees

Think carefully before adding more trees to your churchyard and don't forget to consult your archdeacon.

You need a well-considered scheme. Think about:

- The species: its mature height, span and root growth
- Planting native trees: they will be better suited to the area
- The changing climate: current knowledge suggests we are heading for a dryer climate with sudden heavy rainfall
- Flowering trees are more appropriate for a garden. So use them sparingly.

After planting, the young tree will need protection and care to ensure healthy growth and so this care should be factored into your planting decisions.

Don't forget to [contact your diocese](#) to see if you need a faculty.

## Also of interest



### [Protect the environment](#)

[Find out why you should act](#)



### [Making changes to your churchyard](#)

[Let us take you through every step of your project](#)



### [Bats](#)

[Everything from permissions to care and management](#)



## Biodiversity

[Find out how to protect the wildlife in your churchyard](#)

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