

Information Sheet 1 – Tending young trees.

Trees, planted with care and expense can die each year from the lack of just a few minutes of TLC — Tending, Loosening ties and Clearing grass and weeds. All trees planted in the last five years need your help and a visit at least once a year, between March and September, and some TLC. A few simple steps will help many more trees to survive the crucial early years and become an important part of our heritage.

TLC tips

Here are a few easy, effective tasks, normally requiring less than five minutes a year, that will help to give a young tree a good start in life and make it much more likely to survive to maturity.

Tending

Check the tree in March or April every year. Is it alive? If there are no leaves, look for green under the bark of twigs (scrape the surface with a fingernail or knife) and living buds. Fill in any gaps in the soil around the roots and use a foot to firm the new soil. Also, if the soil has been lifted by frost, firm it down. If the soil is waterlogged, channel/drain the excess water away from the tree. Look for damage caused by pests and diseases. If the tree is dead, try to work out why and contact the Tree Section.

Loosening



Check the stake and the tie. Is the tie too tight? The tree stem should not be under pressure from the tie, and should not rub against the stake or guard.



Does the tree still need a stake? A young tree should only need one until its roots have grown into undisturbed soil to give it stability, which generally takes a year. Check this in spring by releasing the tie and if the tree stays upright, remove the stake.



If the tree leans like this and the roots move or...

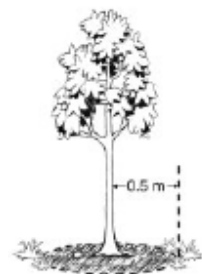


...if it is top heavy, bending over like this



Shorten the stake (to just above the bend, if relevant) and replace the tie at the top of the stake to ensure the stem stands upright.

Clearing



Pull up any grass and weeds for a radius of at least half a meter around the tree. (this won't be possible with street trees, so just weed the tree base) Take care to avoid damage to the tree's roots, which can be in the first few centimetres of topsoil. Early in the year, when the soil is moist, cover the cleared area with bark or brushwood chippings. This helps retain moisture near the roots, reduces competition from weeds, and means there is no need to use grass-cutting machinery near the tree where it might damage the bark.

And don't forget the most important bit.. **WATERING!** Watering is essential for newly planted trees: the larger the stock size the more watering will be needed, especially in periods of drought. As a rule, try to give each tree a very thorough soak. Ensure the water penetrates to the roots by, if necessary, forking over the soil surface before watering. The gardeners' maxim of "little and often" will only encourage surface rooting, thus increasing the vulnerability of the tree to drought and sun-scorch in the long run.

Any questions? Contact the Tree Section 020 8891 7808 or e-mail trees@richmond.gov.uk