

Small Woodland Owners' Group

NEWSLETTER MAY 2014

**The sun and the
pleacher man –
hedging with Rich
Make a woodland
bench in 10 minutes
Managing ash die-back
Woodfair listings**



Small Woodland Owners' Group



Spring seems to have arrived, and with the exception of the ash, the trees in our woods are in leaf. It's a wonderful time of year and we would love to know your plans for your woods this year. Articles, news and photos are all very welcome – please send them to Judith@swog.org.uk. In addition, if you would like to host a meeting in your wood, please get in touch.

The Small Woodland Owner's Group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British woodland. The company Woodlands.co.uk sponsors the group, so membership is completely free and events are free of charge unless otherwise stated. SWOG is open to anyone interested in the management or the enjoyment of woodland.

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SWOG COURSE LIST APRIL 2014



SWOG Course Listings

Anyone who buys a wood from Woodlands.co.uk is given £300 towards a woodland course to help towards owners' enjoyment and knowledge. These courses can encompass anything from basket-weaving, green woodworking or pole lathe turning, to chainsaw tuition and woodland management. Members are asked to write a short resumé of their course, noting how effective they

found it, and whether they would recommend it to others.

We are gradually incorporating all these valuable comments into a database listing which can be searched by area or course topic. We hope it will be useful to anyone searching for help and guidance in choosing a woodland course. Technological gremlins have bedevilled progress, but version two is now on the SWOG website here: www.swog.org.uk/courses-4

Weird and Wonderful Wood



**Saturday 17th 10.30 – 6.00pm and
Sunday 18th May 2014 10.30 – 5.00pm Haughley Park, Wetherden,
Nr Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 3JY**

Weird and Wonderful Wood is a unique and exciting event which is different every year. For those who love wood, those fascinated by the beauty of wood, and wooden objects, it is a rare chance to see how they are made and an opportunity to try making things. Demonstrations will include furniture-making, musical instrument-making, displays by traditional fletchers and bowyers, chainsaw carving, wheel wright, hurdle-making, wood-turning, pole lathe turning, sign-writing, labyrinth-making, flute maker as well as coracle making and traditional gypsy caravan displays.

Workshops, for both adults and children are free and include activities such as archery, willow weaving, spoon wittling, withy work, papermaking, gypsy flower making, pole lathe turning, scrap wood, puppet making, jewellery making, den building, and Monkey-do tree climbing.

Admission per day: Adults £6, Concessions £4, Children under 12s £3, and under 3s free. Dogs are welcome but must be kept on a lead at all times.

Horse Logging Demonstration

Saturday 17 May 2014, 3pm–5pm, Glentress Forest, Dumfries & Borders

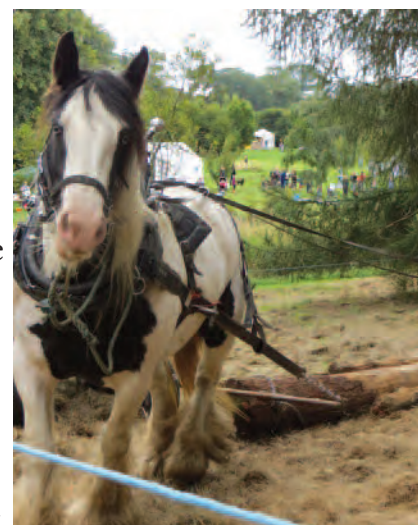
Woodland owners, managers and the wider public have a great opportunity to see working horses in action on a commercial timber harvesting (thinnings) operation in the heart of Glentress Forest this May.

See working horses in action pulling timber from woodland and meet local horse loggers including Rab and Caitlin Erskine with their logging horse Rhona (a chunky Ardennes mare). Discover how horses continue to play an active role in sustainable forest management.

Glentress Forest provides an accessible logging site where Caitlin and Rab will be working a felling and extraction of thinnings contract for several weeks leading up to the demo on 17 May.

John Everitt, FCS Forester for Glentress said: 'We are keen to use horses rather than machines for timber harvesting on what is a fairly sensitive site. Whilst it can be slightly more expensive than the most efficient modern machines we think it is worth paying a premium to minimise

disturbance, for example around mountain bike tracks, streams, footpaths and roadside verges. We are aiming to make the woods more attractive and develop timber quality by selectively thinning



out some of the trees and we hope to make a small profit from the sale of timber'. It's a lovely spot with good footpaths, and the new Glentress Peel Centre and café will be open for refreshments nearby. Entrance by donation to BHL Charitable Trust. For more information on Glentress Forest visit the website, www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk/glentress

The horse logging afternoon is part of a wider programme of events at the Border Festival of the Horse, an 11-day celebration of horses and riding from 16–25 May. To find out more, visit www.bordersfestivalhorse.org



The importance of bees

**Woodland Bee Hunting Walk,
Fore Wood, Friday 9 May 2014,**

Crowhurst, East Sussex,

10:00 –12:30

Saturday 10 May Tudeley

Woods, Pembury, Kent,

10:00 –12:30

Join Rosie Earwaker from the RSPB to discover more about the rare Fringed-horned Mason Bee, and why they live in the coppiced woodlands of

the High Weald today.

Rosie will give an introduction to woodland bees (including dispelling a few myths), an introduction to the Fringe-horned Mason Bee, and the importance of coppicing to the survival of this species. This will be followed by a walk around Fore Woods, with a chance to have a go at catching and identifying bees.

These are free events from the High Weald AONB. Click this link to book the Fore Wood event and this link to book Tudeley Wood.



Wonders of Wood/Founding Fathers' Day, Ryedale Folk Museum, North Yorkshire 14–15 June

Ryedale Folk Museum is celebrating Fathers' Day with practical displays of wood-related crafts, including wood-turning, chair caning and more. With a number of displays about the museum's Founding Fathers, the museum is offering a half-price discount on family tickets in honour of Fathers' Day.

Open from 10am–4.30pm, the Ryedale Folk Museum offers a unique glimpse of the past and won the White Rose best small visitor attraction prize in 2013. For more information, visit the website www.ryedalefolkmuseum.co.uk.

Woodland management and products survey – can SWOG members help?

The last decade has seen a resurgence of interest in items produced sustainably from our native woodlands. Yet in the Midlands, there is no information on markets for greenwood products. Can you help us out?

At Moulton College in Northamptonshire students studying Countryside and Wildlife Management have teamed up with the Small Woods Association and the Rockingham Forest Coppice Group to design an online public survey to help identify the current and future demand for woodland products and training courses in this region. It is hoped that the results from this questionnaire will assist local forest crafts people and woodland owners and help them to manage their woods more sustainably for both wildlife and timber production.



So this is where you come in – we would greatly appreciate the views of SWOG members. so please help us by filling out the brief online survey and send it out to as many other interested people as you know. This is the link to the online survey:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/HQFR3JB.

For more information on this project or on courses at Moulton College, contact Dr James Littlemore at james.littlemore@moulton.ac.uk or 01604-491131.

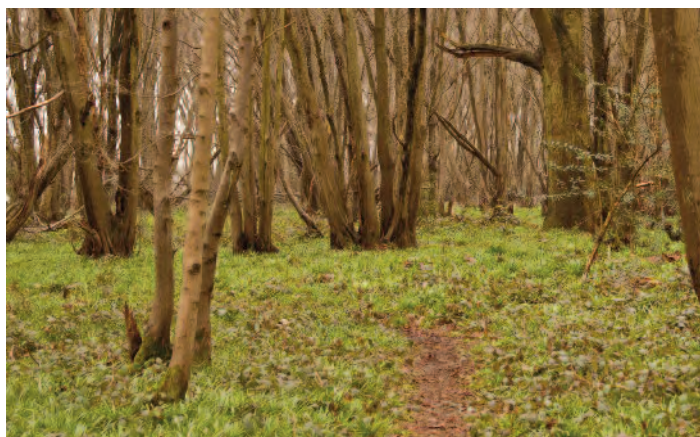
Flowers in the spring

It's been a wonderful year for bluebells in our woods. The Woodland Trust reports that native bluebells are bouncing back following last year's cold spring. With an average first flowering date of 5 May in 2013, this year first flowering was some three weeks earlier in mid-April. The earliest flowering recorded to date was in 2012, with an average across the UK of 4 April.

Long-term records show that English bluebell flowering dates have advanced by five days in the last 50 years alone, with other spring species flowering up to 12 days earlier over the last 25 years. Records suggest that this is a result of climate change, which the Woodland Trust has highlighted as one of the greatest long-term threats to ancient woodland, the natural habitat for native bluebells.

The UK is home to half the world's population of English bluebells, which gives the

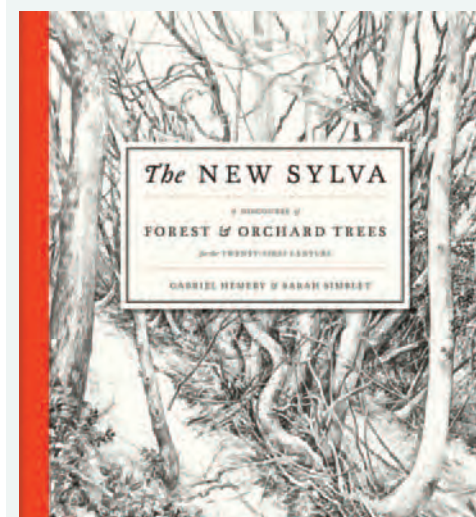
Heartwood Forest in April 2013 (left) and April 2014 (right). (Courtesy WTPL/Judith Parry)



country's bluebell woods international significance. Widespread throughout ancient woodlands, bluebells are not only threatened by the loss of ancient woodland habitat. The distinctive indigenous bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) are rivalled by the Spanish bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*), with which it readily cross-breeds, resulting in the fertile hybrid *Hyacinthoides hispanica x non-scripta*.

There was an interesting debate on the SWOG forum (www.swog.org.uk/forum) regarding the protected status of native bluebells, with a link to the 2003 report, *Bluebells for Britain*, published by Plantlife International, the charity which works to conserve wild plants in their natural habitats.

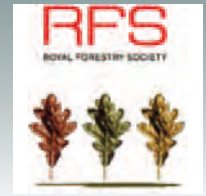
Woodland owners who wish to introduce bluebells to their woods should take care to use reputable suppliers who source their stock from sustainable sources.



Members' offer – The New Sylva

Last month SWOG gave the world the first review of Dr Gabriel Hemery's book, *The New Sylva* and we are delighted that other publications have given it similarly favourable reviews. SWOG members can still take advantage of a 30% discount off the recommended price. Further reviews and a sample pages are available on the Sylva website [here](http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/the-new-sylva-9781408835449/).

To take advantage of this discount offer, visit www.bloomsbury.com/uk/the-new-sylva-9781408835449/ or call 01256 302 699 and enter the discount code Sylva30 at the check-out. Offer ends 31st May 2014.



RFS, Small Woods and Sylva – a new partnership

Three major organisations serving public interests in forestry, have come together forming a powerful partnership to foster sustainable forest management in Britain. The Royal Forestry Society, Small Woods Association and the Sylva Foundation will be working together to support woodland owners in caring for their woodlands.

The majority (72%) of all forested land in the UK is owned and managed by private woodland owners. Ensuring that our woodlands are resilient to future challenges – including pests, pathogens, and climate change – while also being capable of supporting biodiversity and producing timber, requires the active engagement and support of owners. In England alone, around 47% of woodlands are considered either unmanaged or under-managed. Bringing these woodlands back into good condition through sustainable woodland management will be integral to growing a new ‘wood culture’, providing more jobs in the forestry sector, improving woodland habitats for nature and creating more places for people to exercise and enjoy the countryside.

The partnership reflects the different specialisms and interests of the three partner organisations. The Royal Forestry Society and Small Woods Association are both membership organisations, which together supporting over 6,000 woodland owners. The Sylva Foundation does not offer a membership but runs the myForest Service – a free web-based platform offering mapping and management tools for woodland owners and managers.

All users of the myForest Service will be

eligible to join the Royal Forestry Society and the Small Woods Association at a discounted rate. The offers are open to anyone who has signed up to the myForest Service, providing that they have not recently been a member of the organisation they wish to join. Full details about the offers are available via the myForest website: www.myforest.org.uk/membership

Dr Gabriel Hemery, chief executive of Sylva, said ‘It is a significant step for Britain’s woodlands, and for those that care for them, that our organisations are able to work together in this way for the first time. By collaborating we are able to bring together the management tools of myForest with the benefits of two great membership organisations.’

Simon Lloyd, director of the RFS said ‘We are delighted to be teaming up with Sylva Foundation to be able to offer those new to woodland management the opportunity to combine the benefits of myForest’s online management planning tools with the opportunity visit woodlands and learn about all aspects of woodland management from the experiences of a network of 3,500 RFS members. We believe well managed woods which produce sustainable quantities of quality timber, wood fuel and other products are better for nature conservation, better for people and better for the economy.’

Mike Bentley, chief executive of the Small Woods Association said ‘We warmly welcome the chance to team up with Sylva and the RFS in this joint effort to help more people manage their woodlands. Small Woods are a friendly and approachable membership organisation offering support and advice to owners, practitioners and enthusiasts with different backgrounds, objectives and levels of experience.’

Practical management for ash dieback – new research

Louise Hill is a first year PhD student at Oxford University investigating the impacts of ash dieback on UK ecosystems. She explains how her work might be useful to woodland owners over the next few years.

Ash dieback has become the most widely publicised threat to the UK's forests for decades, and with good reason: losses of up to 90% of the UK's 126 million ash trees have been predicted – an impact that may even exceed that of Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s. However, it is not all bad news, as the focus on ash dieback has led to a wide range of scientific projects aimed at combatting various aspects of the disease.

Different groups are working on finding and breeding ash trees that show resistance to the disease or producing modern chemical or biological treatments for infected trees. My particular area of interest is examining the ecosystems that ash is part of to predict the impact of dieback on the wider countryside.



The impact of dieback on small woods

Coming to terms with the reality of ash dieback in the UK is an important part of the struggle to reduce the damage it will cause. In the long term, work to identify resistant ash varieties or to control the chalara fungus may ensure that ash does survive in the UK, but that will provide little comfort to woodland owners who see their woods decimated over the next few years. Neither will it help the wildlife and other biodiversity that are currently relying on ash trees for habitat. Even when resistant ash cultivars become commercially available, is it really going to be feasible to replant the entire countryside?

For the moment, it is critical that we investigate what the impacts of the disease are likely to be across the UK – in terms of biodiversity, carbon storage, productivity and other ecosystem services – and what we can do to protect our forests from these impacts.

We are setting up an experiment to help answer some of these questions, and we hope that the answers we get will translate directly into practical management advice for woodland owners. Forest plots have been set up where ash trees have been killed by ring-barking to simulate ash dieback. We will be looking over the next three years at the effect this has on the ground flora, especially the regeneration of other woody species (it is not yet known whether any species will replace ash as the dominant regenerating species in woodlands). We will also investigate the response in the growth rates of other established trees in the plots, to see if they may partially compensate for the loss of the ash by increasing their growth rates. Our plots are in forests with differing numbers of deer in them, which will let us

check if ash dieback and high deer numbers interact – we suspect that the combination of high deer numbers and ash dieback may lead to very low levels of tree regeneration, which may indicate an urgent need for deer control and/or replanting in woods where the two co-occur.

This experiment is only in its first year, and it will be several more before we get any answers to our questions. However, we hope that this will be soon enough to give practical advice to forest owners which may help lessen the impact, for both people and biodiversity, of ash dieback in their forests.

Louise is funded by the Sylva Foundation, the A.J. Hosier fund, and the Oxford Matched Scholarship Fund.

The sun and the pleacher man – hedging in spring

Inspired by the first glimpse of spring, (and with an old Dusty Springfield song buzzing in his head) Rich Hare painstakingly begins to restore an old hornbeam hedge.



After sitting around for most of the winter, like most people I was going a bit stir crazy waiting for the weather to break so I could get on with some work in the woods. Top of my list was this roadside hedge restoration.

Consisting mainly of hornbeam, it had some poorly spaced old stools which over the years, had been cut higher and higher. With most of the re-growth starting at 3 or 4 feet high, I felt there was little chance of laying it successfully and the only way to restore it would be to coppice it down as low as possible and start again. To add to the complexity of the task, the stems had grown up into a telephone wire meaning I had a slow and awkward job of unpicking the mass of branches with a combination of pole saw and loppers.

If that wasn't enough, the week before I



The failed remains of the hedge.

Poorly spaced stools of hornbeam hedging, which had been coppiced high. started, a tractor had gone down with a flail, smashing off potential stems I might have been able to lay into the gaps.

Despite all these difficulties, the sun spurred me on and I made a start at the beginning of a welcome two weeks of beautiful weather.

Because of the overhanging cable, I found it easier to coppice back into the wood, clearing a space and making it easier to drag the stems back and out of the way.

Any stems that were low enough I pleached over and layered into the gaps. If you've not done pleaching before, it will take a bit of practice. Basically, you are trying to sever the stem until it will bend over and lay down, but you must leave enough of the bark and sapwood to keep the stem alive.

'Layering' is different to 'laying'. With a well stocked dense hedge, you would just pleach and lay over the stems as low down as you can so as to make it stock-proof, then depending on the style you are using, you might put some stakes in at a forearm's length apart, then weave some binders, usually hazel, into the stakes to hold it all down. Because I had lots of gaps in the hedge, I pleached any suitable stems over into the gaps, dug a shallow trench in the soil, scraped off some bark on the underside and pegged them into the ground. I'm hoping that

where I've done this, the stems will root and eventually become independent from the original pleacher, making a thicker and more impenetrable barrier.

You could also plant saplings into the gaps, but I prefer this method as there is no watering to do and the new growth is feeding off the centuries old, mature root system instead of trying to compete with it.

Normally you would send all your pleachers in the same direction, starting at the highest point and working downhill, so your pleachers are pointing uphill. In this case it was fairly level and with so little to work with, I took every opportunity to get stems in the ground and pleached in both directions where necessary.

Eventually, I managed to get all possible stems layered into the gaps. The next part was the brutal demolition of three saw chains. I wanted to get these big stools down nearer the ground so that in a few years time the new growth can be laid over to finish the



restoration. These stools looked to me like they were a good few hundred years old, all covered in moss and soil which has built up in all the nooks and crevices. Being roadside, they have also been accumulating years of road grit and grime. Each stool took its toll on the saw and the operator as I had to re-sharpen the chain at each cut. It looks severe now, but starting again is sometimes the only option.

Now it's just a question of watching and waiting for it all to come back. It's a slow process, but it's had some help from the sun . . . and the pleacher man!



Making a woodland bench

Mike and Tracy Pepler's blog (peplers.blogspot.co.uk) about their activities in Chestnut Coppice in Sussex will be familiar to many SWOG members. It includes a number of really useful videos on a variety of woodland subjects. Mike has kindly allowed us to turn a couple of them into step-by-step guides. We'll kick off with how to make a woodland bench in under five minutes.

You will need:

- one log about 2 metres long
- two smaller logs about 30cm long (large enough to sit under the long log and support it)
- a chainsaw (Please exercise caution and have full regard to health and safety when using a chainsaw.)

1. Position the long log on the ground securely so that it can't roll. Flatten the top of the long log by running the chainsaw horizontally along the length to create a flat surface. Depending on the size of the log, the cut will only be a couple of centimetres deep.



Making a woodland bench

2. Roll the log over and cut two wedges out to hold the smaller logs. Note the size of the small logs and position the V-cut about 20 cm in from the edge of the main log. Repeat at the other end of the log.



3. Roll the main log over. Move the small supporting logs into place and place the main log on top – voila! One low, but sturdy woodland bench. Obviously, the size of the bench can easily be varied, using bigger logs as supports. The position of the feet and the extent to which the top of the log is flattened are largely a matter of personal preference.

The video can be seen here:
[/www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPgrkkQl_F8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPgrkkQl_F8)



God's Trees



Professor Julian Evans, the author of God's Trees, is well-known to many SWOG members. Angus Hanton reviews his latest book, which is both beautifully illustrated and authoritative.

You'll find out about the trees of all the Bible lands including modern-day Israel, Syria, Egypt, Iran, and Iraq. It's not just which trees were there but how they were used – cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) for beams in Solomon's temple, and acacia trees for shade in the Negev Desert, for example. Most widespread were olive trees (*Olea europaea*) which produced olive oil for lighting and cooking. You can do a cover-to-cover read or just dip in for the pictures and captions, enjoying the exotic photos, maps and the illustrations by Veronica Pinchen.

One chapter from *God's Trees* that stands out looks at trees as metaphors for the good things in life. The idea is that trees are associated with peace, with establishing permanent homes and with prosperity. Some of the metaphors are captured in the phrase 'tree of life' or the notion of using tree branches to make shelters. The Old Testament figure Nehemiah re-instituted the feast of the tabernacle and urged his people to, 'go into the hill country and bring back branches from the olive and wild olive trees, from myrtles, palms and other leafy trees, to make temporary shelters'.

Even if you are not at all religious, the Bible is so much a part of our culture that homing in on

its trees has relevance to everyone. Julian Evans is as knowledgeable about trees as anyone I've ever met – having been a professor of forestry, a chief research officer for the Forestry Commission and now President of the Institute of Chartered Foresters. But he also studies the Bible and is a lay preacher. As Julian admitted to me, 'I have woven a bit of my own faith into *God's Trees*'.

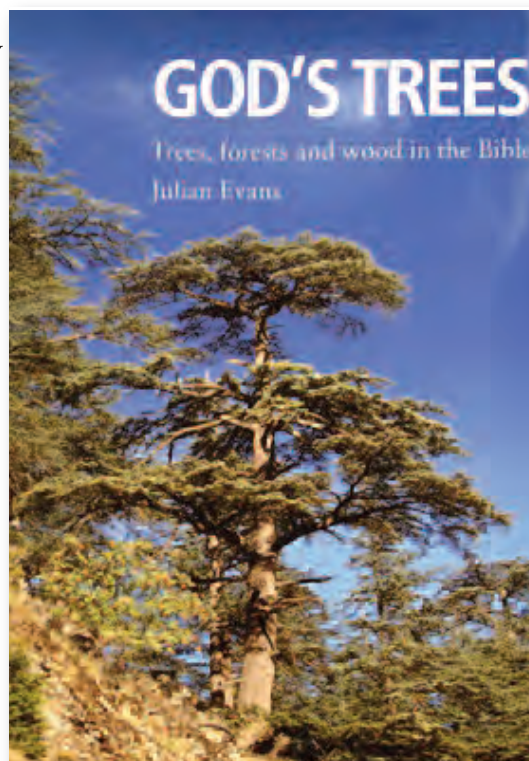
John Evelyn, the 17th century author of *Sylva*, noted that 'trees and woods have twice saved the whole world: first by the ark and then

by the cross, making full amends for the evil fruit of the tree of life in paradise.' Julian Evans explores what sort of wood was used for Jesus' cross of crucifixion and reckons it was probably Cypress wood. He points out the irony that most of the 'relics' in Europe recovered on the Crusades or in other times are in fact made from pine or oak – trees that are more common in Western Europe.

By the time you get to the end of the book, you realise just how important trees are to the whole fabric of the

Bible and biblical times – with towns and places named after trees (Gethsemane means olive press, for example) and, in an age before plastics, wood was the main material for making objects of everyday life (Jesus of course was a carpenter's son). For my money, the best part of *God's Trees* is the vast array of photos which give the woodland enthusiast an armchair tour of the Middle East.

God's Trees (hardback, 208 pages, ISBN 978-1846254109) is available from the publisher www.dayone.co.uk for £20 (01568 613740); or from Amazon.



Visit Woodlands.co.uk/blog or click on the title to read the full blog.

Atlantic oak woodlands - our 'temperate rainforest'

Angus visits North Wales and is overwhelmed by the beauty and biodiversity inherent in the damp woodlands near the coast. Warmed by the Gulf Stream, they are unlike other British woodlands.

Butcher's broom

This spiky, evergreen plant is often found in woodland or on wasteland, is also known as 'knee holly' because of the prickly leaves that grow at knee height. Mature branches of the shrub were once bound together and used by butchers for cleaning their chopping blocks, hence the name. Chris discusses its use by herbalists and its potential for the pharmaceutical industry.



When the woodland wind blows

Buffeted by March winds, Angus reflects on the characteristics of various local winds that affect different areas and examines how they shape woodlands.

Plant galls

Plant galls – what are they and why do they occur? Lewis discusses the formation of these plant abnormalities.

Woodlands TV

Woodlands TV (www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/) is a fantastic archive, with a video on every conceivable subject relating to forestry: woodworking, practical guides, crafts, survival skills, conservation and much more. Subscribe to the channel for email updates on the latest releases.



How to control Japanese knotweed

Japanese knotweed is one of the most tenacious and damaging invasive species. Dr Paul Beckett shares his expertise in Japanese knotweed – its life-cycle, the different methods of managing and inhibiting it, as well as the legalities of dealing with this 'controlled waste'.

How to eat wild food safely in the woods

Paul Beadle from the County Durham Woodland Education Service lists five steps to ensure that the wild food you find is safe to eat. It's a safe and gradual process that helps you assess whether a plant is any way toxic.

How to make a bird box

Jim Edwards, a fundraiser for a Sussex right of way organisation, expertly offers us a step-by-step guide to building a bird box.

Woodfair listings



This is not an exhaustive list, so if you know of any others, please let us know!

Woodlands.co.uk and SWOG will be exhibiting at Woodfest Wales, Treefest and Bentley.

Weird and Wonderful Wood

17–18 May 2014 Haughley Park, Wetherden, Stowmarket, Suffolk
www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk/

Royal Highland Show 2014

19–22 June 2014 Edinburgh
royalhighlandshow.org

Blackdown Hills Woodfair

21 June 2014 Wrangway, Wellington, Somerset
www.woodbiz.co.uk

West's Wood Fair

21–22 June 2014 East Dean, Chichester, West Sussex
westwoodfair.co.uk/

Woodfest Wales

27–29 June 2014 Caerwys, North Wales
www.woodfestwales.co.uk

South Downs Woodfair

12–13 July 2014 Horndean, Petersfield, Hampshire
www.woodlandcrafts.co.uk

New Forest and Hampshire Show

29–31 July 2014 Brockenhurst, Hampshire
www.newforestshow.co.uk

Treefest at Westonbirt Arboretum

23–25 August 2014 Tetbury, Gloucestershire
www.forestry.gov.uk

Stock Gaylard Oak Fair

23–24 August 2014
Sturminster Newton, Dorset
www.stockgaylard.com/oak-fair

National Forest Woodfair

25 August 2014 Beacon Hill Country Park, Leicestershire
www.nationalforest.org

Wychwood Forest Fair

7 September 2014 Charlbury, Oxfordshire
www.wychwoodproject.org

Lincolnshire Firewood Fair

7 September 2014, Revesby Estate
www.lincolnshirefirewoodfair.co.uk

APF Wood Show

18–20 September 2014
Ragley Estate, Alcester, Warwickshire
www.apfexhibition.co.uk

Chilterns AONB Countryside and Food Festival

14 September 2014
Ashridge Estate, Hertfordshire
www.chilternsaonb.org/

Bentley Weald Woodfair

26–28 September 2014 Lewes, East Sussex
www.bentley.org.uk/events

Surrey Hills Woodfair 2014

4–5 October 2014 Birtley House, Bramley
www.surreyhills.org