



Message from Vicky

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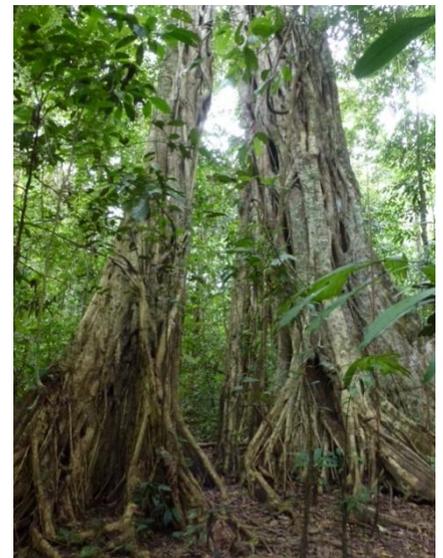


Having just returned from a trip from the Peruvian Amazon jungle, one of the most biologically diverse areas on Earth and home to over 70% of the living species on the planet, I thought it may be of interest to share my strange encounters with trees whilst deep in the jungle!

One tree that I found particularly intriguing was the stilt-root palm tree which has long, straight roots which branch out above the ground like the spokes of an umbrella. Lichen dusts them, giving the impression that they have supported the tree for years, but that's not the case! The tree sheds old roots as new ones grow in the direction of better light sources. This can effectively move the tree up to a meter each year.

I thought it was only in Tolkien's world that trees could walk. But here, amongst the tangled vines of the Amazon, fantasy is reality.

The strangler fig which begins life as a sticky seed left on a high tree branch by an animal such as a bird, bat, or monkey. As it grows, long roots develop and descend along the trunk of the host tree, eventually reaching the ground and entering the soil. Several roots usually do this, and they become grafted together, enclosing their host's trunk in a strangling latticework, ultimately creating a nearly complete sheath around the trunk. The host tree's canopy becomes shaded by the thick fig foliage, its trunk constricted by the surrounding root sheath, and its own root system forced to compete with that of the strangling fig. This process can kill the host; if not, the host tree, being much older than the strangler, still dies eventually and rots away and a magnificent fig 'tree' is left behind whose apparent 'trunk' is actually a gigantic cylinder of roots.



Probably the most magnificent of all, the Brazil nut tree can grow up to 60m tall! Their seed pods contain 15-22 nuts and the pods can weigh 2.2 kilograms. When they fall they can reach 50mph and, if your unlucky enough to get hit by one, it can either kill you or leave you seriously dazed. The locals often tend to make their footpaths outside the canopy line of this tree for that very reason!



Like most trees the Brazil nut has a special relationship with other plants and animals in this case the agouti - a small mammal that looks a bit like a large guinea pig.

Agoutis have small, chisel-like teeth that can penetrate the Brazil nut's seed case. They eat some of the nuts. But, just as important, they carry away and bury others for future meals. If forgotten, these seeds can stay dormant in the soil for years, waiting for the perfect conditions to germinate and grow into a new Brazil nut tree.

News from Tree Wardens

Tisbury's Jubilee Meadow and Orchard

Debbie Carter, Tisbury

The new native hedge that was planted at the top of the field is doing well now the nettles and hog weed have been cleared from the roots and the copse at the bottom has also been cleared of invasive weeds so most of the plants have survived. The meadow was full of marbled white, meadow brown and ringlet butterflies early in the year and even a few holly blues. Later we had an explosion of small tortoiseshell butterflies everywhere so the sunny summer has been great for the butterfly population.

All the 60 orchard trees survived the wet winter and hot summer and we hope to get some fruit before too long. I will try to get a photo of the blossom in the orchard next spring for the newsletter.



Photos by Andrew Carter

Since the system changed concerning applications to fell or trim trees in the conservation area I have had two occasions on which I objected to applications to fell trees. On both of these our excellent Salisbury Tree Officer, Shane Verrion, came out to look at the trees in question. One case, a hollow walnut, he overruled with good reason and the other, a mature copper beech, he supported my objection and the tree remained so the system seems to be working.

Tree Warden visit to Barbers Farm Nursery, Chapmanslade, Wiltshire

Norman Hodnett, Sutton Benger

On the afternoon of Wednesday 30 July a party of Wiltshire Tree Wardens visited Barbers Farm Nursery at Chapmanslade, near Westbury Wiltshire to be given a guided tour of a nursery producing plants, shrubs and young trees for the commercial market.

The group were met by the owner, Legh Walker, who began his career in horticulture as a young man working in the grown-under-glass tomato and cucumber industry in the Lea Valley just to the north of London in the 1960s. With a lifetime of experience from apprentice to owner he has a wealth of knowledge and expertise in every aspect of the trade.

The visit began in the small retail area where the Nursery sells plants to callers. We then went on to follow the process from planting seeds to potting on as the plants grew uniformly and strongly in a carefully controlled environment. Green houses or rather robust polytunnels are the main growing environment with black plastic covering the soil which both prevents weed growth as well as making it warmer for the plants. Watering is vital and it is carried out automatically at night, effectively controlled in the form of light showers at regular intervals.

The timing of the growth of plants to be ready for the commercial buyer is crucial - the plants must be of the right size and ready for the market at a particular date, or they will be rejected. Those we saw were remarkable for their uniformity and strong growth. The market is very competitive and even the additional cost of compost needed to fill a larger than essential pot can be critical to the commercial viability of a particular plant line.

Both compost and pots are an expensive part of the process - each repotting becomes more expensive as plants and their pots get bigger. While the nursery endeavours to keep down the proportion of peat in the compost used, the reality is that compost with peat is the best medium in which to nurture young plants.



Legh Walker showed the group the remaining young Wiltshire apple trees from the programme of grafting to meet the needs of a particular planting in the county. These had been potted on a number of times and were growing very strongly at about a metre and a half tall. The programme of grafting Wiltshire apples has not been continued on a routine basis because commercially the demand is too small. Nonetheless the expertise is clearly there should it be needed for a specific requirement.

Commercial nurseries have difficulty in recruiting young people who would like to make a career in the industry. Nonetheless many of the staff have been there upward of twenty years and have become very expert in the skills of propagation and grafting. There are some tasks which have to be done which are repetitious and entail working in a dusty environment. Wherever practical they try to rotate the staff through the tasks entailed, avoiding long stints at essential but relatively undemanding work.

It was a very interesting afternoon which gave a deep insight in the costs and problems of producing that plant that we so lightly purchase at the garden centre perhaps on the spur of the moment.

Matters of Interest to Tree Wardens

The Tree Council's Jubilee 'Diamond' Trees

The final editing of the book is still not complete. A new printer is still being sought. There is as yet no website. The plaques for the trees are dependent on a website. It is hoped there may be more positive news of this project for the next issue of this newsletter.

Update on Chalara in non-woodland trees

The latest outbreaks can be seen on a map produced by the [Forestry Commission](#) on 26 August.

On 23 July, more than 70 delegates from Tree Council member organisations gathered to hear the latest updates on the impact of Ash Dieback in non-woodland settings and the fight to understand and contain it.

The Tree Council, which is currently researching impacts of Chalara in the UK and mainland Europe, drew attention in particular to:

- the importance of recognising that there will be a 'lag phase' in the spread of this disease, which will result in a slow build up over a number of years, before it enters into an 'exponential phase' when rapid spread of the disease will occur.
- the experience in Suffolk, where the disease may have reached the 'exponential phase', as it appears to be spreading widely and rapid decline of ash trees is now being observed.
- the necessity for all landowners, whether individual or organisations, to begin to develop Local Action Plans to enable advance preparation and readiness for the arrival of the disease in their area.

The outputs from this session are being analysed by The Tree Council and will be summarised and circulated to members for comment during the autumn. PDF versions of the presentations given are available from the following:

[Forest Research](#)

[The Tree Council](#)

[West Sussex County Council](#)

Events and Training

The planning of 2015 events/training programme is currently underway; if you have any training requirements or have a tree related project within your parish that you would like to share with other Tree Wardens please [contact Vicky](#) with your comments/recommendations/requirements.

Book an event – more details on the website

www.wiltshiretreewardens.co.uk

Saturday 20 September Practical tree and shrub identification morning at Wroughton with Richard Cripps

Sunday 28 September South West Region Tree Warden Forum at Kennaway House, Sidmouth, Devon

Friday 10 October Visit to Westonbirt Arboretum

Saturday 11 October Trowbridge Apple Festival

Friday 21 November Winter Tree Identification Workshop in the Salisbury area

Also on the website you will find information on where to go for funding, useful links, diseases to look for, past activities and who to contact.

Remember

Seed Gathering Season Tuesday 23 September - Thursday 23 October 2014

National Tree Week Saturday 29 November - Sunday 7 December 2014

Walk in the Woods Friday 1 May - Sunday 31 May 2015



Works of art? Olive trees seen in Mallorca