

Tree nursery diary – Tree log #10

Last week we went to visit Methlick Primary School which is acting as Curator for a tray full of Gight acorns. Roger spoke to a packed assembly about the group's tree nursery for Gight Wood. He explained why we are growing trees, how we are growing them and what will happen to them once they are big enough to withstand the unwanted attention of deer. We also talked about biodiversity and how many species a single oak can support. And finally we showed them a short compilation of camera trap footage from Gight including a busy jay, scratching badgers, a majestic owl and a peeing fox.



Tree nursery diary – Tree log #9

February is the perfect time of year to take aspen root cuttings. Two of our volunteers ventured down the slopes to locate the aspen stand and to track its roots to a suitable spot for taking cuttings. Hopefully suckers will start to appear in the next 2 months. Once individual suckers are tall enough, they will be potted on.



Tree nursery diary – Tree log #8

Our tree nursery now has two compost bins. Our aim will be to use homemade compost and leaf mould as much as possible to help our seedlings and saplings along. The serious ground preparation will start in 2024 but for now we have downed tools and are planning ways to engage with our enthusiastic volunteers!



Tree nursery diary – Tree log #7

We were delighted to hand over some Gight acorns to the pupils at Methlick Primary School. The P6/5 children diligently carried out the float test to select those acorns that have the greatest chance of germinating. They then planted them in a prepared tray and will check them in early Spring to look for signs of germination. Thank you, P6/5 and their Eco Schools leader! (Photos AF)



Tree nursery diary – Tree log #6

After much preparation – both administrative and practical – we were finally ready to welcome our volunteers on the first seed gathering party at Gight. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the event because of high winds. In the end the forecast was a little more dramatic than reality, but safety has to come first.

Once the breeze had settled a little, the leaders formed a scouting party and went for a walk around the reserve to check the status of the seeds. We managed to gather a good, first batch of acorns, hazelnuts, birch and alder seed. In addition, we looked out for other seeds to collect in spring and summer next year, e.g. willow and geans. We are currently working out ways to get seed to interested 'Sapling' volunteers to grow on at home. Watch this space!



Tree nursery diary – Tree log #5

We were chuffed with the delivery of some tree tubes from Gight for re-use in the fledgling tree nursery. They not only help protect the saplings from browsing by animals, but also provide a micro-climate around the young plants helping with temperature and moisture control. The tubes can also reduce weeding time around the plot and that can only be a good thing!



Tree nursery diary – Tree log #4

And the shed is up! This allows us to store equipment close to the growing space and keep essential items out of the weather outside the growing season. The team has been working on instructions for 'tree volunteers' to make sure everyone can make an informed decision about how much or how little they want or are able to contribute.



Tree nursery diary – Tree log #3

The tree nursery at Rickarton now has a levelled base for the shed. Removing the field turf and levelling was hard work! Next comes laying slabs to support the shed. We are fast approaching seed collecting season and the team is making plans for the how, where and what. Watch this space!



Tree nursery diary – Tree log #2

Last month Richard Marriott, a local tree nursery expert, visited our shiny, new tree nursery site and provided input to the Master Plan. The space will be divided into three plots for different ages of tree. The ground needs to be prepared by removing the overlying turf, rotovating and putting down weed barrier until ready for use. In the meantime the team will be making compost and leaf mould.

In conjunction with Mark Young, convenor of Gight Wood, the team discussed which species to grow specifically for Gight. Oak and hazel were identified as priority species with others such as alder, aspen, gean and rowan also on the list.

We will be organising seed collection outings soon so if you want to be part of our ‘arboricultural’ adventure, watch this space!

Table 1: Collection and storage of seed

Notes on columns: column 2 gives the interval in years between good seed crops. Column 3 gives recommended months for seed collection. In most cases these are set out as earliest/normal/latest. There will be variation with different years and with geography. Column 4 gives method of storage as described in section 1.2. In the case of stratification, the number in the table gives the time in months that the seed should be stratified. "Sp." is an abbreviation for "species" (plural).

Species	Crop Collection	Storage	Notes
Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>)	2-3 Sep/Oct/Nov	B	Pick cones shortly before they ripen.
Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	3-5 Aug/Oct/Nov	C 16-18	Aug for immediate sowing. Oct for stratification.
Aspen (<i>Populus tremula</i>)	- Apr - May	Avoid	Collect catkins when the white down appears.
Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)	5-10 Sep/Oct/Nov	D	From Jan seed may need water spray to remain plump.
Birch (<i>Betula</i> spp.)	1-2 Jul/Aug/Sep	A or C6	Pick catkins shortly before they ripen.
Broom (<i>Sarothamnus scoparius</i>)	1 - /Aug/ -	A	Pick pods when black. Pop open by hand.
Buckthorn (<i>Rhamnus catharticus</i>)	- Sept - Oct	C6	Pick fully ripe berries.
Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i> & <i>P. Padus</i>)	1-3 Jul/Sep/Oct	C4	Can be sown immediately. Pick ripe berries before the birds do!
Chestnut, Horse (<i>Castanea hippocastanum</i>)	1-2 Sep/Oct/Nov	C6	Non-native. Can be sown immediately after collection.
Chestnut, Sweet (<i>Castanea sativa</i>)	1-4 May/Jun/Jul	D	Non-native. A warm summer is required to ripen nuts.
Elm (<i>Ulmus</i> spp.)	1-2 May - June	Avoid	Fertile seed is rare. Pick when green pigment disappears from wing.
Field maple (<i>Acer campestre</i>)	2-3 Sep - Oct	C18	Some seed most years.
Gorse (<i>Ulex europaeus</i>)	- Oct - Nov	A	As for broom.
Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)	1-2 Sep/Oct/Nov	C18	Pick fully ripe berries.
Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)	Sep - Oct	C3-4	
Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	2-4 Nov/Dec/Jan	C16	Pick fully ripe berries.
Hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>)	2-4 Aug/Sep/Nov	C18	
Larch, European (<i>Larix decidua</i>)	3-5 Nov/Dec/Jan	B	Non-native
Lime (<i>Tilia</i> spp.)	2-3 - /Oct/ -	C18	
Oak (<i>Quercus</i> spp.)	2-4 Sep/Oct/Nov	D	Collect from ground below trees in autumn. <i>Q. Petraea</i> has good crops 3-5 yrs apart.
Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)	1-2 Jul/Aug/Sep	C6	Pick fully ripe berries.
Scots pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)	2-3 Nov/Jan/Feb	B	Collect cones before they ripen.
Spindle (<i>Eunonymus europaeus</i>)	2-4 Sep/Oct/Nov	C6	
Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)	2-3 Sep - Oct	D	Non-native. See footnote.
Yew (<i>Taxus baccata</i>)	Sep/Oct/Nov	C16	Pick berries from trees. The seed (not the flesh) and foliage are DEADLY poison.

Footnote: Sycamore is not of great value to wildlife and is sometimes regarded as a weed where it has invaded woodlands and ousted other species. It is suggested that tree nursery programmes give preference to more important species. The deliberate propagation of sycamore might best be restricted to sites where other trees struggle to survive (e.g. exposed hills in the Pennines, or windy and saline situations on the coast).

Tree nursery diary – Tree log #1

Our Ranging for Nature project is starting to take shape. The committee has been working hard behind the scenes holding planning meetings and purchasing equipment. One of the first purchases was deer fencing for the tree nursery. Here are some before, during and after photos of the deer fencing being installed. The tree nursery is officially in place. Now we need trees!

Not so fast... First, we need to prepare the soil, gather local, native seed and nurture seedlings. There will be plenty of opportunities for volunteers to pitch in, so watch this space!



Before



During



After