

Epping Forest Countrycare

is the District Councils countryside management service. We aim to maintain and enhance the natural environment for the benefit of both local people and wildlife. This is done by creating and maintaining habitats, improving public access and increasing awareness of our rural heritage. Countrycare's team of four paid members of staff work with schools, volunteers, youth groups, wildlife organisations and national agencies, amongst others, encouraging participation in practical environmental projects.

Epping Forest Countrycare, c/o Planning Services, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex, CM16 4BZ.

01992 788 203. countrycare@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

The Tree and Landscape team deal with tree and landscape issues in connection with Planning applications; applications for works to trees within conservation areas; making and administering of Tree Preservation Orders; and liaising with members of the public on tree issues. Contact Chris Neilan on **01992 564117**

The Historic Buildings, Conservation Areas and Urban Design Team

deal with most matters relating to historic buildings and conservation areas, including grants, enhancement projects, buildings at risk, repairs, enforcement, prosecutions and advice. They also advise on the design of new development, prepare planning and development briefs and design guidance leaflets as well as overseeing the Waltham Abbey HERS (Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme). Contact Paul Sutton or Karen Rolfe on **01992 564119**

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Enhancing Your Environment



Epping Forest District Council
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Countryside and Conservation News
Issue 07 - February - May 2006



Countrycare's volunteer diary dates



February

- Thursday 2 Epping Green Millennium Garden~#~
Sunday 5 Epping Green Millennium Garden
Sunday 12 Swaines Green,
Thursday 16 Thornwood Flood Meadow LNR~#~
Thursday 23 Thornwood Flood Meadow LNR~#~

March

- Thursday 9 Roughtalley's Wood LNR~#~
Sunday 12 Swaines Green

April

- Sunday 2 Chairmans Charity Walk
Thursday 6 Roding Valley Meadows LNR~#~
Thursday 20 Country Walk routes maintenance~#~
Sunday 23 ****Event**** "Bloomin' Bluebells!"

May

- Thursday 4 Linder's Field LNR~#~
Sunday 14 Swaines Green
Thursday 25 Volunteer Summer Tour

Although not all listed here, there is a volunteer project every Thursday and on some Sundays. If you would like details of all our projects, please give us a call on (01992) 788 203 and we will send you a copy of the finalised details in our monthly update sheet as [the above list may be subject to change.](#) Those projects marked with ~#~ will have a pick up from Loughton Station at 9.30 am and we will aim to have you back there for 4.30 pm. If you need a lift for any of the other projects, please call the Countrycare office on (01992) 788203. Please bring a packed lunch, sturdy boots and plenty of enthusiasm. We'll ply you with tea, coffee and biscuits to help keep your energy levels up!

Feeding Garden Birds

Feeding your garden birds will both help maintain songbird numbers and provide great pleasure, as you spot new species or see close-up the wonderful antics of wild birds. The numbers and varieties of birds that you attract will be influenced by the foods and feeders you use. Live foods, such as mealworms and waxworms, can create the greatest excitement, whilst the seed and peanut feeders keep the reliable chaffinches, greenfinches, sparrows and starlings well fed and happy!

Here are the RSPB's Top Tips for feeding your Garden Birds:

- 1 Introduce a bird table. Put out high protein seed mixes & kitchen scraps such as animal fat and soaked, dried fruit.
- 2 Put out hanging feeders for black sunflower seeds, sunflower hearts, sunflower-rich mixes or unsalted peanuts.
- 3 Ensure a supply of fresh water every day. If it is very cold use tepid water *but don't use any antifreeze products!*
- 4 Supply apples and pears for blackbirds, song thrushes and other members of the thrush family.
- 5 Fat blocks rubbed into the bark of trees is a great help for treecreepers, goldcrests and others.
- 6 Put up nest boxes to provide roost sites for the smaller birds. They will then be used for breeding later in the year.
- 7 Plant berry-bearing plants such as hawthorn, rowan, holly, cotoneaster and berberis in your garden.
- 8 Leave wild, weedy or shrubby areas in the garden. These provide a natural seed source, cover and a supply of small insects.
- 9 Feed live foods such as mealworms and waxworms. These will attract a wide range of species.

Don't forget to keep your birdfeeding areas clean and tidy and always remember to provide a good supply of fresh water.

The "careful alternative" - conservation.....

Taken out of context, this list of "don'ts" may give the view that conservation is all about freezing old buildings in a perpetual time-warp at the expense of any function. But conservation is about making sure all alterations are carefully justified beforehand, taking into account not only the affect of the works in the short term, but also their consequences for the character and historic interest of the building and its future function. Historic buildings can often be adapted to meet modern requirements without losing any historic fabric or with alterations that are designed to be "reversible". If a building is "listed" or in a conservation area, the degree of alteration permitted by the Council will vary according to the importance of the building, the components affected, and how essential the alterations are to the functioning of the building.

Developing a caring approach to old buildings is essential to the whole community. The protection of our historic environment affects us all, whether we live or work in an old building or neighbourhood, shop in historic town centres, or enjoy visiting historic properties and towns. Neglect, decay and insensitive alteration have a real impact on the quality of our surroundings.

For more advice and information on historic buildings please contact: Paul Sutton on 01992 564119.



*Waltham Abbey
town enhancement*



Wildlife Gardening Calendar



It's that time of year again! Yes, time to dust off your bird table (if you haven't been using it all year,) and make sure that our feathered friends have plenty to eat and drink!



Countrycare Project Details

Epping Green Millennium Garden was a project that began back in 2000, to convert redundant allotments into a wildlife garden. A small pond and wildflower meadow has been created and the grassland is getting better every year. This winter we will renovating the pond, which has struggled to hold water and opening up a formal pathway onto the site via the allotments. **Meet** 10.00am, car park next to the Traveller's Friend Pub, Epping Road, Epping Green. **Grid reference:** TL 434 055

Swaines Green in Epping was finally saved this summer, when it was bought by the Corporation of London and Epping Town Council (with help from the Friends of Swaines Green, EFDC and other groups in Epping) The FoSW will be running monthly practical work days through the winter with the support of Countrycare. The main projects this winter will be to widen the pathways through the site, enhancing them for both wildlife and people. **Meet:** 10.30am, kissing gate at entrance to Swaines Green between Lower Swaines and Coronation Hill. **Grid Reference:** TL 455 026.

Thornwood Flood Meadow LNR, North Weald. This was the 4th flood alleviation scheme to be created by EFDC back in 1998. Since October 2002, the whole site has been managed under DEFRA's Countryside Stewardship Scheme and is being managed for both flood defence and wildlife. In December 2004, it became EFDC's 9th LNR.

This winter we have a variety of tasks centred on the copse adjoining the houses in Teasle Mead and tree works to the inner bund beside the brook. **Meet:** 10.00am, Thornwood Village Hall Car Park, Weald Hall Lane. Thornwood. **Grid Reference:** TL 473 046.

Roughalley's Wood LNR, North Weald comprises areas of both ancient and secondary woodland. It also supports a wide variety of plants and animals with interesting flora including the broad-leaved heliborine and reptiles like Grass Snake and Slow Worm.

This winter we will be continuing the programme of coppicing in the secondary woodland, which was planted in the early 1990s after the 1987 storm. It is now starting to take shape, but we need to "weed" out the self-seeded willow and thin some of the ash trees that are now starting to put on height.

Meet: 10.00 am, Norway House car park, off Epping Road, North Weald. **Grid Reference:** TL 488 037

Chairman's Charity Walk takes place every year to raise money for the Chairman's chosen good causes, which this year will be St Clare Hospice and Chigwell Riding Trust. The walk costs £10 to enter. For more details please contact the Countrycare office on (01992) 788203.

Roding Valley Meadows, Loughton. This is not a project for those that want to keep their feet dry! We will be helping Patrick Bailly of the Essex Wildlife Trust to cut the fen area. The fen is designated as a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and it has benefited enormously from our work there over the last three years. If you fancy joining us then please bring your wellies! **Meet:** 10.00am, Marles Croft Way (where the flats are), off Oakwood Hill, Loughton. **Grid Reference:** TQ 437 956

****Event** "Bloomin' Bluebells"** is a guided walk around the lovely woods of Abridge to admire their show of Bluebells. Please call the Countrycare office on (01992) 788203 for more details and to book your place.

Linder's Field LNR. Countrycare volunteers have managed this great LNR since 1990. Comprising areas of unimproved grassland, small ponds and ancient woodland the LNR is well used by both local residents and wildlife! The jobs for this winter will be continuing the scrub coppicing, bramble bashing and planting a new hedge on the top of the site to screen a boundary fence. **Meet:** 10.00am, Roebuck Lane entrance. Please park sympathetically in roads nearby. **Grid Reference:** TQ 415 945.

Volunteer Tour is our way of thanking our volunteers who have worked so hard on our sights. We will be visiting some of our reserves to see how all your hard work has helped to improve them. Please see the May Update Sheet for more details.



match the original design. Replacement plastic windows should be avoided as they can never match the fine detail and character of original timber windows; they invariably have larger, chunkier sections with black rubber gaskets around the glass, and they are **not** (as many double glazing companies would like you to believe), maintenance free - plastic becomes scratched and disfigured by dirt and ultra-violet light over time, and will eventually need to be painted to maintain its appearance.



Satisfactorily repaired sash window.

Make sure that modern services and equipment are located unobtrusively - satellite dishes, air-conditioning units, extractor fans and CCTV cameras are alien features that must be positioned discreetly - and preferably not on the front elevation of your house. Electricity wires, telephone cables, waste pipes and other services should be installed tidily without snaking across walls and damaging decorative features.

Do not use cleaning methods that damage original surfaces - sand-blasting and even the most gentle air abrasive cleaning can remove the surface from brick and stone, particularly in the wrong hands and should never be used on timber. Chemical poultices should be used to strip paint from historic timbers so that any original markings can be preserved. Stripping paint from doors by immersion in a caustic bath both damages the wood and removes the glue from joints.

Do not overload any existing structure - replacing slates with concrete tiles can cause rafters to bow and even collapse under the increased weight unless the structure is strengthened. Building Regulations approval is also required for any re-roofing work. Removing tie beams from the roof structure (the horizontal beams that run at eye level across the attic at right angles to the ridge) can cause the roof to spread and even collapse. Removing chimney breasts, walls and other structural features can also damage the structural integrity of the building. Building Regulations approval is also required for this type of work.

Do not paint or coat surfaces that were originally left in their natural state - cementitious coatings and most modern exterior paints are not porous and will lock moisture in the walls. Evaporation is concentrated at cracks where any salts present crystallise, causing decay. Damp patches may appear on the inside of the wall as more moisture is forced to try and evaporate here - raised moisture levels can also lead to dry rot within timbers, especially if the room or space is not well-ventilated.

Do not extend or alter your home in a way that is unsympathetic to its original character - extensions that visually dominate the original building and are not in-keeping with the character of the building should be avoided. Any extension should normally be designed to be "subservient" to the original building, and respect the character of the original through the use of complementary materials and detailing. Internal alterations that involve the loss of the original layout of rooms, principal features (such as staircases or fireplaces) or decorative items damage the character of the interior. Covering the garden with tarmac or paving slabs to create forecourt parking is visually damaging to the streetscene and the setting of a building.

Avoid using mix-and-match "period style" details - the addition of reproduction features for uses never originally intended, such as "carriage lamps" on either side of the front door, external shutters particularly where they are fixed to the walls, and "bullseye" glass panes make old buildings look cheap and "phoney". "Period style" features such as "Georgian" or "Elizabethan" mass-produced front doors, imitation "stuck-on" glazing bars or leaded lights, and other fancy details look completely out-of-place in a genuinely historic building.



Unsympathetic replacement window and poorly sited satellite dish.

Do not replace original features and detailing un-necessarily - replacing original timber windows and doors is rarely necessary if the windows can be satisfactorily repaired. If replacement windows are necessary, then they should be replaced in timber to precisely

DIY Tree Planting!

Many of us love planting new trees and watching them grow, but how many people grow their own trees from seed? It is so easy to do, fun and, best of all, its free! Obviously, it's a much slower process than buying a young tree from the local nursery, but I believe the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.



There is no question of the provenance of your tree - you have collected the seed yourself so you know where it has come from. The establishment of the tree when planted in its final position is usually easier because it can be grown in the same environment that the seed has been raised in.

Not only is this a rewarding hobby but you will also benefit the environment, as trees provide a habitat for numerous flora and fauna, they produce oxygen whilst storing carbon dioxide, benefit our health by filtering out pollutants and their presence also decreases our stress levels and assists healing.

The best time for collecting seed is the autumn, just after they have fallen from the tree. There are four main groups of seeds, fleshy fruits, nuts, winged seeds and cones.

After picking the fleshy fruits, immerse them in warm water and leave for a day or two. When the fleshy surround has softened and split, drain the water off and remove the seed with your fingers. Pat the seed dry with kitchen towel and it is ready to plant. If you cannot plant it straight away, you can put it in a plastic bag in the fridge for no more than a week.

Nuts such as, hazel nuts, walnuts and beech nuts need stratifying, before sowing. This means exposing them to the cold for a period of time. This can be done by overwintering them outside. Just put them in a tray of compost and cover them lightly with more compost and leave them. In the spring, when they have produced small



roots, pot them on into small pots. Horse chestnuts and acorns need removing from their outer casing or cups before sowing.

After winged seeds are collected they need stratifying. An exception to this is wych elm, which can be collected in the summer and planted immediately. Winged seeds can be planted with the wings left on or they can be removed by rubbing between thumb and finger.

Cones can be collected and stored in a paper bag for a few days. During this time the cones should open up and release their seeds, which will be ready for sowing.

With all your seedlings, prick them out and pot them on as necessary, just as you would your flower and vegetable seeds. When they are of a reasonable size, plant them out in their final location. Then begins your regime of tender loving care. Use stakes and ties as necessary when they grow larger. Water them regularly and check the ties and stakes. Try to keep the ground around your young tree weed free.

It can give great pleasure to plant seeds for memorable dates. A friend of mine planted some acorns when he knew his wife was pregnant. When the baby was born they planted the small oak trees in their very large garden, to celebrate her birth and mark her arrival in the world. There is no end to this theme. You could plant some seeds when you become engaged, planting the trees out when you get married. But please don't chop the trees down if the marriage doesn't work out!



A word of warning about the selection of tree species. Ensure you choose the right tree for the right location. Unless you have a very large garden, you may not want an oak or a horse chestnut, so the smaller rowan, hazel, birch or cherry might be more suitable.

DO YOU LIVE IN AN OLD HOUSE?

Then read on... here are our top ten tips for looking after your valuable piece of England's heritage!

Only employ contractors or builders who specialise in historic building work - traditionally constructed buildings do not perform in the same way as modern ones and need to be treated differently, at every stage of their conservation and repair. Modern materials and construction techniques are often incompatible with traditional ones, and repairs that are suitable for modern buildings can lead to the deterioration of historic building fabric. Relatively few contractors and builders have the expertise required to deal with the special problems often found in historic buildings.

Make sure that you carry out essential maintenance work regularly - if huge repair bills are to be avoided and important historic fabric protected, you need to clear gutters of leaves and other debris in the autumn; broken or slipped tiles and slates need to be replaced or fixed; flashings should be maintained and chimneys pointed and capped to prevent water entering the building; air bricks and other vents need to be kept clear of weeds and soil to ensure that cellars and sub-floor voids are kept well-ventilated to prevent condensation, which also causes decay.



Hard cement pointing destroys soft bricks

Use lime not cement for mortar repairs and re-pointing brickwork - traditionally constructed masonry is usually bedded in soft, lime mortar and is relatively flexible: pointing with a hard cement mortar restricts its movement, causing stress in the surface of the wall. Cement mortars are also impermeable - that is to say that they do not allow the structure behind to "breathe": moisture is forced to evaporate through the face of the brickwork, causing the brickwork to "spall" and deteriorate. Cement materials may also be visibly different, both in colour and detail.

- You don't have to be a direct neighbour to experience problems with a hedge. An exceptionally tall hedge might affect properties separated by other gardens, or a road.
- The hedge in question doesn't have to be in a garden - it could be within industrial or commercial premises, or on parkland or Crown land.

Stuart Forgione
Technical Officer
(High Hedges)



Tree Wardens Corner

Next Open Meeting:-

2pm on Monday 6th February 2006 at the Civic Offices, Epping.

All Tree Wardens are welcome to attend to swap information and experience.

What are Tree Wardens?

Tree Wardens are local people appointed by their community group, residents association or parish council to gather information and to encourage practical projects relating to trees in the community. You do not need to be an expert as you will be provided with an "action pack" and training to give you the basic knowledge you will need. What is important is that you should genuinely care for trees and the environment.

Tree Warden programme is run by Epping Forest District Council on behalf of the Tree Council. The Tree Council's role is to improve the environment by encouraging tree planting and to gather knowledge and understanding about trees and their management.

If you are not currently a Tree Warden but would be interested in joining, please call Zoë on (01992) 788 203 for more details.

Useful publications -

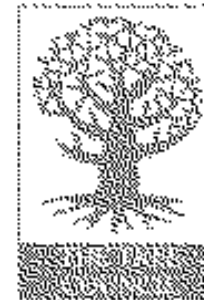
The Tree Council produce a useful 64 page colour booklet entitled "The Good Seed Guide". This is available for £3.50 inc. p. & p. from:- The Tree Council, 71 Newcomen Street, London SE1 1YT.

Useful websites: www.treecouncil.org.uk
www.woodland-trust.org.uk

Good luck and happy planting!

Lizzy Haines

Assistant Landscape Officer and Arboriculturist.



High hopes for High Hedges!

Hello from the newest member of the trees and conservation team at Epping Forest!

I have been appointed to deal largely with the new legislation regarding High Hedges - this means that if you are concerned about a hedge in a neighbouring property, or are the owner of a hedge that may be considered overly tall by someone else, I'll be the person you speak to.



As you may be aware, the new legislation came into force in England on 1st June after a great deal of lobbying by national newspapers and campaign groups. It is part of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 - but this doesn't mean hedges are subject to 'ASBOs'! Instead, it means that people living nearby a hedge that they consider too high might be able to register a complaint with the council. The Act is there to safeguard the 'reasonable enjoyment of property', in other words to prevent overgrown hedges spoiling the ability of people to enjoy their gardens and homes.

The legislation is intended to allow people who aren't able to agree a solution with their neighbours to approach the Council to resolve the dispute. In some cases these may have been running for years, resulting in considerable strife for those affected. You don't have to be a homeowner to be able to complain about a hedge; neither do you need to be the sole occupant of a building. You could be living in a block of flats or rented accommodation - a hedge could still be affecting you and you could still make a complaint.

For a hedge to fall within the legislation, it needs to fulfil certain criteria:

- Is it evergreen/semi-evergreen? It needs to retain live foliage all year.
- Is it a hedge? It needs to be a line of 2 or more trees or shrubs.
- Is it more than 2 metres in height? This is the threshold to qualify.
- Does the hedge block light? It needs to be a solid barrier.

People affected by a problem hedge will need to demonstrate that they have made an attempt to resolve the issue with their neighbour - usually this means writing a letter.

If this proves unsuccessful, registering a formal complaint with us will usually be the next step. This is a fairly simple process involving a form. Currently, Epping Forest District Council charges £265 for looking at a high hedge complaint - this is because the council is providing a service that will benefit an individual rather than the wider community.

The council's role in a complaint is to strike a balance between the interests of the complainant, hedge owner and wider community. If the hedge is found to be too high, the hedge owner will be instructed to reduce it to a more appropriate height. The council can also impose a maintenance regime to control the future height of the hedge.

Since May 2005, EFDC has received 67 recorded enquiries about the high hedge legislation - both hedge owners and people suffering the effects of a high hedge. So far, 3 of these have turned into formal complaints - all ongoing at the time of writing. Several cases have been resolved amicably without a complaint being made - in our view, a successful outcome!

Dispelling the myths - the truth about High Hedges:

- Not every hedge will have to come down to 2 metres! This is the threshold above which a complaint can be considered - likewise, it is the lowest height to which we can enforce reduction of a hedge. The maximum height for a hedge will depend on the level of inconvenience it is causing to neighbours.
- People with a tall hedge in their garden are not under threat of an Anti Social Behaviour Order. The legislation falls within the Anti Social Behaviour Act but councils are limited to imposing a maximum height for the hedge.
- There is no maximum height for a hedge - council's can now determine if a hedge is too tall for it's surroundings, but there is no 'ceiling'. The appropriate height will depend on the extent to which it is affecting the lives of those who live near it.
- Deciduous trees do not qualify as a hedge - for this reason, Beech and hornbeam hedges are exempt from the legislation. Although they retain vegetation throughout the winter, this is brown and dead.
- The legislation does not give people the right to an uninterrupted view! However, the loss of a view can be considered as one of the problems caused by a hedge.

