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# Living Woods

*Magazine*

**Education  
Issue**



**Plus: Tool Reviews, Win a  
Truncator and APF tickets**





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## Editor's comment

Why an Education Issue?

Because while thousands of new woodland jobs are being created each year, our land-based workforce is ageing. Because more than half of all woodland workers are over the age of forty. Because making a life in wood or in woodlands can be a reality for you or someone you know.

The simple truth is that we need to positively inform young people and career-changers about the possibility of building a satisfying and meaningful work life in Britain's trees and woods.

Here's my plan: we start them young with Forest School (p 6), then when they're ready, or ready to leave that office-based job, get them enrolled in the right course (p 14) with knowledgeable career advice (p16), and spotlight some real-life woodland business successes to inspire them (p 5, 10, 22, 38, 40). Definitely begin by taking them to APF2016 this month.

Why an Education Issue? Because care of our forests can't be outsourced abroad. It stays here. It's down to us. Let us know what you think.

**Nancy Wood**, Editor  
nancy@livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk



Cover photograph by John Carey

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# Brexit Update, Top Sheds

## EU Funding Announcement

As we were putting issue 41 of Living Woods together, a most welcome announcement appeared from Chancellor Philip Hammond guaranteeing funding for certain organisations beyond the date of Brexit – whenever that may be. The Forestry Commission followed quite quickly to interpret the Chancellor's words as they applied to

woodland owners, applicants and agents. Further details are still to be worked out, and no one yet knows what domestic policy might be post-Brexit, but the immediate effect is that the Forestry Commission is now able to honour legacy agreements, new Woodland Management Planning agreements, CS 2015 Woodland Creation capital agreements. Applicants should begin to

hear the outcome of their applications, and Woodland Officers will be able to continue to Countryside Stewardship 2016 Higher Tier Applications, even when projects continue beyond the UK's departure date from the EU. Check with your local agent for more information. Of course, such guarantees can only be honoured for the life of this Parliament, until 2020. For more Brexit, p 44.

## Shed Heaven

We can breathe again. The 2016 winner of the annual Cuprinol Shed of the Year Competition has been revealed. The word went out for 'innovative and inspiring' sheds earlier this year and entrants clearly surpassed themselves on both counts. Kevin Herbert of Berkshire took the laurel with his The West Wing Eco Shed, a three-room confection created from 90% recycled materials over eight years. We don't know if our favourite bit is the bookcase that conceals a children's hideaway, or the 400 milk cartons – which took a year to collect – supporting the roof of wild turf.

We also have a soft spot for the shed of Jo Candy of Lancashire. Named 'Boatcrash', it made the short list in the Cabin/Summerhouse category. Jo framed Boatcrash with oak and silver birch saplings, hand stripped, split and barked with froe, adze and a drawknife made from an old sword.

For all the winners: [cuprinol.co.uk/shedoftheyear.jsp](http://cuprinol.co.uk/shedoftheyear.jsp). To be alerted when the 2017 competition opens: [readersheds.co.uk/shedme.cfm](http://readersheds.co.uk/shedme.cfm). If a Living Woods reader wins next year, we'll give them a two-page spread in the September edition.

## Obama's New Monument

President Obama has distinguished himself by protecting more land and water than any other American president during his tenure in office, nearly 300m acres. He recently marked the centennial of the birth of the US National Park Service by declaring 87,500 acres of the New England state of Maine the newest federal parkland, to the delight of environmentalists and dismay from some locals and the state's Governor. Named the Katahdin Woods and Waters National



The West Wing



Boatcrash

# ds, New Pest

Monument, the original tranche of 70,000 acres was donated by Roxanne Quimby, founder of Burt's Bees, and augmented with further land acquisition. No hunting is allowed on Quimby's donated tract, one reason some local residents are resentful. The businesswoman also barred loggers and snowmobilers from her 120,000 private acres. Citizens who rely on a declining logging industry for their livelihoods are concerned that further restrictions may harm the area's precarious economy, which is suffering from changes in the market for pulpwood.

## Sweet Chestnut Tree Pest Alert

The Forestry Commission is asking us to stay alert for the exotic Oriental chestnut gall wasp (*Dryocosmus kuriphilus*), which appeared in southeast England last year in several locations close to London, in Hertfordshire and in Kent. The insect itself is tiny, just 3 mm long, but the 'galls' are easier to spot. Sometimes

white, sometimes pink, these bulbous growths form on buds, leaves and leaf stalks. A severe infestation can cause the tree to go into decline. If you do spot *something*, first be sure the tree is a sweet chestnut, then report your sighting via Tree Alert, [forestry.gov.uk/treetalert](http://forestry.gov.uk/treetalert). Find more info at [forestry.gov.uk/gallwasp](http://forestry.gov.uk/gallwasp).

## We Wood Drink to That

Wormwood irresistibly flavours absinthe, oak casks do the same for wine, whiskey and bourbon, and now hornbeam charcoal is performing similar magic for a new brand of vodka made in Surrey. Artisan distillery Silent Pool has produced Wry vodka, filtered over traditionally made hornbeam charcoal, which apparently gives it a 'tiny bit of bite'. In spite of creating this vodka for hipsters, the distillery has somehow managed to make an excellent move in engaging John Sinclair, a stalwart of the Sussex and Surrey Coppice

Group and a man who knows his way around a kiln, to supply the locally-sourced hornbeam charcoal. It's £20 per 70 cl bottle from [silentpooldistillers.com](http://silentpooldistillers.com).

## Woodsharing

The Wood Register is an online service – and soon-to-be app – courtesy of the Sussex & Surrey Coppice Group, designed to match woodland owners in the Southeast of England with local woodsmen to cut and manage their woodlands. It equally exists to help local woodsmen find woodlands to manage. You go online, list your details and information about your woodland or your skills, check out others' listings and respond appropriately. Simple. All negotiations take place privately between landowner and woodsman, and the listing service is entirely free of charge. We'd love to hear of other similar services around the UK and how they're working out. [www.thewoodregister.co.uk](http://www.thewoodregister.co.uk)

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# Shape the Future of our Forests

From Plantagenet to planting forests, in 2017 the Tree Charter calls on the past to benefit the future, by **Judith Millidge**

In 1217, in the wake of Magna Carta, young King Henry III signed the Forest Charter and with an impression of the royal seal restored the rights of common people to use the royal forests for fuel and grazing. Now woodland owners and everyone who cares for our forests are urged to make their own mark on the new Tree Charter launching next year.

To mark the 800th anniversary of King Henry's decree, in 2017 a new Forest Charter will be issued, the 'Charter for Trees, Woods and People', which will encourage Britain to celebrate, value and visit our greatest national resource. The Charter will guide policy and practice in the UK and establish principles to ensure that people and trees can stand stronger together in the future.

With blogs from a wide variety of writers, ranging from druids to conservationists to arborists, the Tree Charter website also includes thousands of stories submitted by people all over the country. They have shared memories and tales of their favourite childhood tree, of woodlands, of walks and of their affection for trees and forests. Everyone can contribute to help shape the Charter. Visit the website <https://treecharter.uk/> to tell them why trees are important to you.

### Woodland owners

Over 70% of British woodland is in private hands, however, and the Tree Charter also wants to hear from the owners. The Sylva Foundation, one of more than 50 woodland organisations supporting the Charter, has set up an online survey to guarantee that the views of woodland owners are reflected in it. Sylva wants to capture owners' hopes and fears for the future to make certain that the Charter supports them in their vital role as custodians of the nation's woodland heritage.

The Sylva survey is the only activity specifically aimed at ensuring the views of woodland owners are reflected in the Charter, so if you own a woodland, large or small, please take five minutes to visit the Sylva website <https://sylva.org.uk/myforest/charter> and fill in the questionnaire.

Though responses so far have flagged up owner's concerns over pests and disease, the overwhelming response has been a positive one, reflecting the satisfaction that many owners derive from working their woods and managing them sustainably for timber, wildlife and conservation.

Watch for a series of events during 2017 celebrating the new Charter for Trees, Woods and People to put trees at the forefront of public consciousness.

[treecharter.uk](https://treecharter.uk)  
[sylva.org.uk/  
myforest/charter](https://sylva.org.uk/myforest/charter)



# Brookhouse Wood

by Will St Clair

■ [willstclair.co.uk](http://willstclair.co.uk)

*'A herd of sheep had escaped and was loose in the orchard.'*

One evening last month, not long past midsummer, nearing 10pm. Penny and I and a good few friends found ourselves in the woods celebrating the success of our newly-built pizza oven by consuming more dough and cheese than is medically advisable. As we cracked open another round of local ale, a distress call came in from the neighbouring farm. A herd of sheep had escaped and was loose in the orchard.

The friends and I piled into the pickup truck and roared off in pursuit. After a good hour of herding, separating them from other sheep and chasing the bold ones through the dark, we got them all back into their field, present and correct. We all felt like kids running around after those sheep, and returned to our fireside feeling elated and energised. We were also truly convinced that all the exercise had burned off our earlier extravagance, so we celebrated our new herding skills with yet more pizza.

Something I've learned repeatedly since taking over Brookhouse Wood last winter is that you never really get to knock off and go home. When something needs doing, even in the middle of the night or on a Sunday, then it needs doing! Yet, somehow, it never feels like work, or like a job. Making my living from a woodland has begun to feel more like being a part of a living, breathing organism that needs feeding, watering and listening to.

That is not to say that running the Living Wood workshop is not challenging! We are constantly running to keep up with the ever-growing responsibilities of our business. As one task is completed, ten more seem to appear in its place. But they are our tasks that we have chosen, and they all serve to make our home more functional and enjoyable.

We are now six months into our new life here in the woods and it really has begun to feel like home. The business brings us a constant stream of guests, volunteers and people coming to learn green woodworking. It is wonderful to see how the place thrives on being full. Penny and I particularly love the very welcome communal aspect of our lives now. We share our meals around the huge oak table with new and interesting people who have come to learn and who frequently end up sharing their knowledge with us and helping us grow.

It's also very special for me to see how inspired people become when they enter the workshop space. Even guests who have planned a quiet holiday in the yurt are rarely able to resist trying their hand at spoon carving or turning on the pole lathe.

As summer has come on and the weather has grown warmer, I have spent more and more time in the workshop



developing teaching methods, building equipment for the courses I offer and making and sharpening tools. One of the best things about living here at Brookhouse Wood is having space to invite other green woodworkers to come and collaborate. I just finished teaching a lathe-building and bowl-turning course with the humble but brilliant bowl turner Yoav Elkayam. Yoav arrived at the woods in a beautifully converted van filled with woodenware and musical instruments from his travels, spending time with some of the most talented woodworkers across the country and beyond. He brings a fantastic energy to the workshop and working with him on this course has been a highlight of the summer. He is a patient teacher and I was really impressed with the results he got from our group of first-time bowl turners.

As each student brings his or her own perspective to the course and adds a different dynamic, the group finds its rhythm gets totally absorbed by the project. For me, it is hugely satisfying watching a group take their first ever bowls off the lathes they have built themselves, and be desperate to jump back on and improve on the last one. For many of them, this is a break from day to day working life, and building something from scratch to make simple, beautiful, useful objects with, has a visible effect.

The woodland grows quickly and swallows anything left unattended. Robins build nests in jacket pockets left on the coat peg too long, and leaves cover every surface you want to keep clean. Coming from the city, I am reminded how efficient we have become at keeping our environment from interfering with our lives. But it comes at a cost. Living here, having a more intimate relationship with my surroundings, feels good.

The birds usually beat me to the cherries. It looks like the squirrels will have most of the hazelnuts, but, even so, there are plenty. I'm glad there are more mild months to enjoy and more courses to teach before the cold forces the workshop into hibernation for another season.



# Out of the Classroom and Into the Woods

**Angus Hanton** spends a day in Forest School where 'free range' is both the learning and the lunch

**H**old onto the head and turn the body a few times until the head comes away on your hand," directed David.

"Yuck! I'm not doing that." Nick stared at the dead wood pigeon, more in fascination than disgust. A few minutes later, having undergone an apparent change of heart, Nick picked out another of the recently-shot pigeons, took its head carefully in his hand and followed David's instructions. David then showed him how to open the crop in the neck to discover what the bird had been eating. After that, Nick got up the courage to get properly stuck in – he twisted the bird's wings off and, using the "flip and split" technique, extracted the breastbone with the wing muscles. One of the other boys then showed Nick how to cut the meat off the bone gently and carefully with a sharp knife. Spotting the bowl of water by the fire, the boys asked Dave if the meat needed cleaning. David explained that it was already clean in the body and as long as no feathers or earth had got onto the meat, it wouldn't need washing, that the bowl of water was for the boys to clean their hands after dressing, or butchering, the bird.

Together the four boys nearest the fire cooked the wood pigeon breasts in a frying pan and then shared them out to everyone. Even without seasoning they were delicious - perhaps the best and most impeccably free range lunch I've ever had in a woodland. An acquired taste maybe, but a hundred times healthier than burger meat. Although the pigeons weren't previous inhabitants of this particular woodland, they had been shot earlier in the day by a local farmer protecting his crops.

Nathan asked David to show him the bird's bladder. "I can't," said David, "Birds don't have bladders. All its wee goes into its poo." Nathan seemed satisfied. Like me, he'd tucked that information away in the back of his head to tell the others later.

This Cumbrian Forest School programme is organised for ten boys, 14-16 years old, one day each week for 10 weeks. This was week number seven, so the boys were all quite used to it and they knew both what to expect and to sometimes expect the unexpected. They love their Thursday day out in the woods, though not always for the reasons you'd expect.

For instance, Tom explained to me that he's been in

trouble at school, including for getting angry at a teacher. But at Forest School, if he gets angry he just walks away from the group for a while; at formal school he's trapped in the classroom where it's impossible to do that. He also told me that he likes being able to take his fizzy "sports" drink to the woods and drink it whenever he wants, which he obviously can't do at normal school. David, who supports the Forest School leaders Gemma and Lily during sessions, reckons there's another reason Tom likes going out to the wood for the day: Tom is being brought up by his grandmother and has very little male company. He lights up when David shows him how to do things with tools and nature. It seems to David that he is satisfying Tom's hunger for a male role model and male company.

While the wood pigeons were cooking, one of the boys dropped a bird's head from a height to see if it would fall straight. It did. He stated that it would obviously drop faster if it were heavier. Another boy questioned that and suggested that the weight didn't matter because gravity created the same pull on everything. David, stirring the pan so that the pigeon got cooked on both sides, mentioned Galileo's idea that it was only air resistance that made a lighter object drop more slowly. As discussion broke out about this, I reflected that at times our outing was much more 'school' than 'forest', only the boys reached the school-like subjects in their own time and without the props of the indoor classroom.

By lunchtime, several of the boys were resting in hammocks that they'd put up. The teacher, Alison, pointed out that these were put up both cooperatively and competitively, but the boys had had to reach some compromises because there were more boys than hammocks. In any event they, she believed, wouldn't have resolved this so easily and got them up in their first week or two at Forest School. The boys had begun to plan ahead too – one boy asked, "Miss, can we bring a football on the last week?" 'Miss' thought for a moment and said, "Yes, as long as by then you've got your Forest School qualification finished."

Danny, another of the boys, tried to explain to me the Forest School's discipline system from his point of view: "You want to avoid exclusions and seclusions. ►







# EDUCATION





You can be put in “the zone” which Miss Blake runs which isn’t too bad but you want to avoid internals which also limit what you can do.”

Another activity the boys must master for their Forest School qualification is tree identification, though I notice that the boys prefer to focus on this knowledge when it relates to tree climbing projects and working with bushcraft tools. There were bits of wood lying about for spoon carving and other bushcrafts and the leaders had provided a couple of plastic crates full of useful tools - froe, knives, drills and saws. Actually there was a lot of kit available such as cargo nets, hammocks, fireplace fuel, pans and tripod.

Forest School is much more than a day out – or a series of days out – for young people. Forest School courses are led by qualified teachers like Lily Horseman, organiser of this particular programme through her

company Kindling Play and Training. She brings more than fifteen years’ experience of what works best in the woods for kids (and adults) of different ages. As classroom teacher Alison says, “We couldn’t run this programme without Lily.”

From the school’s point of view it is extremely beneficial for these specific pupils, who had struggled with behaviour and other issues in the classroom setting. But the Forest School pupils’ time out of school, and the removal of their sometimes disruptive activity, has the knock-on effect of allowing those students who stay back at the main school to study more effectively. As classroom teacher Alison said to me, “These are nine boys you couldn’t put together in one classroom.” In Forest School, they thrive.

■ [kindlingplayandtraining.co.uk](http://kindlingplayandtraining.co.uk)

## What Is Forest School?

Forest School is a growing movement that refers both to a specific hands-on learning experience in woodlands or natural environments and also a specialised learning approach that complements the wider context of outdoor and woodland education. In 2006 a Forestry Commission report estimated that there were approximately 140 Forest Schools across mainland UK. For comparison – an exact number is difficult to find – as of last year there were more than 360 Forest Schools in the county of Worcestershire alone. The Forest School Association has aided more than 13,000 teachers and others to undertake Forest School training.

The history of outdoor learning and teaching has many ancestors, from scouting and Margaret McMillan’s outdoor nurseries onward. The current incarnation was inspired by a visit of nursery nurses at Bridgwater College in Somerset to Denmark in 1993 to observe the open air ‘frulitsliv’ early years educational approach there. By 1995 the college had developed a BTEch in Forest School, and over the past twenty years the concept and training have spread throughout the UK.

Forest Schools, led by Level 3 Forest School practitioners, may

involve mud, cold, sharp tools, fire, risk and rain as well as discovery, self-reliance, delight, new areas of interest, new understanding of natural process and connection to the natural world – all the things that *Living Woods* readers cherish.

It is important to note that Forest School needn’t involve a forest. Seaside, meadows, heathlands and even school grounds can

be appropriate for Forest School learning, though the leader may need to import some materials to assist. *Living Woods* encourages woodland owners to do what they can to make their own woodlands available for outdoor teaching and to Forest School in particular.

■ [Forestschoolassociation.org](http://Forestschoolassociation.org)



©Angus Hutton

# Professional Woodsman, Teacher, Maker: Making Wood Work

**John Waller's** thriving Underwoodsman enterprise offers many lessons for woodland business success, by Nancy Wood

**J**ohn Waller arrived at Bore Place in Kent in 1992 to begin employment as an ecologist. He had no idea that he was stepping into a working situation that would evolve over time into a near-ideal set of circumstances for his wood and willow-based enterprise, Underwoodsman Ltd, to develop and thrive. If you're making the move to a working life in wood – or in the woods – John's story illustrates elements crucial to your success.

Poised on the border of Kent and East Sussex, Bore Place is a remarkable enterprise, a productive farm for at least 700 years that is also a forward-looking project in modern methods of sustainability. It's a 500-acre haven of conservation and natural appreciation, an historic treasure with educational programmes that reach out to the future. Bore Place had undergone many turns of fortune over the centuries before Neil and Jenifer Wates, he of the Wates Construction family, bought it in 1976. This visionary pair was committed to environmentally sustainable farming and to education. To these ends, they established Bore Place as a land trust and later added an educational charitable trust. Neil created the first methane digester in the world, among many other projects. The dairy farm has been fully organic since 2005. They were conscientious and extremely thorough in their assessment of Bore Place's potential. When John Waller arrived, he found that most of the surveying work he expected to do had already been completed.

'This was the most surveyed piece of farmland in the country,' says John. Rather than spending his time adding to the database, he took on the management of the neglected coppice lands, a combination of three main woodlands and a variety of shaws, totalling more than 65 acres in all. 'I thought I'd have a play and see what happened,' he says.

He began to restore hazel coppice and ash, the latter mainly for firewood. As he began to create material,

he learned bodging from Richard King and then basket making from Malcolm Seal. 'I picked up hurdle making as well.' And in keeping with Bore Place's educational ethos, he began to offer courses, a core set of half a dozen to a dozen, mainly centred around greenwood work and different forms of wood weaving.

'It took five to ten years to set up the courses. In those days, the biggest problem was getting in touch with people to publicise them. I spent a lot of time at craft fairs and county shows. Once people attended, though, they tended to repeat and the courses built up through word of mouth,' says John. His clients tend to be local, from London and the southeast, though some have come from as far away as Dorset, Suffolk and Bedfordshire. They tend to be aged between 35 and 60, with a split of roughly 65:35 men to women, with a cohort of young people as well. 'There's been an explosion of course offerings recently and they're more in demand than ever.' He experiments with his courses, sometimes adding in one-offs, like the oak cleaving workshop illustrated on these pages.

He remained an employee for seven years until going self-employed in 1999, renting a former stables on the farm, negotiating a contract for woodland management and running his courses. 'You do carry all the risk this way, but it works for me.'

He advises anyone hoping to survive and thrive in any type of woodland business to find a working partnership with someone to handle the bookkeeping and admin. In John's case, it is his wife, Amanda, who was formerly an editor at *Butterworth's Law Directory*. John found that he was so busy in the workshop and the woods that it was easy to neglect the 'business' side of his business. 'It's a tough lesson to learn.'

Over time, John has continued to diversify his work life, becoming a qualified tree surgeon, building the willow weaving side of his courses and business, with a special focus on living willow garden structures, taking

*John Waller in  
The Green Wood  
Workshop at  
Bore Place*



**It's crucial to keep an open  
mind about education"**







# EDUCATION



©John Carey

*John, right, supervises an oak cleaving workshop*

on an apprentice and some part-time and seasonal helpers and learning from everyone he meets. He refers to it as 'latching onto stuff as it comes. I learn so much from the people I meet, everyone from accountants to tree surgeons.'

His passion for education is apparent in the intensity with which he talks about it. 'It's crucial to keep an open mind about education. It's not just courses and teaching and taking money for a day. For people who are interested in woodland and woodworking, there are many ways in: you can volunteer, get outdoors to keep fit, just think of it as a different way of spending time, there are many, many routes, right up to full apprenticeships. Formal courses are not the only route in.'

The sustainable ethos of Bore Place is native to John's way of thinking. 'Look, working in the

woodlands involves a web of processes. The waste product from one is a resource for another process and you make use of it all. Otherwise, you just end up moving the same bit of wood around. My little mantra is that I try to make each piece of wood work for me three times: I get paid to cut it, paid to demonstrate how to use it, and then I sell the product.'

John Waller has made a living from the woods for more than twenty-five local, sustainable, traditional years, adapting to the needs of the times, always looking for the next opportunity to learn, and working with Amanda to think like entrepreneurs.

'I say to anyone who wants to do this, 'Be bloody-minded, stubborn and self-motivated. That attitude is the only way in. It's down to you.'



## Good Practice for Good Business

So you've made the life decision to become a professional in some form of woodland enterprise. John Waller's decades of experience offer invaluable signposts to increase your chances of success.

Associate yourself with a going concern to take advantage of assets like land, workshop space, publicity, client base, expertise, sales showroom, etc. John says, 'Linking myself to the estate has been fantastic. I couldn't have designed it better.'

Seek out and take advantage of opportunities. John's initial employment as an ecologist led to woodland management and teaching, and on to other enterprises.

Learn, learn, learn. Not only through courses and formal educational programmes, but from everyone you meet.

Find a business partner. Or at least someone who is good at admin, taxes, PR, and anything else that takes you away from your core business.

Be creative in finding assistance. John has had an apprentice in the past. Currently he employs a university student seasonally as well as having the

assistance one day a week from a former accountant who uses his time outdoors to stay fit. John employs extra help on an ad hoc basis for fencing, coppicing, and tree surgery.

Extend your reach via the internet, magazines – like *Living Woods* – fairs and events. Encourage word of mouth.

Diversify. Like most people who work on the land, John teaches his own courses as well as teaching courses for others, gives talks, makes hurdles, fencing, baskets, greenwood projects and live willow structures, coppices, manages woodland, sells wood fuel, organises volunteer days at Bore Place and is a qualified tree surgeon. Find your own mix to keep you productive through the seasons.

Create a clear, useful website and keep it up to date.

Experiment. John might try a new course as a one-off, assess it and gather feedback before deciding to add it to his core offerings.

Stay focussed. From John's experience, a determined, resilient, self-starting attitude is the key to creating a successful business and life in wood.

**John Waller,**  
underwoodsmen.  
co.uk, 01892  
740303  
Boreplace.org

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# Upward Mobility

There are many ways to climb the woodland career ladder, by **Dr Rosalind Arden**



©Stephen Dorey ABIPP / Alamy Stock Photo

**Y**ou are never happier than when you're out and active in the woods. Could your interest be the seed of a proper career?

Or you've done your time in an office, in front of a screen, and you're ready to break out into a new life working in forests and woodlands. Could you make the change?

The answers are 'yes' and 'yes'. The forestry and tree and timber sectors report a shortage of skilled workers, with more than 15,000 jobs expected to be created by 2020 and more than half the workforce over 40 years old. There is room for you to find your own way to fulfil your dream of a life in the woods. And the pathways into a career in the woods are as varied as the woodlands themselves.

As usual, Google is your best friend for seeking information. Invest some time looking at the key websites below to get a sense of what opportunities exist and what employers require in terms of qualifications.

Honestly consider your own personal qualities, both as they are now, and as they may develop. If you want to work in forestry, you will either need to be a 'morning person' or be able to adjust to it

as contractors start and finish early. You'll need to be happy building some muscle: much of the work requires sustained manual effort. Most jobs need perseverance, but what you have to persevere with varies between jobs. In the woods you certainly have to be comfortable with the damp and grey, rainy days as well as the sunny ones.

Use work experience and volunteer work to get a feel for what you might want to do. Malcolm Allen of the Woodland Trust says, 'Work experience, or weekend work, give you an understanding of what the different jobs can involve.' Spending some time on work experience before applying for an apprenticeship will strengthen your application, as well as offering a taste of the reality of a working life in the woods. Malcolm strongly advocates for practical skills. 'Practical skills are highly valued, even if most woodland managers have degrees these days.'

There are three main sectors of woodland and forestry careers, with many subsets and offshoots:

### **1. Woodland Management and Maintenance**

This includes tree planting, looking after the health of existing trees, creating and maintaining access routes in woodland, building and maintaining



infrastructure such as steps or paths for walkers, putting in gates or stiles or, controlling vegetation.

## 2. Harvesting

This work included removing small trees, working with chainsaws, and working with tractors. This kind of work is sometimes paid as piece-work.

## 3. Arboriculturist

This includes tree surgery, climbing trees and making them safe. Working with chainsaws. There are 135,000 trees in Royal Parks alone, so there is a fair amount of work to be done to keep them healthy and safe for people to sit under.

There are also positions for teaching, coppicing, horse logging, wildlife study and preservation and much more. Often, forest workers weave many strands of enterprise into a career.

Woodland science provides another set of options, which begin with an academic degree or post-graduate track in areas of study like dendrology (the science of trees), wildlife biology, forest dynamics, soil science, and forest management as well as broader ecological concerns.

To start researching woodland work generally, the Royal Forestry Society is a good place to begin. Their website just launched a series of four videos, 'Real Careers in Forestry' to inspire and inform your search. Another excellent website is the Countryside Jobs Service (CJS), listing jobs, training opportunities of all kinds and volunteer opportunities. Their page on job-seeking, 'Helpful Hints,' has excellent advice. Lantra is another portal to consult for information about land-based careers.

Qualifications for woodland work include: certificates from courses such as City and Guilds Forestry and Arboriculture, specific practical training courses that you first have to pass, then maintain every few years (such as chainsaw certification); junior and advanced apprenticeships and college-based diploma or degree courses. It's a good idea to look online at some key institutions, just to see how they work, but also to research smaller associations and groups that may offer learning opportunities suited to your interests.

Apprenticeships: Applicants may need a good standard of education, generally 2 GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and science at grade C or above, though some apprenticeship programmes accept practical experience as qualifications. The government's newly-funded commitment to increasing opportunities for apprenticeships make this a fine moment to pursue this type of training.

Awards, Certificates and Diplomas: Applicants should research the requirements of the college or service provider offering certificate diploma courses, which are divided into levels and which include practical application as well as some academic work. As an example, the Sparsholt College in Hampshire requires two GCSEs to enter its Level 1 Diploma in Woodland Skills course.

Degree programmes: Depending on your goal, a university degree in Forestry, Environmental Science,



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Conservation or something similar may be the means to set your foot on the road. You will usually need to have five GCSEs including maths, English and science, as well as three appropriate A-levels. However, because of the highly practical element of some of these courses, universities are often willing to consider life experience in assessing applications. Mature students are welcome in these areas of study and universities can be flexible. For instance, Bangor University offers distance learning at MSc level and part-time degrees.

In the end, are the hard work, the weather, the physical effort worth it? Malcolm Allen says, 'Don't be under the illusion that it's all bluebells and romance. The days can be long and hard.' But dedication and time pay off. 'You can walk in a woodland you've planted if you stick at it. You see the fruits of your labour. You have a fantastic sense of achievement.'

Or as Marcus Sangster, Chair of Forestry Learning and Development Working Group, says, 'People with forestry qualifications are in demand; if you take this path you will be very employable and you really will have a variety of fulfilling opportunities open to you.'

### Websites to Google:

- Coppicewood College
- Countryside Jobs Service
- Forestry Contractors Association
- Forestry Commission (see the 'Careers' tab)
- Gov.uk (Trees and timber apprenticeships)
- Grow Careers (more horticultural)
- Institute of Chartered Foresters
- International Dendrology Society (under 'what we do' see: 'provides bursaries for students to study horticulture')
- Kew Royal Botanic Gardens (see Specialist Training web pages)
- Lantra (training courses and apprenticeship information)
- Royal Forestry Society (careers guide and great videos)
- Small Woods Association
- The Arboricultural Association
- Woodland Trust

# Land a Career in the Trees

The Career Clinic at APF 2016's Forest Zone is the perfect place to explore your next steps and make new friends, by **Toby Allen**



©Say It With Wood

**M**ay I tell you a sad fact, one that many of us involved in woodlands already know? Nearly 50% of Britain's woodland cover is unmanaged. Almost half of this amazing, solar-powered product, British timber, is not being properly cared for, harvested and brought to market.

Currently, the trees and timber industry contributes more than £286m to the UK economy, but the often-forgotten links in the chain are the human beings on the ground, managing, cutting and extracting the trees. By the nature of the job we do, we often work in isolation from one another, coping with the influences that market forces, weather, running costs and changing legislation have on our woodland businesses, frequently without a network of support.

With this in mind, my wife Aly and I have held a series of networking events and tool

sales over the last few years to bring the falling community together. Last year, we approached the Confederation of Forest Industries (CONFOR) to ask if they would fund a small area at the forest shows they organise, a dedicated space where woodland workers could get together with industry experts to share knowledge and answer questions. CONFOR agreed, and the first experiment at the Longleat Woodland Show in 2015 was both useful and a lot of fun.

The Forest Workers Zone, as it became known, was a such a success that CONFOR have agreed to fund it again at the APF on the Ragley Estate in Warwickshire on 15 – 17 September. To make the most of the area, there are several organisations working in partnership this year, including the National Coppice Federation, the Forestry Contracting Association, Forestry Commission, ESUS Forestry & Woodlands,



the Forestry Industry Safety Accord and others. It's an exciting programme.

On the Thursday and Saturday mornings, 15 and 17 September, the Forest Workers Zone will host free drop-in advice sessions on how to manage woodlands, topics like adding value, working with conservation groups and countryside stewardship. In the afternoons, we'll focus more on practical skills like felling efficiently and chainsaw repairs. With so many of our woodlands in hard-to-reach places, you might be interested to learn about building low cost skyline systems or using horses alongside machinery. If you have information to contribute, please come along and get involved. The Forest Workers Zone is your area.

On Friday morning, 16 September, we'll be hosting a Career Clinic – of special interest for this 'education' issue of Living Woods. A cross-sector skills group will be there so you can discover the different pathways to beginning or developing your career in practical forestry. Rebecca Oaks and Steve Fowkes will discuss forestry and coppicing apprenticeships, Debbie Bartlett from Greenwich University and Charles Cartwright, from the Herefordshire and Ludlow College, will speak on career progression and development opportunities.

During the Career Clinic, they'll be holding the Forest Skills Survey – to be launched during the APF – and we'd like to encourage everyone to answer the questionnaire. It's the only way to ensure that future

skills funding is targeted appropriately.

Friday night brings a 5pm networking, drinks and folk music event, another easy way to make connections with fellow woodland workers.

We also have two very special guests giving talks this year: on Thursday at 3.30pm Mike Abbott will talk about the evolution of the green wood industry and his part in it. Few people have had such a profound impact on green wood working as Mike. At 3.30pm on Friday, Steve Cull, aka 'The Blademaster', one of the pioneers of mobile sawmilling in Britain, takes time out from running his own stall to tell us about his career and share some milling tips. And at 1.15pm each day, Sean Helman demonstrates his method of sharpening hand tools.

We encourage everyone to come, share information and make new friends. Find us on stand 1130 on the demo circuit, and enjoy free tea, coffee and cake. Perhaps you have some kit you'd like to put up for sale on the classified board, or would like to advertise for work. We also offer pop-up competitions with great prizes like a Sugihara chainsaw bar and Dolmar goodies to be won each day. The APF promises to be a huge show this year, with something for all of us who are involved in British woodlands.

■ For more information, or to get involved in this or future events, email [toby@sayitwithwood.co.uk](mailto:toby@sayitwithwood.co.uk). [apfexhibition.co.uk](http://apfexhibition.co.uk)

**Toby Allen** and his wife **Aly May** are the founder/owners of Say It With Wood ([sayitwithwood.co.uk](http://sayitwithwood.co.uk)), a local, sustainably-run company offering chestnut fencing, garden furniture and structures, forestry and mobile sawmill services and firewood supply, among many other wood-based products and services, from their base in Herefordshire.



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# Special Effort

Writer and ecologist David Blakesley works to enable autistic children – and their parents, carers and teachers – to experience the natural world, research by **Hannah Foxton**

**D**avid Blakesley hadn't intended to co-found a social enterprise that would bring classrooms of special needs children, especially those with autism, into the countryside. He is known in woodland circles for books he has co-written with Peter Buckley on habitat management – *Managing Your Woodland for Wildlife* and *Grassland Restoration and Management*, among others. But he had a life-changing moment when he was asked to research and write a chapter on 'woodlands for people' for a book he was writing with Peter about how to create new native woodland.

'It was a bit out of my depth because I was writing about the diverse range of benefits that woodlands offer to society,' Blakesley relates, 'And to bring it to life I went out to a Woodland Trust tree-planting session with a local special school. The teachers warned me that some of the children might be unsettled by the experience of being out of the classroom, in the countryside. But the children were all really relaxed, digging holes and planting trees. I think the teacher was a bit surprised at that. So I started to talk to other teachers and parents and I realised that many children with autism and related disabilities get few opportunities to go out into the countryside.' As a pilot project, he decided to write a guide for teachers, parents and carers, to visiting the Kent countryside. Feedback was so positive that the book was published in spring 2012. And *Nature and Autism* was born.

In 2012, he was commissioned to write a report for Natural England with King's College London to study the involvement of ten special schools in England using the natural world as an element of teaching. Did they get their classrooms out into woodlands, parks, or other natural spaces? And did the teachers and head teachers value such activity?

'The messages that came through loud and clear were that the teachers we interviewed all thought that engaging children with the natural world was highly beneficial, to their wellbeing, to their social skills, and to their attitude to learning as well,' he says. Blakesley found that while there was some literature that described the benefits and experiences of children with ADD in natural settings, very little had been done to study the

same topics for children with autism.

'Many children benefit from engaging with the natural world, but we found that not all teachers have the confidence or the experience to take children out, and to use it as a classroom.'

The social enterprise exists to enrich the lives of people with autism, mainly children, through experiences of countryside and nature. Autism and Nature have wisely chosen to make use of the wealth of existing nature and woodland teachers and organisations, enabling schools to take classes into the open air for visits and activities led by experts.

'We work in partnership with other organisations like the RSPB, the Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust, who then lead the visits. When the visits first started, I was concerned about how the visits would go, would the children respond positively, but I've stopped worrying about this now. When a class visits a nature reserve for an outdoor learning session, in our experience, the visits always seem to go well, irrespective of the class size, the abilities of the children. We have lots of quotes from teachers about the benefits to their children; such as their patience, their social skills, their wellbeing. And we've seen it with our own eyes,' Blakesley explains.

The outdoor learning providers communicate with teachers before a group turns up to find out what they are doing in class, what the abilities of the children are and how best to link outdoor learning to classroom learning. Blakesley has found that outdoor learning providers who tend to work more with mainstream children tend to adapt their activities easily to children with special educational needs. Blakesley observes the visits, writes about them, and sends questionnaires to teachers asking their impressions of the visits. Slowly, over many visits, evidence has begun to build up that supports Autism and Nature's belief that outdoor learning benefits children with autism.

'Ultimately we want parents, carers and other teachers to read about the experiences of these children,' he says.

To this end, encouraging families into woodlands and nature, Autism and Nature has a range of projects that offer practical information to help families engage their child with autism with nature. Their series of local guidebooks – so far their range







# EDUCATION

includes Kent, East and West Sussex, Suffolk, Surrey, New Forest and Hampshire and more are in the planning stages – offers a selection of outdoor settings for visits and days out with plenty of information to specifically assist the parent, carer or teacher of an autistic child in planning a pleasant experience.

For instance, the book on Kent notes that 'Knole Park attracts a lot of visitors, particularly when the Visitor Centre and the house are open. For this reason, some children with autism might find the car park rather stressful.' The guides also include information on terrain, gradients, presence of lakes or rivers and whether fencing is in place or not, whether dogs are allowed and if so, on leads or not; extremely useful for families and classes whose members have issues with accessibility or other requirements.

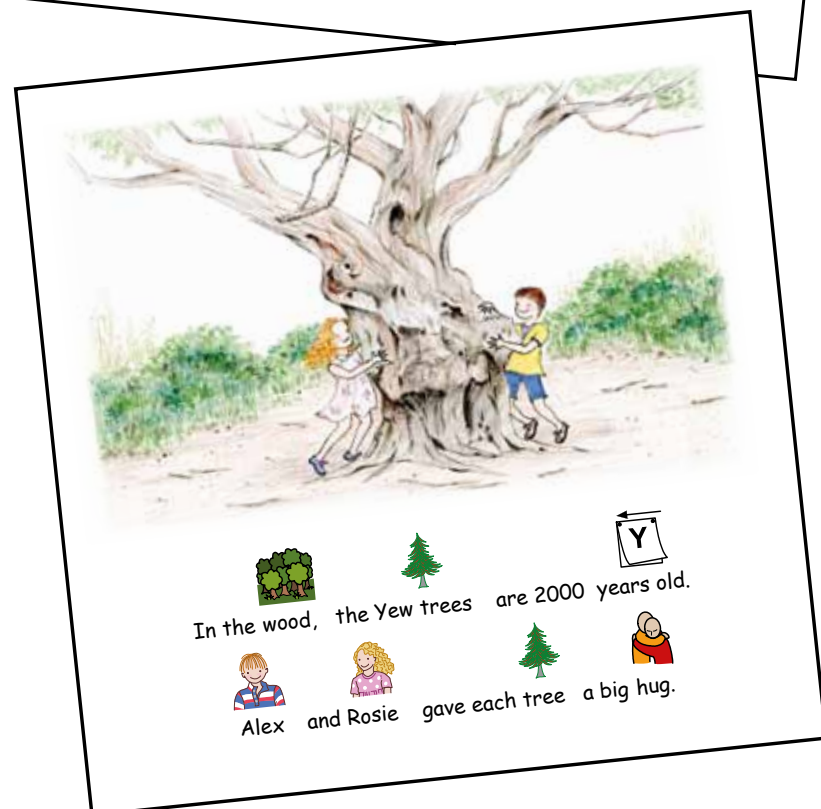
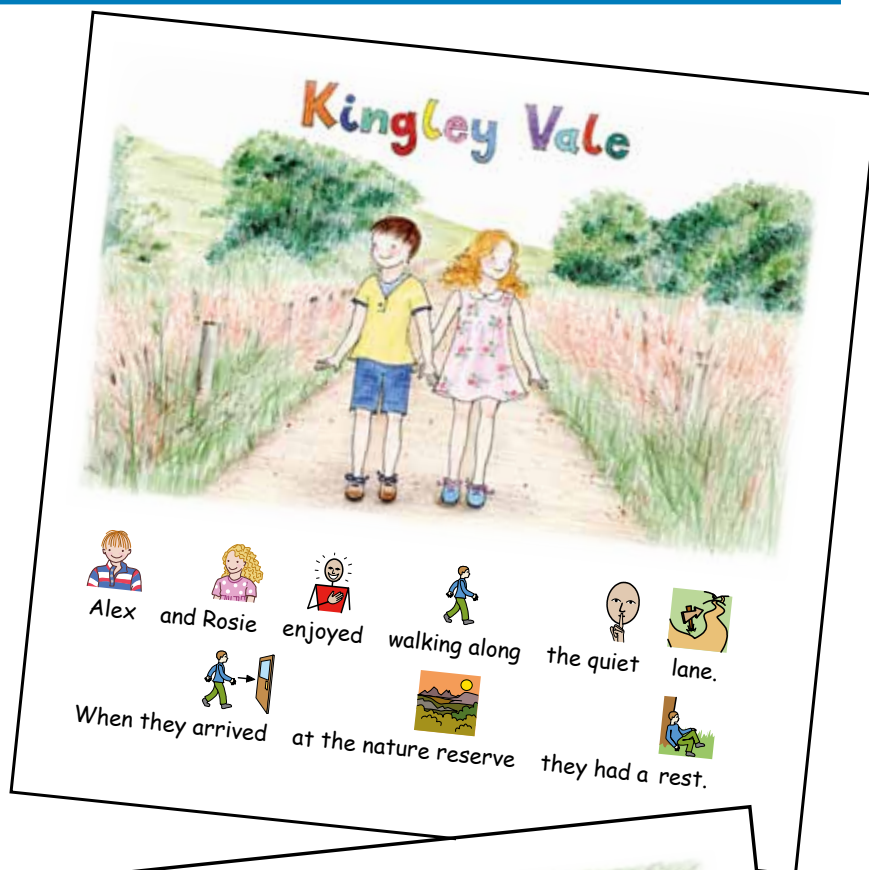
In addition, each featured natural place includes an illustration of a playful child, describing their experience, as in, "there were blue butterflies everywhere" to show to children and help prepare them for new experiences in advance.

'Parents seemed to quite like the cartoons, so we thought, 'Why not do a children's version of the guides? Why not go to exactly the same sites in the same order, but instead of having five hundred words of text, we'll just have a few words of text underneath the cartoon, supported by Widget symbols.' So that's how we started the Alex and Rose Adventure books for children.' The charming illustrations are the creations of Blakesley's wife Tharada.

'We took advice from teachers and speech and language therapists and from Widget Software, a company that produces symbols that help communicate ideas and information,' he says. Thousands of the books have been printed and distributed for free, and are available on Autism and Nature's website to download at no charge.

Goals for the future of Autism and Nature include finding time to follow up distribution of the guides to ascertain if teachers have been able follow up by getting their classes out into the countryside. They also want to talk to parents, carers and teachers about how they use the Alex and Rosie story books. 'The stories in our books are all about activities in the natural world. They make natural art, they make crowns using leaves, run up a hill and watch birds.'

For now, the business of Autism and Nature is to produce more resources to get more children into the countryside, to get outdoor education providers to offer more sessions to schools and families, bringing schools, local authorities, conservation organisations and autism charities together to open the door to the natural world to children with autism.



Autism and Nature is extremely grateful to have received support for its work from a wide range of organisations, including charitable trusts, community foundations, AONBs and National Parks, the Woodland Trust, the Big Lottery Fund, and private organisations such as woodlands.co.uk.



Autismandnature.org.uk  
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FORAGING

# A Wild Food Year

*The Edible City*, by forager and teacher **John Rensten**, reveals the feast right under our noses



©Graham Wood

**J**ohn Rensten, of Forage London, is evangelical about wild food. He loves its easy availability, its superfood status and how 'putting on your foraging goggles will transform your city surroundings.' The leader of foraging walks in London, at the Dorset coast and on mushroom forays has been learning about wild plants for twenty years. Yet John says, 'I'll never have the topic down. I'm always learning. One little green space teaches me so much – it's endless, cyclical, wonderful.' His new book, *The Edible City*

(Boxtree), out 8 September, is a diary of a year of urban foraging. It leads readers to source and cook sixty most common plants – plentiful across the UK and northern Europe – and offers sensible safety tips. About woodland foraging his advice is, 'Get to know your trees and you'll get to know what grows amongst them.'

 [foragelondon.co.uk](http://foragelondon.co.uk)



## Excerpt from *The Edible City*

### 10th October. Somewhere in the shadow of Arsenal Football Stadium

It's a tricky time of year for me; the city dweller wants the dry weather to go on forever, while the fungi hunter wants the rain to come and help the mushroom season along. Where I end up foraging is very often in the hands of the gods, so I find it best to just concentrate on the abundance of wild and not so wild fruit that the summer has delivered, and if the weather does turn, then off to the woods I go. Last year was quite literally a wash-out, but this year's alternate periods of hot sun and heavy rain had sent the fruit trees and bushes into overdrive. Like so many of London's best foraging areas, this little gem of a park is tucked away, a magical doorway leads from the street, straight into this wild Narnia. Everything on my picking list was here . . . crab apples, bright orange rowanberries, pears, medlars, hawthorn berries, sloes and blackberries. But best of all, a hedge about 200 metres long, festooned with 2cm scarlet ovals, wild rose hips – dog rose to be specific. I never tire of expounding the health virtues of these amazing fruits. Weight for weight, rose hips contain twenty times the vitamin C of oranges, masses of pectin (commonly used in throat lozenges), high levels of antioxidants, beta-carotene, vitamin B and essential fatty acids, and let's not forget the fact that they taste fantastic.

Rose hips freeze really well and I use them for syrups, sauces and to give sweetness to numerous recipes. I collected about a kilo in under half an hour, a big cotton beach bag round my neck, leaving both hands free to pick as I moved sideways along the hedge like a cross between a crab and a space invader, grinning like an idiot and humming like a bumblebee.

### Traditional wild rose vinegar

Rose hips, white wine vinegar or white balsamic vinegar, sugar (optional)

Due to their impressive size, I prefer to pick Japanese rose hips (not a native but thoroughly naturalized) but any variety, wild or otherwise, will do perfectly well and different species will give varying flavours. Part of the joy of this recipe is in the presentation, so if you'd like to end up with bottles filled with rose hips you'll need to use a variety that will make it past the bottle neck and dog rose are one of the most attractive in shape as well as colour.

Another of my recipes that's hardly a recipe at all. Pick bright red hips, ripe but still firm, then top and tail them with a sharp knife before sticking lots of little holes in them with a pin. Be sure not to cause any damage that will let the little hairs from the centre escape. Alternatively, you can freeze and defrost the hips to soften them but I prefer the process of picking and pricking each one. Find an attractive clear glass bottle or jar, depending on

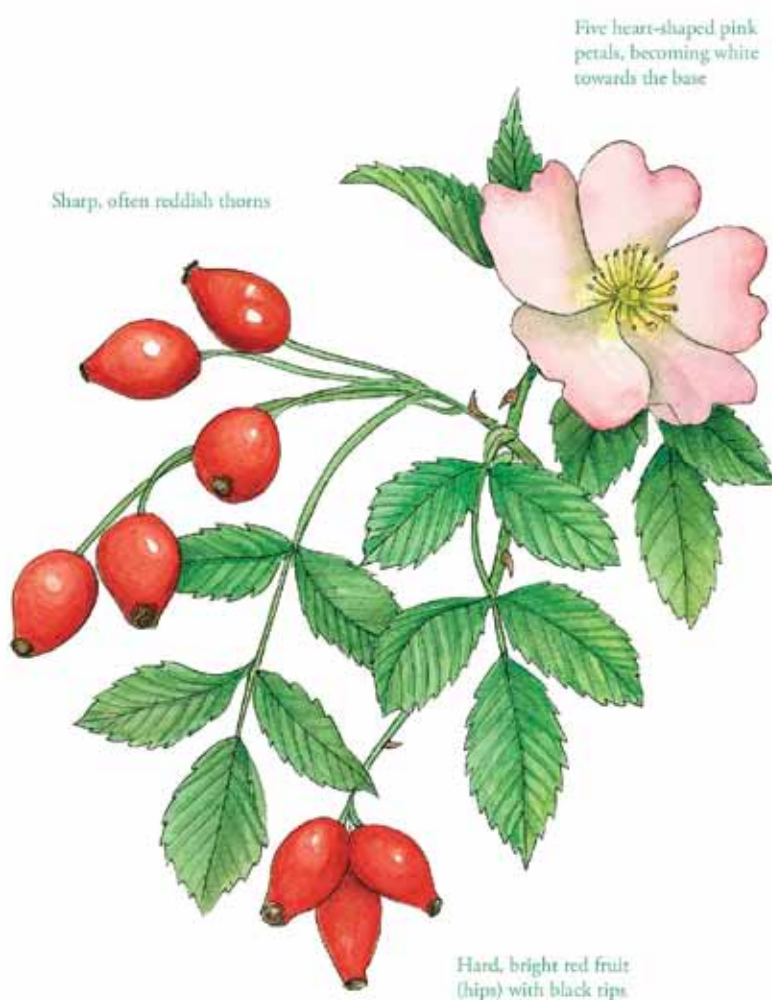
the size of your fruit, fill it with hips, then fill the remaining space with white wine vinegar or, if you're feeling lavish, white balsamic. For a sweeter version, heat the vinegar and add a heaped tablespoon or two of sugar to every 100ml of liquid, then leave it to cool before adding it to the hips. About 6–8 weeks later it's ready to use, and in the meantime make sure you leave it sitting around where people can admire your creativity.

### The Edible City

by John Rensten, illus. Gwen Burns  
pub. Boxtree, £12.99

## DOG ROSE

*Rosa canina*



PARTS USED: Flowers, fruit

HARVESTING TIP: Use scissors and watch out for thorns

# Golden Foraging Rules

A guide to having it and eating it too, by **Kat Morgenstern**

Nature is bountiful. The hedgerows are full of bramble, elderberry and rosehips and there is never a shortage of nettles. And yet, while certain plants are indeed abundant, or even invasive, plant diversity on the whole is shrinking at an alarming rate. Climate change, pressure on natural habitats as green fields are turned into construction sites, and excessive and often careless collection of wild species, are the main culprits. On the other hand, foraging is a wonderful way to get out there and to connect with the environment. To ensure that our wild tastes will not create further problems, follow these golden foraging rules:

### 1) Learn local life

Every ecosystem is a web of life, a tangle of intricate relationships of plants, insects, birds and other animals. Get to know your local habitat and the species within it as your friends and neighbours. Learn about their likes and dislikes and discover their stories. Research the many different uses of plants and don't shy away from learning about their biochemistry either. Particular plants are associated with certain types of soil or particular geological features. The presence of specific plants can be read as indicators – the pH level of the soil, whether it is nutrient rich or poor, compacted, loamy or waterlogged. Try to understand the whole ecosystem and the roles of your plant friends within it. Who pollinates them, and who may also be after their fruit? All these clues are important pieces of the puzzle to understanding your local environment.

### 2) Better safe than sorry

Most importantly, learn about any poisonous plants and their edible look-alikes that you may come across in your neighbourhood and NEVER EVER gather anything you cannot POSITIVELY identify. Consequences of mistaken identity can range from highly unpleasant to lethal. Lily of the valley leaves or autumn crocus leaves, for example, can be dangerously deceptive. They look a lot like ramsons, or wild garlic, and may fool inexperienced foragers – which could be fatal if they end up on your dinner plate.

### 3) Become a guardian

The more you learn about your local ecosystem, the better you will recognise potential or hidden problems that may not be obvious to the casual observer. You will naturally become not only a gatherer, but also a steward, finely attuned to subtle shifts and changes. And you will also begin to appreciate your potential



impact. Note any detrimental effects your own foraging habit may create and find ways to address these.

### 4) Respect protected species and habitats

Familiarise yourself with any endangered or protected species that (should) occur in your neck of the woods. Picking these or gathering at protected sites is highly illegal. ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/8](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/8)). Safeguard protected stands of rare plants and try to proliferate them by spreading their seeds.

### 5) Shun environmental pollutants

Avoid foraging near busy roads, on industrial sites or on intensively farmed land, where herbicides, fungicides, pesticides and fertiliser are routinely used.

### 6) Leave roots and barks alone

While picking seeds, leaves and flowers rarely causes any long-term damage, gathering barks or roots usually kills the plant. Minimise your impact by picking only the parts that occur abundantly, or (in the case of trees) where they are already dead or dying, or scheduled for cutting.

### 7) Don't be greedy

When gathering your wild dinner, always keep the whole ecosystem in mind. Never gather more than you need or can process, and never take all the plants in a particular spot. Other critters may depend on it – more than you do.

### 8) Eat invasive species

Help conservation efforts by making invasive plant species part of your diet.

#### Kat Morgenstern

is a nature teacher, writer and creator of the website Sacred Earth ([sacredearth.com](http://sacredearth.com)), dedicated to ethnobotany and ecotravel.





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# Giants of History

About ten years ago I stumbled across a Victorian photograph of Sherwood Forest's Major Oak – arguably Britain's most famous tree. I had seen it as a child thirty years previously, and remembered connections with Robin Hood and the sheer awe I had of standing beside its huge, cavernous trunk. I revisited and photographed the Major Oak in its present state.

That one photograph inspired me to travel Britain seeking out our largest and oldest trees and their stories, a project that became the book *Britain's Tree Story*, published by National Trust in 2011.

Since then, my passion for ancient trees has taken me around the world on an odyssey to photograph 100 magnificent

trees in 39 countries and record their stories and connected culture in a companion volume: *World Tree Story – history and legends of the world's ancient trees*. It is my great pleasure to share some of those stories with you here, in abridged form, in *Living Woods*.

– Julian Hight



Photo © Julian Hight

**Majesty**  
Nonington, Kent, England

A tree growing on private land at Fredville Park wins the prize for Britain's largest maiden Oak – that is, a tree that has not been pollarded, and retains its natural towering crown. The giant Oak (*Quercus robur*), fittingly known as Majesty, measures 12.2m (40ft) around its waist, and is hollow

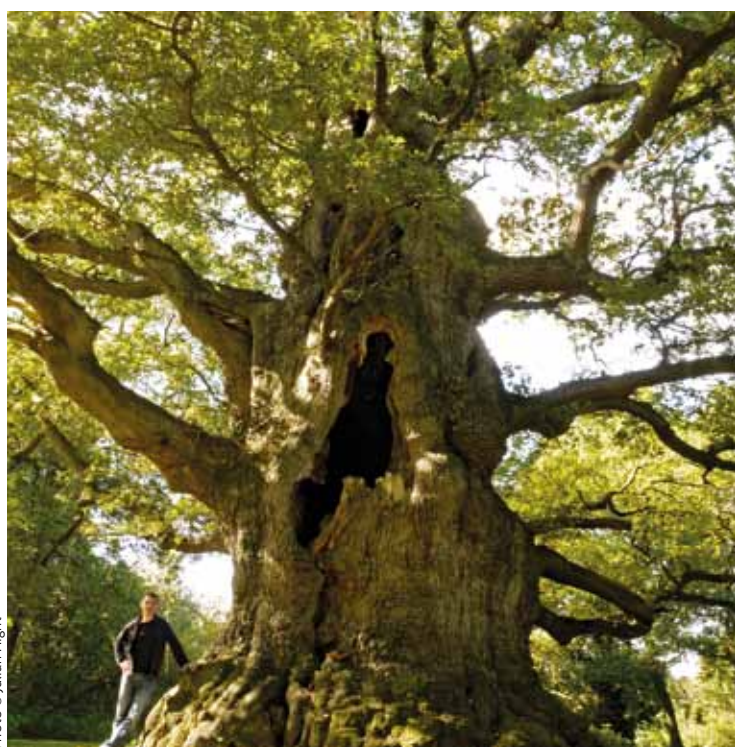


Photo © Julian Hight





throughout the length of its 18.8m (61.6ft) tall trunk.

One of the earliest mentions of the tree appears in 1793, when it was found to measure 9.5m (31ft), meaning it has grown 2.7m (8.8ft) in the interim. Most estimates proffer an age of 5-600 years on Majesty, but its vast size coupled with reports of its mature presence in 1554 – known then as the King Fredville Oak – surely confer a more senior status.

**Yamatoka Jindaizakura  
Jissoji Temple, Hokuto, Japan**

Japan's obsession and reverence for its flowering Sakura (Cherry Blossom) is unparalleled. Japan's earliest texts, including the eleventh century *Tale of Genji* – sometimes referred to as the world's first novel – mention the tree often, both literally and poetically. Yet the tree cult is rooted far deeper, stretching back



# LEGACY

at least to the prehistoric Yayoi period, and I suspect further still, possibly originating with the Jomon hunter-gatherers who reached Japan 10,000 years ago.

At Jissoji Buddhist temple in the north of Japan lives the largest girthed – and possibly oldest – Cherry tree in the country, measuring 12.8m (42ft) around its hollow black furrowed trunk, yet standing only a stunted 10.3m (33.8ft). Known as Jindaizakura

(‘divine generations sakura’) the Sour Cherry tree (*Prunus cerasus*), is thought to be 2,000 years old, and is said to have been planted by Yamato Takeru, a legendary early 2nd century hero traditionally considered to be Japan’s 12th emperor.

Jindaizakura’s delicate, fleeting, colourful blossoms set against an historic, wizened trunk perfectly embody the fragility and beauty of life against the backdrop of an ancient, honourable culture.

## **Elia Vouvon Ano Vouves, Crete**

Olives have been cultivated on Crete since the third millennium BC, an occupation that formed the basis of Minoan economic dominance in the Mediterranean for 1,000 years. Sometime after the demise of the Minoans and the Mycenaean who flourished and faded after them, a cultivated Olive was grafted onto the trunk of a Wild Olive tree in

the vicinity of Ano Vouves in western Crete. Hollow and twisted – a living sculpture – the tree appears to have been spun rather than grown.

In 1994 carbon dating offered an estimated age of over 3,000 years old. Graves in a nearby village dating to 700 BC confirm human activity in the vicinity during that period.

I measured the hollow girth at 7.42m (24.3ft). A superfluous statistic when you consider its great age.



Photo © Julian Hight





Photo © Julian Hight

**Methuselah**  
**Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, California,**  
**USA**

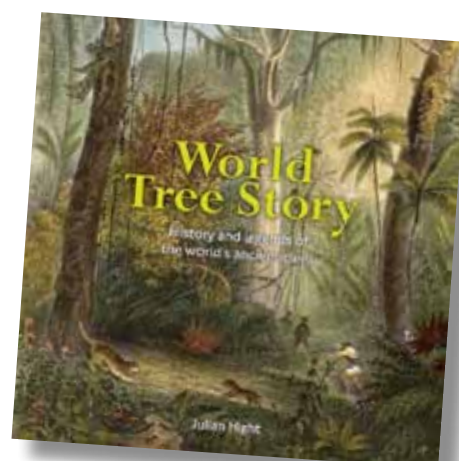
In 1957, Edmund Shulman – a professor of dendrochronology from Brooklyn – discovered by counting tree rings that one of the White Mountain Bristlecone Pines in California to be the oldest known living tree in the world.

Shulman named the tree after the oldest living biblical character, supposed to have lived for 969 years – a mere youngster compared to his sylvan namesake.

It stands in Methuselah Grove, 15.25m (50ft) high, and just one of its three main trunks survives, sustained only by a single strip of bark. A tree ring section cored by Shulman, left uncounted at the time of his death, was later confirmed to be from a tree 4,806 years old, and this stands as the oldest known living tree in the world, its whereabouts a secret. A walk through the Bristlecone forest is a walk through ancient history, a living history.

Abridged from **World Tree Story** – history & legends of the world's ancient trees by Julian Hight.

Signed copies of **World Tree Story** are available to order direct from the author at: [www.worldtreestory.co.uk](http://www.worldtreestory.co.uk)





# Head Set

**Carlton Boyce** gets a handle on axes and hymns his favourite make, Gränsfors Bruk

**T**he invention of the axe transformed the way primitive man practised agriculture. Wielding an axe enabled him to create pasture from forest, build shelters, cut firewood and defend himself from attack. The invention of the axe speeded evolution in unimaginable ways and it remains one of the few tools that has passed almost unchanged from the Stone Age to today: Oldowan man would recognise and be able to use a modern axe with few problems.

While the earliest stone axes were held in the palm of the hand, our ancestors realised that adding a handle multiplied power and added leverage. The axe head also underwent development throughout the intervening millennia and there is now a bewildering range of lengths, sizes, weights and shapes of axe, all designed to do a specific job. While you can still buy a generalist, jack-of-all-trades axe, it is unlikely to be the master of any.

## Good axes versus cheap axes

While a perfectly serviceable axe can be bought for under £10, I'd rather buy a top-quality axe that has been made with pride. The craftsmen at Gränsfors Bruk stamp their initials in the axe head, for example, so I know that Anders Strömstedt was confident enough in my Small Forest Axe to put his name to it.

For me, a lot of the pleasure I derive from working with and around wood comes from the way a tool feels in my hand. A well-balanced, beautifully made axe makes even the most tedious job – and splitting a winter's worth of kindling in an afternoon is a very, very tedious job – much more pleasurable. And because working with wood is a hobby for me, I don't need to keep an eye on the P&L spreadsheet.

Finally, because my three axes owe me about £250 in total (a not inconsiderable sum but far less than a decent small chainsaw), I take a pride in looking after them properly. Cleaning and servicing my axes connects me not only to the men who built them, but with others like my grandfather whose tools always stood sharp and well-oiled.

The staff in ProAdventure in Llangollen is knowledgeable and helpful and pointed me in the



©Carlton Boyce

**Gränsfors Bruk Selection, clockwise from top right: Splitting Maul, Scandinavian Forest Axe, Small Forest Axe, Wildlife Hatchet, Splitting Hatchet, Wildlife Hatchet, Hand Hatchet**

right direction when my axe fetish first started to develop. If you can't get to them in person, they also provide a very good mail order service ([www.proadventure.co.uk](http://www.proadventure.co.uk)).

Other reputable axe manufacturers include Wetterlings and Hultafors, as well as Fiskars for those on a budget.

## Choosing the right axe

An axe can be used to chop or split, pound or fell, and choosing the right axe will save you time and money in the long run. Chopping kindling is the first job most of us buy an axe for and the ideal axe for the job will be light and balanced in the hand, with a concave wedge-shaped head to help it force its way cleanly along the length of the wood.

Such an axe is commonly known as a hatchet and can be bought from your local DIY superstore for as little as £10 or as much as £80 for a hand-forged Swedish axe like the Gränsfors Bruk Splitting Hatchet I use. Whether you go for the budget option or the professional hand-crafted one, it is important to pick a hatchet that is well-balanced and light enough to be used single-handed.

Splitting larger logs calls for a similarly shaped head, but an axe or maul with more weight and a longer handle will enable you to deliver more of a punch -- nice when you're faced with a stubborn knot.





to fell a tree, there is real pleasure in wielding a small axe to chop down saplings or limb trees. I use the Gränsfors Bruk Small Forest Axe as it's easily transportable but heavy and versatile enough to be used for almost anything I'd want to use an axe for in the woods. If you're buying your first good axe, this is the one I'd recommend.

#### Care of the axe

I rub boiled linseed oil into the new handle of every axe I buy. I start by rubbing a small quantity in with my bare hands once a day for a week, then once a week for a month, and then once a month for a year. I top it up when it looks a bit dry, which normally means in the spring and autumn.

Simply removing tree sap from the head and wiping it over with an oily rag will go a long way to keeping your axe in good shape. Storing it in its leather sheath will protect your hands as well as the cutting edge.

You'll want to touch up the cutting edge from time to time, something a small file and a double-sided sharpening stone make very easy. Just take your time and follow the angle the manufacturer ground at the factory.

If you follow these tips then your axe will not only last you a lifetime, it will endure for generations. Imagine seeing your grandchildren use an axe you've bought and cherished for decades. Suddenly spending £100 on an axe doesn't sound so bad, does it?

Don't go for anything too heavy, though. Hitting a log at twice the speed gives you four times the power at impact and an axe that is too heavy to swing easily simply won't let you make the most of that principle.

In the same spirit, resist the urge to have a chopping block that is set too high; mid-calf height is ideal as it will let you hit the wood with all the force in your swing. Incidentally, it's also worth using a low-power strike initially; by starting with a relatively low-energy strike you'll save an enormous amount of effort because the majority of logs you encounter will split fairly easily. Save your full-power blows for obstinate logs, or days when you need to burn off some frustration.

My Gränsfors Bruk Splitting Maul was another significant investment that gives me pleasure each time I pick it up. The handle is fitted with a steel collar to protect it when I inevitably miss, and the poll (or butt, the blunt head of the axe that sits opposite the cutting edge) is tempered to enable it to be used as a hammer to pound a wedge in. (You should never use any other type of axe as a hammer as the steel is very strong but quite fragile and there is real danger of the head shattering, sending sharp pieces of metal flying through the air.)

Finally, a felling axe is designed to cut across the wood fibres rather than down them like a splitting axe. While most of us would choose a chainsaw



©Carlton Boyce



# Hold fast!

**Robin Gates** makes a traditional carpenter's holdfast from an ash branch

**T**he inherent strength of timber grown to shape has been exploited by woodworkers for centuries, from shipwrights to timber framers. The curved timbers of a ship's hull, tying planks together, and the arcing uprights of a cruck-framed building are more durable for being cut from the natural bends of boughs selected for purpose from the tree. In contrast, components which are sawn to curved shapes from straight-grained wood are prone to split where short grain comes to the surface.

Although some people continue to search out grown limbs in the forest, for the most part newer methods of construction have made the technology of grown timbers obsolete.

That said, a grown-to-shape branch from the woods offers a neat way of turning the tables on obsolescence and replacing a metal tool with a wooden one – by making a holdfast.

More versatile than a vice and quicker to set up, the hook-shaped holdfast is a work-holding tool used by carpenters since Roman times, and is traditionally forged in iron. It has a shank passing through a close-fitting hole in the bench, and a long curved beak which bears down on the wood.

The way a holdfast works is delightfully simple. When you knock it on the head with a mallet, the beak exerts force on the work, the work exerts equal force on the beak (according to Newton's 3rd law) and as it does so causes the shank to lean backwards in the hole. The leaning shank then jams between the hole's upper and lower edges. And that's it: holdfast, work, and bench are locked as one. A knock on the back of the shank loosens it and the work is freed.

To make a timber holdfast, find a straight bough of about 1 ½ inch (38 mm) diameter in the shank and with a branch of about 1 inch (25 mm) diameter emerging at 45 degrees to form the beak. Tough and shock-absorbent ash is well-suited to the purpose but hazel or any tough species will do.

Cut away the bark, going beyond the sticky green cambium before rounding with a draw knife or spoke shave. The shank of an iron holdfast is usually about ¾ inch (20 mm) diameter but considering timber is less rigid than iron a shaft diameter of 1 inch (25 mm) to fit a 1 1/16 inch (27 mm) hole will provide a solid equivalent, given a bench thickness of about 1 ½ – 2 inches (40 – 50 mm).



©Robin Gates

### **Selecting an ash cruck in the woods**

If you're of a certain age like me and find yourself using the 'old money' of Imperial measurements more than metric, you'll find an old halfpenny, which is exactly 1 inch diameter, an appropriate template for marking the end of the shank.

Having reduced the shank to within a few shavings of final size it's time to bore the hole to accommodate it, and the best tool for this job is the good old hand-cranked brace with a centre bit. The shavings spiral upwards like pencil sharpenings.

The reach of a holdfast allows it to clamp over a wide arc so positioning the holes isn't critical, holes almost anywhere are useful, but if you have a sweet spot on the bench for planing or sawing bear this in mind. Boring several holes in a row at, say, 12 inch (300 mm) intervals will enable you to clamp a long piece of timber with two or more holdfasts simultaneously. Remember, whereas a commercially made holdfast can cost from £20 upwards a timber





Cutting away the bark and sticky green cambium



Reducing the shank diameter to 1 inch (25mm) with a block plane



The beak holds the work piece secure for sawing, chiselling, drilling etc

holdfast is free and you can have as many as you wish to make.

For final shaping of the shank be guided by the hole itself, since friction between the two makes shiny high spots on the oversize shank, showing where to plane. Finally, cut the end of the beak to be parallel to the work surface when the holdfast is locked tight and canting backwards, so as to maximise its area of contact, and this tool is ready for work. A timber scrap under the beak prevents marking the work.

The holdfast is not confined to horizontal surfaces. Using holes bored in the legs or apron of a bench, it will clamp work vertically, too. And unlike a bench vice rooted to the workshop a holdfast transfers well to the outdoors for use on a shaving horse or trestle.

**Robin Gates** is a woodworker living in Herefordshire.



Using the holdfast to clamp a piece of ash for work with the draw knife



# Clifton 600 Straight Flat Spokeshave

The Clifton 600 Spokeshave's quality and ease-of-use impress **Dan Watson**

**S**traight out of the box, the new Clifton 600 Straight flat bottom ten-inch Spokeshave, made by Thomas Flinn & Co of Sheffield, looks like a quality item. In use it does not disappoint.

The iron is 3mm thick and adjustment to set the desired depth of cut and edge angle is very easy. As a green woodworker, I have often become frustrated with my carboot sale spokeshaves and deserted them in favour of a sharp drawknife. This tool though, is truly different, and after some fine adjustment it produced some lovely long, curly shavings.

Clamped in my shaving horse, I decided to test the Clifton on an old chair leg, turned on my pole lathe many years ago. To put it through its paces, my plan was to make some nice flat facets with the aim of working the round leg to a hexagonal shape. With the iron set to take thicker shavings at first, removal of wood was easy. As I drew closer to the finished dimensions, reducing the depth of cut resulted in a smooth finish with a polished surface

to the work.

Supplied almost shaving sharp, the iron is certainly keen enough to carry out most tasks, but edge aficionados may want to spend a little time on some extra honing. I was genuinely impressed with my first use of the tool and its performance from the word go. My next step will be to give it a quick hone and then strop the edge to a mirror finish before working more ash chair legs. I am also planning to try using it for some finishing cuts on my hand carved bowls.

In summary, an extremely nicely made tool, very easy to use, that gives a good quality finish. I am sure this Clifton Spokeshave will become a firm fixture in my tool kit. Highly recommended!

The Clifton 600 Straight Spokeshave was made and supplied by Thomas Flinn & Co, £85.56. There are also curved, convex and concave versions.

■ [www.flinn-garlick-saws.co.uk](http://www.flinn-garlick-saws.co.uk)

**Dan Watson's** skills encompass coppicing, bush crafts, hurdle making, bowl and spoon carving and constructing timber frames of green oak. He is the northern England agent for woodlands.co.uk.









# Stihl 2-in-1 EasyFile

**Dick White** trials a time-saver that's popular with professionals and useful for amateurs

**A**lthough this product has been around for a while, I had never really considered buying a Stihl 2-in-1 EasyFile, being reasonably content with the results I could achieve sharpening my chains using conventional methods and tools. However, I noticed that whenever the use of this tool came up in conversation with both 'professional' and occasional chainsaw users, their comments were almost always very positive. So, when I saw the EasyFile on demonstration (and special offer) in a local farm store, I decided to give it a go.

As one would expect from Stihl, the EasyFile feels solid, 'chunky' and well put-together, with strong plastic end parts (handles) linked by four solid metal guide rails plus the files themselves – two round files and one flat file. One of the 'handles' has a hinged section that swings open to allow the files to be turned or changed.

## Does the EasyFile live up to its name?

The first important point to note is that the file is directional. Unless you have it the right way round and right way up (i.e. with the lower of the two round files on the cutter and the flat file resting on the depth gauge in front of the cutter) then you will not get very far and might well damage your chain. But, there are clear 'this way' arrows on the handles as well as multiple reference marks to help you maintain the correct angle whilst sharpening. Keeping the file horizontal – assuming your bar is vertical – two or three firm but gentle strokes should be sufficient to 'dress' the chain. More strokes may be needed if the chain has not been maintained regularly, particularly the depth gauges. The big plus here is that because you are filing cutter and gauge at the same time, you only need to go around each 'side' of the chain once, rather than doing one circuit for the cutters and another for the depth gauges.

In no particular order, here are my thoughts on the pros and cons of the EasyFile:

- ◆ Some might consider it a bit bulky, but it is not particularly heavy
- ◆ All-in-one item, no need to carry round file, flat file, file holders & file gauge
- ◆ Limited range of file sizes available, although in practice these are the ones that the vast majority of users will need
- ◆ With traditional round file & handle, it is easy



All the tools for the job: EasyFile, stiff brush, plastic pipe, pen



to turn the file during use to ensure even wear. This is still possible with the EasyFile, but more fiddly

- ◆ Normal round files can be used but the flat file is a lot thicker than conventional flat files and does not have a tang. These special replacements are around twice the price of normal ones
- ◆ Easy to use and to maintain the correct filing angles
- ◆ Quicker than conventional method
- ◆ At RRP of £39, it is not cheap, but for users for whom time spent maintaining their tools is 'lost' time, then it will soon earn its keep. Also, compared with even the most basic of automated sharpeners, it is good value, produces better results and there is no need to remove the chain from the bar

#### Conclusion

Although often described as being for the inexperienced user, I know plenty of professional foresters who use the EasyFile; not necessarily because they produce better results, but because of the time factor – they do both jobs at once, so in the time it would take to sharpen the cutters with a conventional round file, you can do this and do the depth gauges too with the 2-in-1.



**Dick White** is a self-employed woodland manager and is also woodlands.co.uk local manager for Cornwall & West Devon

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# A New Chapter for

A much-loved, thriving woodland enterprise flourishes under a new family's ownership, by **Emily Charkin**

**W**e're on a wild goose chase,' accused our 10-year-old son from the back of the van. Five years earlier, Dan and I and our three children had left our comfortable lives in East London and set off to find a woodland where we could live, work and create a space for adults and children to make things together. We had looked at a hundred different woodland sites in Devon, Yorkshire, Wales and even Northern Spain. We were beginning to believe that our son was right when, via some friends, an email arrived from the Yarrow family announcing their intention to sell Wilderness Wood. Our friends said, 'It is written in your names.' The Yarrows, after much interrogation, thought so too. We agreed a price and on April 22nd 2014, the Yarrows and the Morrishes toasted the beginning of a new era for Wilderness Wood.

I'm an educational researcher, who prefers to make things happen, and my husband, Dan, is an architect, who prefers to build. Our most recent project, before moving to Wilderness Wood, had been constructing a timber house for a woodland kindergarten in Dorset, working with volunteers of all ages, described in the 2013 autumn/winter issue of *Reforesting Scotland*.

But nothing had really prepared us for the realities of looking after a place like Wilderness Wood: land, forestry, Christmas trees, buildings, public toilets, kitchen garden and the businesses and community around the woods. We have been very lucky to benefit from the Yarrow wisdom – they still live locally – particularly on how to maintain their excellent continuous cover forestry approach to this 62 acres of productive chestnut coppice and conifers. (Chris Yarrow's book *Thirty Years in Wilderness Wood* was reviewed in *Living Woods* issue 40.) But we have also been finding our own ways of doing things that reflect our particular skills and priorities.

Our family divides its time between the woods and the wider world. Dan is able to devote most of his time to working at the wood while keeping the wolf from the door with a few small-scale architecture projects. I'm able to work part-time at the woods while doing a funded PhD about self-build and education. Our three children do flexi-schooling, which means they go to school part-time so they have time to help too.

The Yarrows shared the workload among family



May Day celebrations

[www.wildernesswood.org](http://www.wildernesswood.org)

**Emily Charkin** is the current owner of Wilderness Wood. Contact: [emilyanddan@wildernesswood.org](mailto:emilyanddan@wildernesswood.org)

members, employees and volunteers, many of whom became friends. Instead of employees, we work with independent enterprises based at Wilderness Wood and our active membership. They contribute time, money and talent towards looking after the wood and bringing it to life with projects and activities. In exchange, we share the economic, social and educational rewards of working in the wood. By working, eating, celebrating, camping out together, we share skills of self-reliance and create a relatively free and convivial space for our and other people's children to grow up in.

The resident enterprises are currently Lucy's Little Forest School, Andrew Coates' Woodland Products and Rachel's Wilderness Café. We are keen to hear from other complementary businesses that might find a home at Wilderness Wood. We also have an active membership of around 70 families and individuals - from our village, Hadlow Down, and from as far afield as Scotland, Holland and France. Members pay an annual subscription and meet for stewardship events and holiday working parties that include

# Wilderness Wood

New zip-wire platform takes shape



work, food, story-telling and music.

Other volunteering families and small groups arrive from all over the world, through the Wwoofing exchange (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, [wwoof.org.uk](http://wwoof.org.uk)). So far we have welcomed a French family with teenagers who built our pizza oven and performed a stand-up comedy cabaret act and a dozen German teenagers who put in a new reed bed and weeded the Christmas trees. We look forward to meeting the Japanese family due this autumn. And we're keen to hear from schools or families who would like to come and spend a fortnight or more helping out at the woods.

We have kept the woods open to the public, experimenting with a Pay As You Feel approach rather than the admission charge from the Yarrow era. We continue to sell Christmas trees – both our home-grown ones and trees from other local fields – and have established a popular Christmas craft market on the busiest weekends.

But as well as looking after what we have taken on from the Yarrows, our chapter at the woods is about creating beautiful new buildings from our own timber with the involvement of people of all ages. We have recently gained planning permission to build eight off-grid chestnut cabins for longer stays and have devised a sponsorship scheme for families to help build one of the cabins, which they then sleep in. We also plan to build new workspaces, including a Meeting House that will be a beautiful structure for licensed ceremonies. Each year, Wilderness Wood hosts about five weddings or celebrations with live music, catering by the Wilderness Café, camping, use of the house, and artisan touches by our members.

The Yarrow family remains stalwart for Wilderness Wood and for us. It's meant a lot to hear Anne Yarrow defending us in a heated village planning meeting or to share lunch with Chris Yarrow after he's helped us mark up trees for thinning and swept the yard of leaves which he cannot bear to see accumulate. The longer we are here, the more we appreciate just how much they achieved.

After an incredibly steep learning curve over our first two years here, we know that our 'wild goose chase' has ended in the right place. And that with hard work, a following wind and the growing involvement of our members, we can take Wilderness Wood, its trees and people, on to a flourishing next chapter – or perhaps even another book.



©Adeline Royal

Members build first cabin

[www.videoproductionar.com](http://www.videoproductionar.com)



## BOOKS

# Gripping Guide

### **The Green Wood Companion**

by Barry Mays

eco-logic books, rrp £20

review by Mike Poole

**T**he *Green Wood Companion* is not an ordinary book. It occupies a unique position, a mix between a guide and an encyclopaedia. At first this appears an odd approach, but it provides a very useful one-stop shop. For example, *The Green Wood Companion* explains about the history of the axe in chapter 14, lists suppliers where you can buy a good one in chapters 11 and 12 and then teaches you how to sharpen it in chapter 13.

Another good example of what this book is trying to do is chapter 18 on wood burning. On one hand it gives us lots of helpful information about selecting, harvesting, seasoning, storing and burning wood and then it jumps straight into Celtic log rituals and inter-war log burning poems.

I found that the author dots about from topic to topic with no seemingly clear route and this organic approach is part of the delight of the book. As such it makes an intriguing volume to leave lying on the coffee table or in the smallest room in the house. Dipping into the book for a few moments to read one of the short chapters is inspiring and provides you with a springboard for more research or to get on with a woodland task.

While the topics meander, the author does not waffle. The chapter on dyeing, for instance, is just 60 words short, but it provides a valuable list of how to obtain a range of colours from different species. This succinctness is a blessing in the modern era when many authors fluff up their prose. The content is rich and engaging, although if you are looking for an in-depth tutorial, this book does not attempt to provide it.

It is difficult to summarise the topics that form the 32 chapters. They range from ash to astrology, burning to bodgers and coppicing to crafts. It seems that you get several short books in one and it is fair to say that if you are enthusiastic about the great outdoors then this book contains many topics that will be of interest.

Of particular note are chapters 9 and 10, which list the uses of different woods and vice versa. Many of us have a predominance of just a few species in our woodlands and these lists provide inspiration for the







abundance of items we can create with their wood. For instance, I have an abundance of Norway spruce and had never considered using it to make the slats for the window blind that I planned for my office.

If I were to make one small criticism about *The Green Wood Companion*, it would be that the chapter on the properties of wood by species is not as comprehensive as it could be. Ten properties of wood (e.g. bendability, decay resistance, annual girth increase) are listed. Some species such as the highly useful oak are categorised in all ten lists but other common species such as Norway spruce are only featured in one.

The author is clearly passionate about being closer to nature. He left his pressured city job in his mid-forties for a more wholesome life in the West Country where “being a Craftsperson is not a way of making a good living – it is a good way of living”. It is fitting that he spends time in the middle of the book discussing the psychological benefits of working intimately with wood.

Just under a quarter of the book is devoted to a compendium of woodland terms, which on its own makes a very useful encyclopaedia. Reading through the list quickly improves your woodland knowledge (e.g. I now know that drovers used to plant “way finders” so that they could find their way in poor visibility).

*The Green Wood Companion* will be particularly useful for UK based woods men and women as the lists are UK-centric, covering UK species, suppliers and associations.

Which chapter did I enjoy the most? It was probably chapter 20, where I learnt twenty useful things to do with wood ash. This was a great find because I did not know that I needed to benefit from this waste product. Now that I have stumbled upon these useful tips I am enthusiastic about putting them into practice.

*The Green Wood Companion* is not a replacement for green wood tutorials (e.g. if you wish to learn the basics of steam bending, the *Companion* does not cover this). It is less about teaching how to do tasks (e.g. coppicing) and more to do with the roots of such practices, why you would want to undertake them and which species you would want to interact with when you do. The author, Barry Mays, does not believe that woodland crafts are the reserve to bygone eras; he is passionate about their being part of the future of the way we live. By writing the *Companion*, hopefully it will help bring this about by making us aware of green wood principles and provide inspiration for the many ways you can get out there and work your wood. Be warned, though, that this book may kindle more inspiring projects than you have time for. That’s what it has done for me.



## Excerpt from *The Green Wood Companion*

### The shaving horse

This ingeniously simple and indispensable device has been used by craftsmen for centuries. It has stood the test of time. The basic design remains virtually unchanged, and is still in daily use all over the world in one form or another, by tens of thousands of craftspeople.

Essentially a foot-operated quick-release wooden clamp, the shaving horse is designed to hold a piece of wood securely, while leaving the operator, who sits astride the device (as astride a horse), with both hands free to work the piece of wood with an edge tool, usually a drawknife. The basic structure is simply a horizontal plank of wood 4 to 5 feet long, supported by three or four legs and standing approximately chair seat height (17 to 18 inches) off the ground, with a second H-shaped structure pivoted vertically through the plank (or around it in an H-shape) and pivoting through the plan. When this H-shaped structure is pushed forwards by the feet of the operator sitting astride, the top pushes firmly down onto the wood that is being worked on, in front of the operator, performing an impressively efficient and strong clamping function.

Although two different versions of the shaving horse evolved, they essentially remain the only ones used today. The oldest version, with official records dating back to 1556, (although even earlier references would suggest circa 1485), is the Continental, sometimes referred to as the Mule, or Dumb-head design. The second variant, known as the English shaving horse, seems to have appeared as recently as the late 18th century, although it may have been used in one form or another earlier than that but not recorded.

### The Continental

The Continental started its life as a sort of table with a slot cut in it to accommodate the vertical shaft running through it, attached to the table with a pivot pin. Above the table, a horizontal chunk of wood known as the dumb head was attached to the top of the shaft to grip the wood being worked on, while a horizontal footrest attached to the bottom of the shaft below the table. Depending on the height of the table, this style of shave horse was used either with the operator standing at the table or sitting on a stool. Later, the continental was adapted to a low, long slim bench (similar to the English design) so the operator could conveniently sit astride it. It is this design that we now use today.

### The English

Instead of a table, the English shaving horse started out as a low, long, slim bench with a vertical



'H-shaped' shaft, consisting of two pieces, one either side of the bench (rather than going through it), with a pivot pin holding them to the bench. Two more horizontal pieces were added to the 'H', above and below the bench, to provide the clamp and foot pedal respectively. The operator sat astride the bench.

Records seem to suggest that whilst the continental was (and still is) the preferred design in Europe, the English version is the one most widely used within Britain and America, probably due to the self-levelling and even pressure synonymous with the design of the clamping structure.

Irrespective of the version used, this wonderfully effective device, with its instant clamping and unclamping function is an all-time classic piece of kit, used by coopers, wheelwrights, chairmakers and the like, for shaping a billet of wood with a drawknife.





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# The Brexit Effect

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## Judith Millidge considers what Brexit may mean for British forests

**B**ritain's woodlands are threatened by disease, we face an energy crisis and the political landscape is in a state of upheaval. Sound familiar? It's 1973, the year the UK entered the EEC. In 1975 Labour prime minister Harold Wilson initiated the country's first referendum on EU membership, and 17.3 million people voted for it, interestingly, almost exactly the same number that voted to leave just over 40 years later.

Listening to the news on the day after the referendum, one could have been forgiven for thinking that the world had turned upside down. Panic and shock reigned, at least among the journalists. Confor is to be congratulated as one of the few institutions to send out a steadying press release within hours of the result.

### Changes in the Air

Anyone involved in forestry will take a long view of events both arboreal and political, but it is worth asking what Brexit may mean for woodlands and forestry. Many of the trees planted in 1973 are now mature specimens, surviving without political interference. Yet it would be unwise to be too simplistic. Two main questions arise: how will British forestry regulations and grants change and will Britain continue to influence European forestry matters?

Domestic politics have been rearranged and there is a

*World leaders in tree-planting ceremony at G7 summit in Japan this year*

new minister of state, Dr Thérèse Coffey, MP for Suffolk Coastal, who, back in 2011 supported government plans to sell off the public forest estate.

Stuart Goodall, Chief Executive of Confor, has welcomed Dr Coffey's appointment, saying, 'Shaping the future of our rural economy and communities after Brexit is an enormous task and Confor looks forward to working closely with Dr Coffey on this issue. We are encouraged by her answer to her first parliamentary question relating to forestry, which makes clear that current funding arrangements for the rural economy will be honoured.

'Another big area will be forestry and flooding. The benefits for planting more trees in upland areas to reduce downstream flood risks are now well-recognised and as Dr Coffey's portfolio also includes flooding, we will continue these important conversations about the enhanced role forestry can play.'

Many people think that EU membership was of huge benefit to Britain's environment: our beaches and rivers are cleaner and more strictly regulated than 40 years ago and our wildlife is better protected. Britain's influence within the EU on forestry matters is well respected. Will this now decline or will we somehow maintain our links? What will be the impact of Brexit on forestry, environmental regulations and grants within the UK?





### Early Expert Opinion

Shortly before the referendum, *Forest Policy and Economics Journal* published an article entitled, 'The nature of Brexit. How the UK exiting the European Union could affect European forest and (forest related) environmental policy'. The authors, from the European Forestry Institute, interviewed nine leading EU experts and academics and asked them what impact British exit would have on forestry policy. The consensus seemed to be that British forestry experts were highly respected and punched above their weight in EU forestry matters. Their presence, it seems, will be missed. (The article can be read here: <http://goo.gl/kzYq3O>.)

Finally, the British economy has undoubtedly entered a phase of uncertainty, which will affect the lives of everyone. The value of the pound has declined and bank interest rates can go no lower, so rather than lying almost dormant in a bank, perhaps money would be better invested in land, specifically, woodland. Angus Hanton, MD of Woodland Investment Management said, 'Devaluation should make woodlands relatively more attractive to buy for several reasons – firewood is more valuable in relation to other fuel prices which have already risen and timber from abroad has become more expensive, so that home grown timber should be worth more by comparison. . . . Put another way, the real value of money in the bank will reduce, whilst the value of a real asset should increase or at least hold its value.'

So it may be that one unforeseen consequence of Brexit for anyone who owns a woodland is that money really will grow on trees.

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# Bigger, Better, More, Joined Up

Britain's historic maps provide a unique resource for University of Stirling research into woodland planning, by **Judith Millidge**

It is a truth universally acknowledged, at least among tree lovers, that Britain's ancient woodland is a treasured and irreplaceable natural resource which we diminish at our peril. Ancient woodland is defined as land that has been forested continuously since about 1600 (1750 in Scotland) – a period when mapping is first considered to be reliable. Its value as an ecosystem is incomparable: soils and plants which have been in place for centuries provide a rich terrestrial woodland habitat for all manner of vertebrates, invertebrates and plants, including 232 which are endangered.

More immediately visible, the lumps and bumps of an ancient woodland are often indicative of historic earthworks, ditches, or pre-industrial workings, and provide important evidence of land use across the centuries. Old maps often provide useful evidence of the extent of ancient and historic woodland and how its use may have changed over time.

Researchers at the University of Stirling are working on a project in which both mapping and the ecological diversity of ancient woodland have proved critical. The WrEn project (Woodland Creation and Ecological Networks) aims to assess the impact of past land use change on current biodiversity in British woodlands. Scientists are using ancient woodland as a baseline to establish how successfully flora and fauna flourish in these environments, and to compare it with the diversity of species within woodlands that are much younger.

Woodland cover is slowly increasing – it now stands at about 13% in England, almost double what it was 40 years ago – but research is showing that newer woodland habitat is more valuable if forested sites are linked in some way. The WrEn project is attempting to assess how to focus limited resources: we need bigger and better quality woodland that is more joined-up, but which of these features is most valuable?

The Stirling research is a long-term, large-scale 'natural experiment' created by identifying woodlands that were planted over the past 160 years. Recently-digitised historical maps show the ways in which land use has changed since the 19th century. Woodlands established in that period vary in size and are often sited on what was agricultural land – land which was previously completely unoccupied by woodland species and which therefore acts as a blank canvas. By examining the scale, scope and connections between these 'man-made' woodlands, researchers can see how past actions have influenced the populations of animals and plants we observe today. Dr Kevin



1570 map of Hampshire showing fieldwork.

Watts from Forest Research, the research agency of the Forestry Commission and lead author of the study, explained: "The combination of a long history of woodland planting in the UK, coupled with comprehensive historical mapping, provides an excellent, possibly unique, opportunity to develop such experiments."

Dr Elisa Fuentes-Montemayor, a researcher on the project from the University of Stirling, said: "So far we have surveyed over 100 woodlands in Scotland and England for a really wide variety of wildlife including plants, invertebrates, bats, birds and small mammals.

"Now we are in the process of identifying what features of the woodland or its surrounding environment are most important. We hope to use this information to guide policy and practice so that we can ensure that when we plant woodlands in the future we are doing so in a way most likely to benefit wildlife."

WrEn is a collaborative research project between the University of Stirling, Forest Research and Natural England (working in partnership with Defra, Scottish Natural Heritage, the National Forest Company, the Woodland Trust and the University of Derby), with additional sponsorship from Tarmac. To read more about the project, visit the website [www.stir.ac.uk](http://www.stir.ac.uk) and search 'ancient woodland'.



# EVENTS AND NOTES

## Wise About Woods Courses

Are you a new woodland owner? Want to get to grips with the fundamentals of woodland management? The Royal Forestry Society (RFS) is hosting a series of one-day workshops that will be right up your street. Focussing on woodland management, timber grading, measurement and conifer identification, the workshops are taught by respected experts and take place around the country. The first one, 'Essential guide to caring for your wood' taught by Prof Julian Evans, takes place on 21 September at RFS Hockeridge Wood in Bucks, so book quickly. [www.rfs.org.uk](http://www.rfs.org.uk)

## Woodland Wedding Request

Gillian Broome emailed us with a call for help. 'I have recently got engaged and we are looking for woodland wedding venues with a barn or space for a marquee. I was wondering if any of your readers might know of anything not too far from Manchester in either Cheshire, Lancashire, Yorkshire, or Derbyshire that would be suitable.' Can we assist? If so,

email [nancy@livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk](mailto:nancy@livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk) and we'll put you in touch.

## Seed Time

The Tree Council's Tree Year Campaign highlights 23 September (the autumn equinox) to 23 October as Seed Gathering Season. It's a time of encouragement for everyone, particularly school children and families, to gather seeds, fruits and nuts and grow the trees of the future. Look into [www.treecouncil.org.uk](http://www.treecouncil.org.uk), where there's inspiration, materials, advice and interactive maps to locate events near you.

## New Woodland Awards

Is your woodland within The National Forest? You may want to know that, as part of the 25th anniversary celebrations of the foundation of the forest, a trio of awards is being introduced to recognise top quality work within its domain. The three categories cover key aspects of work:

- Award for creation of new woodlands ten years or younger
- Award for woodland management older than ten years

- Award for community woodland management

Time is short to submit your scheme for the award – 16 September is the deadline. Application forms and more information can be found at [www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org). An award ceremony will take place in late autumn.

## Free Hedgerow Tree Pack

While you're on the site, take a look at their offer of free hedgerow trees. If you are a landowner within The National Forest with extensive hedging that can accommodate 45 trees spaced out to grow on as significant hedgerow trees, you should make application before the end of September. This generous scheme provides up to 50 free hedgerow tree packs, to be collected in November and planted out this winter through a partnership of the National Forest Company, the Woodland Trust and Northwest Leicestershire District Council. Contact the National Forest Company on 01283 551 211 or email [bfairbrother@nationalforest.org](mailto:bfairbrother@nationalforest.org).

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# Thoreau's Hide and Seek

**E**very American humanities student knows of a philosopher named Henry David Thoreau who lived in the mid-19th century in the town of Concord outside of Boston. On Independence Day, 4 July 1845, when he was 28 years old, Thoreau removed himself from society to the shores of Walden Pond where he lived simply, in nature, and wrote about his thoughts and the things he observed in his masterpiece, *Walden*.

Thoreau was an abolitionist. He was fired from a teaching job for refusing to beat his students. He was arrested for non-payment of taxes, an incident that inspired him to write the essay *Civil Disobedience* which in turn inspired Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King. He lived an ascetic – you might call it minimalist – lifestyle. He was very nearly Buddhist. When you add up all the ways in which the bones of Thoreau's 19th century life jibe with right-on modern sensibilities, he is almost buried under the avalanche of our approval.

I want to unearth him.

Thoreau was a bit of a crank, happiest when he was in opposition to his own friends. 'I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude,' he wrote from the cabin on the land a friend had lent him. In an age when great explorers were discovering the world, it pleased Thoreau to write, 'I have traveled a good deal in Concord.' He rejected ordinary comforts as unnecessary encumbrances. 'Simplify, simplify.' He turned his measuring surveyor's eye to everything from pantaloons to pickerel. He described ice-cutting and squirrel behaviour in detail. He was determined to know beans.

But, at a time when the young country was feverishly exploiting its abundant natural resources and taming its frontiers, Thoreau could also write, 'In wildness is the preservation of the world.' He was one who started the conversation that we continue today about valuing and preserving what is wild.

If you haven't read *Walden*, please do, someday. A man who built his own cottage at the side of the pond with a borrowed axe and returned it sharper than he'd received it, and who could also write, 'Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads,' is a fine companion for those of us drawn to woodlands and wild places.

– A B McCrae



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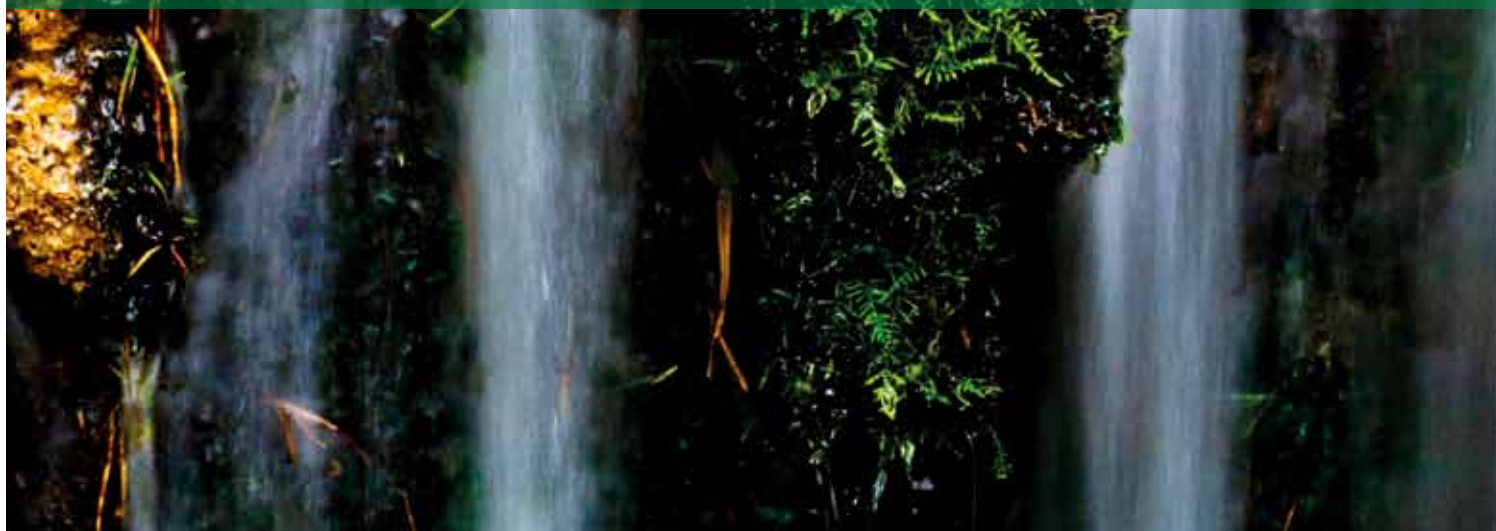
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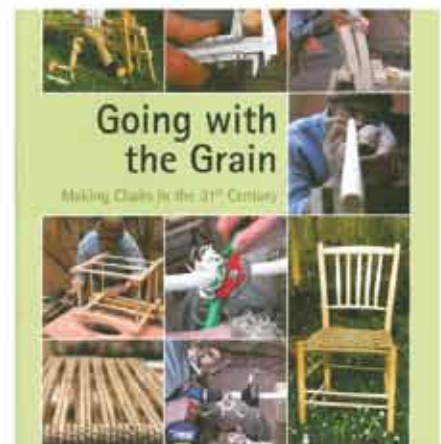
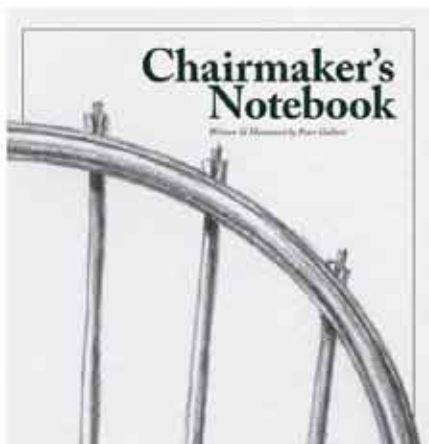
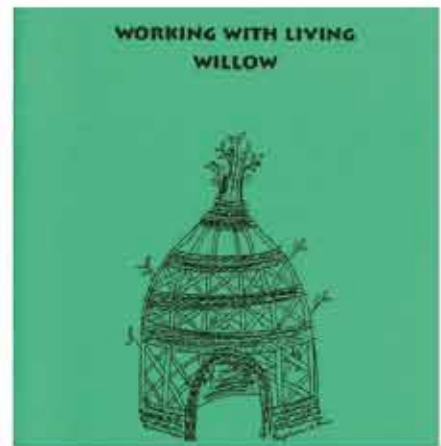
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