



[About](#)

[Events](#)

[Blog](#)

# Birmingham Roots

**Issue 19 | Belated New Year Edition | 20/02/25**

**Birmingham TreePeople's Monthly Newsletter**

**Planting, protecting, and promoting trees and the urban forest**

Hello TreePeople!

We skipped last month to find new ways of delivering our monthly newsletter updates, as it was a bit... old fashioned. That's why our brand-new [Birmingham Roots](#) will be delivered directly to your inbox – no more downloads and website links (although there is always an option to read in your browser), so we can reach more of our [urban forest volunteers](#) directly! We want to be able to let you know about upcoming, current, and past events with ease, and we appreciate your ongoing patience during this process. We hope you're ready for this edition; it's a big one (we wanted to add some photos, but MailerLite got a bit upset).

We hope our wonderful TreePeople had a fantastic start to this year. There will be a lot of changes coming for Birmingham TreePeople (BTP) in 2025, as we transition into a new phase of the charity's existence. BTP wouldn't have gone this far without its dedicated urban forest volunteers, regular supporters, and generous sponsors, so we want to take another opportunity to thank you once again for being a part of this incredible journey with us, allowing us to move to new heights.

Sadly, as part of this transition, we must announce the resignation of several of our original Trustees on the Board of Birmingham TreePeople, who will now be handing over to the newer Trustees and staff members, for an employee-led model for the non-profit organisation. Tonia Clark, Simon Needle, and Ian McDermott are stepping down to advisory roles, after all the hard work they have done to create the foundation of

BTP and our community-led approach to urban forestry through volunteering. However, on the other hand, we have the pleasure of revealing that Trustee Deanne Brettle will be taking over the role of Chair. Congratulations to Dee, as she takes over from Tonia, who has done a fantastic job thus far.

Our volunteers may have noticed our lack of free monthly training sessions as well, and that's because it's being reviewed, passing from Ian onto Tonia, Steve, and Lawrence. The training programme will be back very soon! In the meantime, if you've seen our socials and previous emails, you'll also know that Lawrence is running full steam ahead with the new Orchard Programme, providing new orchards to places like Minworth, as well as free grafting sessions for all ages.

BTP are thrilled to have such a diverse network of urban forest volunteers in and around Birmingham, and we are grateful to have you with us during these times of change and progression. We look forward to what the green future holds.

## 65 Trees in The Zephaniah Forest

The last of [The Zephaniah Forest](#) trees have been planted alongside the [Benjamin Zephaniah Family Legacy Group](#), as well as many community groups and individuals around Burbury Park, to commemorate the legacy of Benjamin Zephaniah. On 23rd January we planted more trees with Millicent, Benjamin's brother, as well as returning volunteer Ebony, and several other amazing local people! Millicent bought a marker to write her family's names on the trees some of them planted together before Christmas. The rain never stops us, and Benjamin always makes the sun shine on our group right at the end.

On 6th January we planted with [The Refugee and Migrant Centre](#), as well as the Woodlands Team and Millicent Springer. Several volunteers from this day returned for the final planting day on 13th February, the day before Valentine's Day, where Qian Zephaniah, Millicent, Cabinet Member for the Environment Councilor Majid Mahmood and fellow [Birmingham City Council](#) (BCC) representative Pat Whyte, a myriad of winning poets (see below), local volunteers and the BCC Woodlands Team duo Leon and Nick. The final planting day saw speeches from Charley McDermott, Millicent Springer, and Qian Zephaniah, as well as poetry recordings of beautiful words dedicated to Benjamin filmed by Josh Neicho from [Local Storytelling Exchange](#).

Thank you to everyone who helped us or been a part of this along the way, particularly BCC Woodlands Team members Leon and Nick and others, a few incredible guys from

the Parks Team, such as Ranger Penny who has helped us with several of these plantings. Their help has been paramount, as well as Operations Manager Matt's organisation and logistics. Thank you to our sponsors [Tree for Cities](#), [Veolia](#), BCC, and [Frank Matthews](#), as well as every single group or individual that helped us reach our fundraising goal to make this project happen.

There are now 65 trees in The Zephaniah Forest, dedicated to Benjamin Zephaniah, in what we and the Benjamin Zephaniah Family Legacy Group, as well as [Burbury Park Community Forum](#) and [Birmingham Empowerment Forum](#), shall ensure will be a growing and lasting legacy for a legend in his hometown.

## Trees Please, Poetry Please?

The three judges for the Trees Please, Poetry Please? competition have compared their shortlists and decided on winners for 65 trees in The Zephaniah Forest. Winners have been notified and we want to hold a celebration in the park in the coming couple of months. Our judges were:

- David Springer - Internal Judge, representing Benjamin Zephaniah Family Legacy Group as Benjamin Zephaniah's brother and fellow artist.
- Charlotte McDermott - Internal Judge, representing Birmingham TreePeople with an MA in Writing, as Communications Officer.
- Zakariye Abdillahi - External Judge, representing the wider poetry community as an active poet and artist.

The 65 chosen poems, on the themes of Benjamin and the Nature that he loved, will be paired with one of the 65 trees planted in Burbury Park as part of The Zephaniah Forest. The poems will be physically printed and attached to the trees, poets will be encouraged to come and replace their work and care for the tree, but they will also be archived on TreePlotter with The Zephaniah Poetree Trail (part of the Tree Trails), as well as ultimately displayed on The Zephaniah Forest webpage with images updated over time. This gathering to adorn the trees will take place in April, to coincide with celebrations for Benjamin Zephaniah Day on the 12th of April. Keep an eye out for the date coming soon, and congratulations to the winning poets, and every single poet who took part in Trees Please, Poetry Please?

## Street Tree Survey: We're Back!

Nina Griffiths is back with her team of street tree surveyors, after we won the Community Environment Fund 2024 Award last year for the [street tree survey](#) project, and the short break! The start of February saw surveyors in Tyseley, Hay Mills, Rubery, Rednal, Quinton, Kingstanding, as well as local areas for regular surveyors, checking the newly planted trees. The dates can be found on the Treevents page, but surveyors must be signed up as urban forest volunteers, and as street tree surveyors, to receive the training and equipment, as well as attend sessions. Nina's surveying mailing list receives the exact locations directly, so please make sure you have signed up following these instructions and have emailed/messaged Nina to confirm session attendance, before coming to survey.

## The Hindsight of Storm Éowyn

### **L2 Arb student with Birmingham TreePeople correctly diagnosed dangerous tree that professionals ignored.**

Will McGee has been a dedicated urban forest volunteer for Birmingham TreePeople for several years, contributing towards the Street Tree Survey Project, attending the free monthly training sessions, and coming to various green activities. Will's crowning achievement so far, however, would be taking all this one step further by completing the Level 2 Arboriculture course, becoming a qualified Arborist.

During Will's training programme, students were taught how to correctly survey and assess trees, and he did so on a particular tree that has been

After assessing the tree and determining it suffered from rot, Will contacted Wilton Shopping Centre with the unlucky news of his survey. The Centre passed it onto Tesco, whose private tree consultant two years ago ultimately decided the tree was "not an immediate hazard". Thus, the trail ended here, and the tree remained large and unstable in a populated area. Luckily, the tree wracked by Storm Éowyn didn't fall on any bystanders, due to the severity of the weather (nobody was brave, or mad, enough to face the outdoors), but the story could've ended quite differently. It also could've ended two years ago, when

unearthed recently by the stormy weather:

'Now, sadly, the landmark copper beech tree that stood at the main entrance to the Wilton Shopping Centre has been toppled by Storm Éowyn - making it the second famous Cork tree to be knocked by storms in five years.'

The tree was actually a mature common beech, around 25m tall. Read the article [here](#).

Will's assessment was first relayed.

Perhaps it is a testament to the training, but it is surely a testament to the application of Will's Arboricultural knowledge in the field, and the sadness of losing trees in being proven correct. Sometimes we can't always be satisfied with just being right, but preventing hazards and dramatic losses of trees are what Birmingham TreePeople are all about.

## Minworth Orchard Planting

A new orchard was planted on 11th January 2025 in Minworth, alongside [Minworth Action Projects](#) (MAP), [Friends of Stephens Pond & Berryfields Orchard](#), and [Sutton Chase Heritage & Ecology](#). The crisp January morning consisted of the community coming together to plant 22 new fruit trees, opposite The Boat Inn on Old Kingsbury Road, for everyone to care for and enjoy for the foreseeable future. We planted Pear, Plum, Mulberry, Quince, and a variety of Heritage apples.

The cold weather didn't prevent the locals coming to help, nor were spirits low – the energy was palpable, and we would like to thank each individual of the many wonderful volunteers that came to plant these trees! Thanks to Lawrence Weston, Trustee Coordinator for Orchards, as well as our generous sponsors [The Tree Council](#), as well as Frank Matthews, and of course the community groups we've worked with to get this orchard in the ground. Now it is time to look after it, and watch it grow.

## Treemembrance Plantings

### Handsworth Park

On 9th January 2025, our first tree planting of the year took place, which

### Mossy Bank Park

The Mossy Bank Treemembrance Planting on 16th January saw Angela

was a wonderful commemorative occasion for the [Treemembrance](#) Programme. We were terrifically lucky with the weather; it was sunny and bright all day whilst planting in memory of Natasha Wade, who sadly passed away last February.

The day of the planting would have been her 50th birthday, and a Liriodendron Tulipifera was planted by her husband, David Wade, in her honour and remembrance.

Family, including one of her sons and David's mother, and friends clustered around the tree to plant it in a great spot, next to the perimeter of the cricket ground in Handsworth Park, between a Wych Elm and a Sycamore. David had some of her favourite music playing and read aloud one of her incredible poems. Afterwards the group went on to have tea in the Sons of Rest café nearby.

Michael Currie, Team Leader at Handsworth Park, had set up the planting, and Rob and Sam from his team did everything else on the day to enable the Liriodendron to have its best possible planting place. Thank you to all who made this possible.

Poultney remembering her parents, Patricia Ann and John Bryan Bower, with the ceremonial planting of a Copper Beech. The [Friends of Mossy Bank's](#) Chair was present, Shiela, Keatley, who was a wonderful help throughout. The grandchildren blessed the tree by planting bulbs at the base, to thrive alongside the tree dedicated to their grandparents.

The Birmingham City Council Parks Team was brilliant once again in digging the planting hole, and assisting the family respectfully. Thank you everyone who made this planting happen, including Julianne, Trustee Treemembrance Coordinator.



## Stirchley WASSAIL!

We had a fantastic evening at the [Fruit & Nut Village](#) (FNV) annual Stirchley Wassail! From Morris dancing by [Ragged Oak](#) folk dancers, stalls with tree themed activities from [Birmingham Botanical Gardens](#) (BBG) and [Hipkiss & Graney](#), and a procession to wake the spirits of the trees (including haiku hanging, storytelling, and singing a special apple tree song by [Misfits Music](#)), this amazing event was one to remember.

Our stall with Julianne and Charley had lots of attention, where plenty of young people and children (and their parents) added to our activity banner of tree drawings and phrases, to wake the trees in the spirit of wassailing! Wassailing is an Old English and Anglo-Saxon tradition, tracing back to druids and 'white witches', who brought the power of community to the trees by singing songs to wake them from their Winter slumber in the Springtime. We hang toasts on the trees, but in this case poetry from BBG's lovely stall, in a procession filled with instrumental noise.

Other collaborators were [Birmingham Brewing Company](#) (where it was hosted), [Incredible Surplus](#), [Juliet Fry](#), BCC, [Artefact](#), [Loaf](#), and [Highbury Orchard Community](#). Thank you to FNV for inviting us and hosting this incredible community event of over 200 people. We look forward to coming back next year!

## BCU Go Green Week

We had a wonderful few hours of tree planting on Friday 30th January with [Birmingham City University \(BCU\) Volunteering Team](#)! We teamed up with BCU students (image by Shorya Panwar, centre) for the University's [Go Green Week](#), and the squad joined Matt and Charley - with support from BCC Woodlands Team's Leon and Nick - to fulfill some of our targets towards the [Urban Forest Masterplan](#) (UFMP) for Birmingham.

The new trees have been planted in Newtown as directed by the UFMP's key performance indicators: targeting low canopy areas of Birmingham, to create fairer tree equity for these neighbourhoods and their communities. This means we want to raise the number of trees in each ward to 25% canopy cover, for the people's fairer access to trees and their many benefits.

Thank you to the students and staff from the Volunteering Team at BCU (especially Sam), Matt our Operations Manager for arranging and hosting the session, and the Woodlands Team at BCC for helping us towards these fantastic goals, whilst simultaneously contributing towards Go Green Week! What a perfect way to do so, if we do say so ourselves...

Green Regards,

**Birmingham TreePeople**

Planting, protecting, and promoting  
trees and the urban forest

You received this email because you  
signed up on our [website](#).

[Unsubscribe](#)

