

Planting trees with 9Trees CIC:

The stages involved



Introduction

Before we plant any trees anywhere, there are many tasks, policies and procedures that we must first follow. Adherence to these procedures ensures that we are planting the right trees in the right places, with wonderful landowners who are committed to protect the trees for at least 50 years. After this due diligence and vetting is complete, we can get on and plant, helping to bring back biodiversity, tackle climate change, and create local meaningful jobs in the countryside sector.

A quick overview of 9Trees: formation to the present day

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- 9Trees was set up in 2019 by co-founders Michael Cunningham and Ash Kent and registered as a Community Interest Company in March 2019. The creation of 9Trees coincides with the establishment of the following protocols:
 - A business plan detailing modes of funding and sponsorship, with a review period set to every 6 months
 - A protocol for communication between the 9Trees team, landowners, contractors and sponsors
 - A protocol for ecologists to follow during site visits
 - A planting plan encompassing seedling establishment (0-5 years) and aftercare (5 - 50 years) Recommendations (50 - 100years)
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The stages to plant a tree: From initial funding to planting and aftercare

These stages are summarised in the following flowchart  Flowchart - Overview of 9Trees processes

1. Funding / sponsorship

- a. Individual subscription (paid monthly or annually)
- b. Individual gift
- c. Business sponsorship
- d. Business carbon balancing
- e. Business gifts for team

2. Sapling acquisition (through seed or nursery stock)

In order to collect tree seed to market or supply, and be within The Forest Reproductive Material (Great Britain) Regulations 2002, the following six steps need to be carried out:

- a. Written permission is needed from the landowner.
- b. Site visit to locate, confirm and assess source material, followed by a minimum 14 day period where they may require access to the source material for inspection.
- c. Collection of seed from source. [W Future thinking when saving seed and raising trees.docx](#)
- d. Tree seed germination (using a polytunnel)

- e. Growing on trees for 1 - 3 years
- f. Thinning & rootstock control of saplings

3. Communication with the landowners

After establishing contact with a landowner, we send them an overview describing what we do for landowners and our expectations of the landowner.

[9Trees Landowner Overview 2021 V2](#) [What we do for Landowners](#)

4. Determining if the land & landowner is suitable

This process is highly important and involves 9 sub-stages, as detailed in this document

[Process for Landowners draft.docx](#) . This process can be broadly split into the following stages:

a. Arranging a site visit

We have various email templates to help make this process consistent and streamlined, including:

- Requests for basic information (site location)
- Requests for a site visit
- Arranging site visits
- Reminder of site visits (if there has been no reply to the site visit request in over 2 weeks)

b. Conducting the site visit

This is a very important step where the ecologists evaluate the suitability of a given site & that the existing habitat is not more valuable than planting a woodland.

This involves:

- Visiting the site & GPS [Field Procedure Epicollect5 Handguide.docx](#)
- Surveying the land [9Trees Site Assessment Procedure_v1.1.docx](#)
- Creating reports for the landowner to read with assessment implications (if planting is possible or not and how it will impact the site, and possible mitigation if planting is not possible). This includes communication on:
 - Any fences that need repairing
 - Any access issues
 - Sponsor visiting/ allocation of trees

[9Trees Site Assessment Report Template_v1.0.docx](#)

[9Trees Site Assessment Implications_v1.0.docx](#)

5. Informing the landowner of our decision:

- a. For unsuitable sites, an explanation is given with an apology, recommendations on how to make the site suitable, and a statement of hope to participate in the future
- b. For suitable sites where trees are not immediately available, an explanation for the delay is given, with a rough time scale for when planting might commence.
- c. For suitable sites where trees are available, an email is sent with the site planting plan. After this is signed off, an email is sent with a suggested date/ time for planting.


6. Tree planting

Trees are planted according to the following protocols:

- a. Ordering trees (we choose native broadleaf species, read our rationale [here](#))
- b. Ordering stakes and guards
- c. Tree planting by either contractors or in house tree planters used

7. Site maintenance

We understand that planting the trees is not the end of the road. After planting, it is essential to manage and monitor the site properly and to mulch the trees so that we maximise their chance of survival. This involves:

- a. [Annual visits in years 1-5 to carry out eco-matting](#). To engage the local community and our subscribers, we use volunteers for this.. For an overview of the volunteer opportunities, read [this](#).
- b. Replanting of any dead trees in the first 3 years / watering if too dry
- c. Ecological surveys annually from 1-5 years
- d.  50 years Woodland Management plan from 9Trees v1

Request access - ecological [9Trees Woodland Management Plan Template_V2.0.docx - Google Docs](#)

8. Sending out certificates to individuals and companies

These certificates confirm the purchase of trees but cannot be used to gain carbon credits. This is in line with 9Trees' intention to prevent a culture of offsetting which, we believe, can lead to the continuation of 'business as usual' behaviour.

9. Promotion for companies (in the case where the trees are funded by a business subscription)

This involves marketing for companies around Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Environmental, Social and Governance criteria (ESG), and carbon neutrality.

10. Publicise our cause to engage the next level of landowner

- a. Maximising [media coverage](#) to raise awareness and encourage individual and company sponsorship
- b. [Team Green Away Day](#) coordination
- c. Attendance of festivals and events, conferences and networking opportunities
- d. Promoting businesses who support us to sign up to our [affiliate programme](#) and thereby raise awareness of what we do.

11. Aftercare

Although, as stated in Site maintenance, tree care is especially important at the sapling stage (years 1-5), it is important that we continue to monitor the site after this too. We do this through:

- a. Ecological surveys every 10 years from year 5
- b. Maintenance visits every 10 years from year 5

Into the long-term: the future plan and legacy of 9Trees

Ash and Michael retire in 2077 (50 years from now), leaving a flourishing company to carry on throughout the UK and possibly worldwide. From the trees we plant today, we hope to have woodlands in every county throughout the UK and Europe for our sponsors, and indeed everyone, to enjoy. Excitingly, landowners are also leaving us sites in their will and we will have first refusal to purchase sites. This means that our minimum commitment of protecting the trees for 50 years is very likely to be exceeded. We hope that our legacy is therefore a restoration of biodiversity, a tangible step to tackling the climate crisis, and the creation of meaningful jobs in the countryside sector that benefit communities and wildlife alike.

Further reading [The Complete Growth Stages Of A Tree \(treetriage.com\)](https://www.treetriage.com/)
[Lifecycle of a Tree: How Do Trees Grow - Woodland Trust](#)