



Strong Roots

*Growing British Tree Nurseries*

**27/10/2025**

**Strong Roots** is a collaboration between:



“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, so the time to act is now. Delay risks undermining both our environmental objectives and the economic potential of this sector”

*Arit Anderson*



# Introduction to the project

**Confidence**  
**Capacity**  
**Certainty**



Year long project, covering England, Scotland & Wales



## Purpose

To recognise the importance of domestic tree production  
To produce a set of recommendations for GB Governments  
To advocate on behalf of GB tree nurseries

# Why grow trees in Britain?



£2.6 billion contributed by the sector to the economy through tree planting and management<sup>1</sup>



22,000 jobs supported and growth could increase this by 9,900<sup>1</sup>



4.1 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide already locked up in UK forests<sup>2</sup>

1. Oxford Economics. (2024). The economic impact of environmental horticulture and landscaping in the UK. 16. [The Economic Impact of Environmental Horticulture and Landscaping in the UK | Oxford Economics](#) [Accessed 22 January 2025]

2. Forest Research. (2024). Forestry Statistics 2024. [Forestry Statistics 2024 - Forest Research](#) [Accessed 22 January 2025]



# Producing more home grown...

- Contributes to Government policy commitments for the environment & climate change
- Better tree supply resilience
- Reduces potential to introduce pests & pathogens
- Reduces cost to public purse of combating outbreaks
- Protects the existing horticultural sector



# Scope

Great Britain

All types of tree production

All sizes of tree nursery

*Not a small ask!*

Out of scope: species choice







# Method

Literature review

28 tree nurseries, seed  
suppliers, industry experts  
interviewed

23 tree growers surveyed  
14 tree importers surveyed

## Evidence review

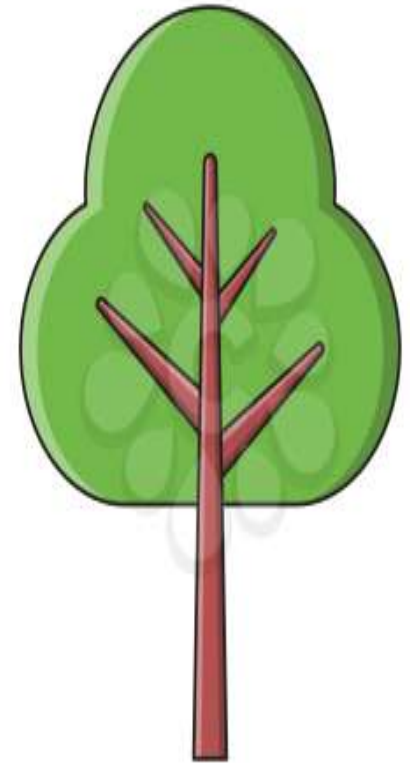
- Identified key themes to explore more at interview
- Allowed early recommendations to be formed for feedback and reconstruction through the process

## Interviews

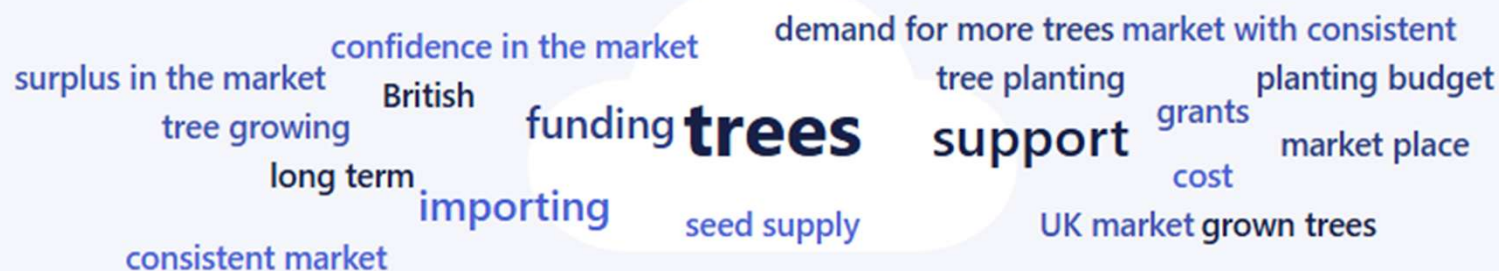
- Confidential interviews with tree nurseries, industry experts, seed suppliers
- Explored further the key themes identified, shaped the recommendations more.

## Online surveys

- Gaining quick and wider input on the themes identified as key issues in interviews
- Allowed insight from tree importers too

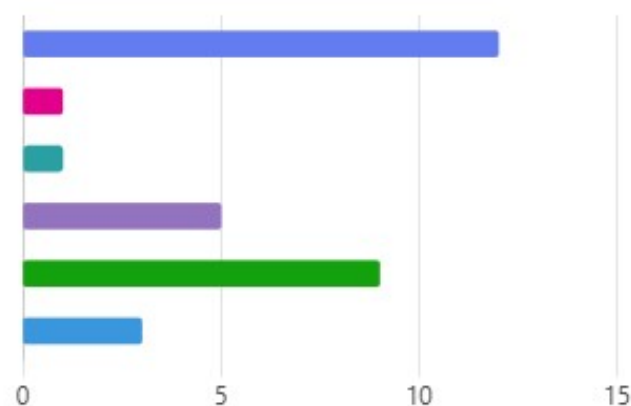


7 respondents (35%) answered trees for this question.



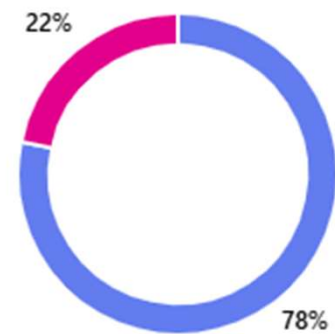
5. Have you accessed any of the following grants?

● Tree Production Capital Grant (Defra)	12
● Seed Sourcing Grant (Defra)	1
● Tree Production Innovation Fund (Defra)	1
● Harvesting and Processing Grant (Scottish Government)	5
● None accessed	9
● Other	3



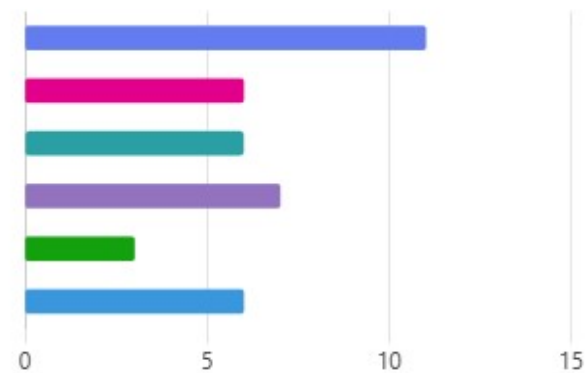
9. Have you invested in automation?

- Yes 18
- No 5



10. What do you think is limiting uptake of automation?

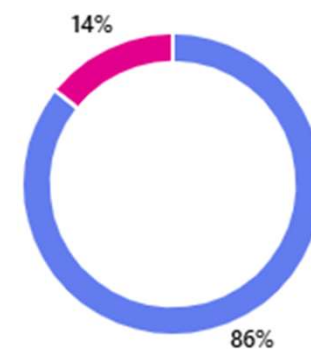
- Cost 11
- Evidence for return on investment 6
- Not available for my needs 6
- Nursery is not large enough for automation 7
- There are no limitations 3
- Other 6





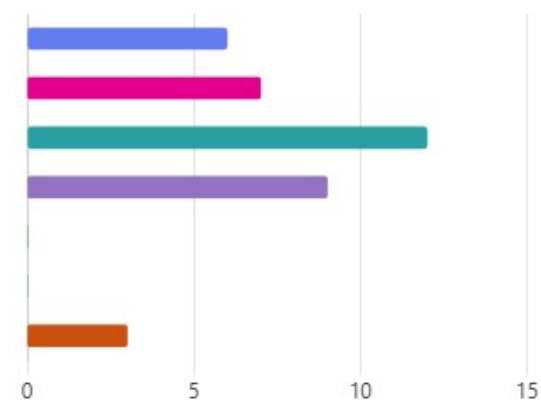
12. Do you find that seed supply can be a limiting factor for growing trees in the UK?

- Yes 12
- No 2



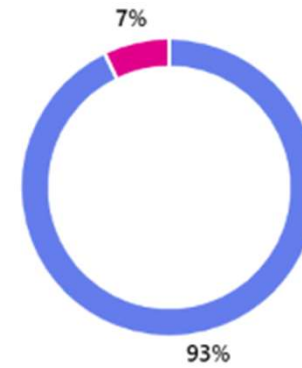
13. What do you think could help boost seed supply in the UK?

- More registered seed stands 6
- Better maintained seed stands 7
- More seed collectors 12
- More seed processing and testing facilities 9
- Better understanding of the UK's genetic resources 0
- Unsure 0
- Other 3



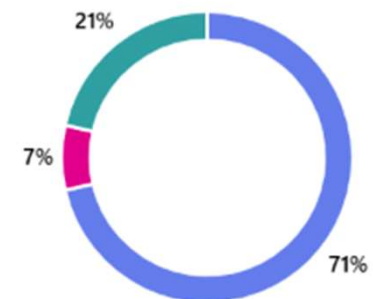
14. Can demand forecasting be a challenge?

● Yes	13
● No	1



16. Do you think there's a skills gap in your sector?

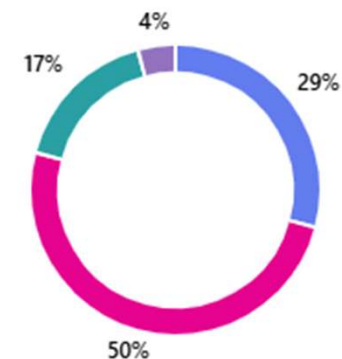
● Yes	10
● No	1
● Other	3



# Importers survey

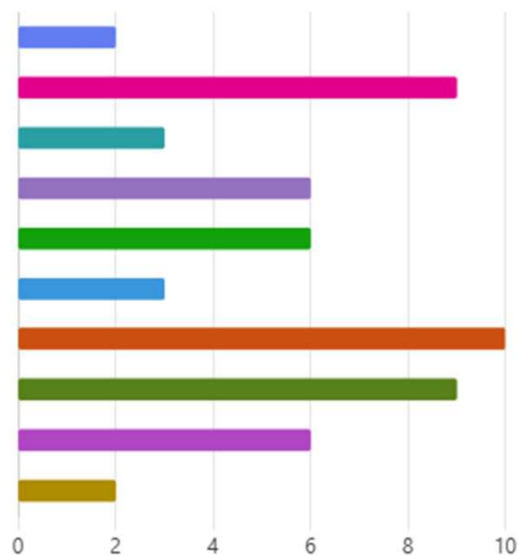
6. What type of trees do you import?

● Forestry	7
● Ornamental	12
● Fruit and nut trees	4
● Other	1



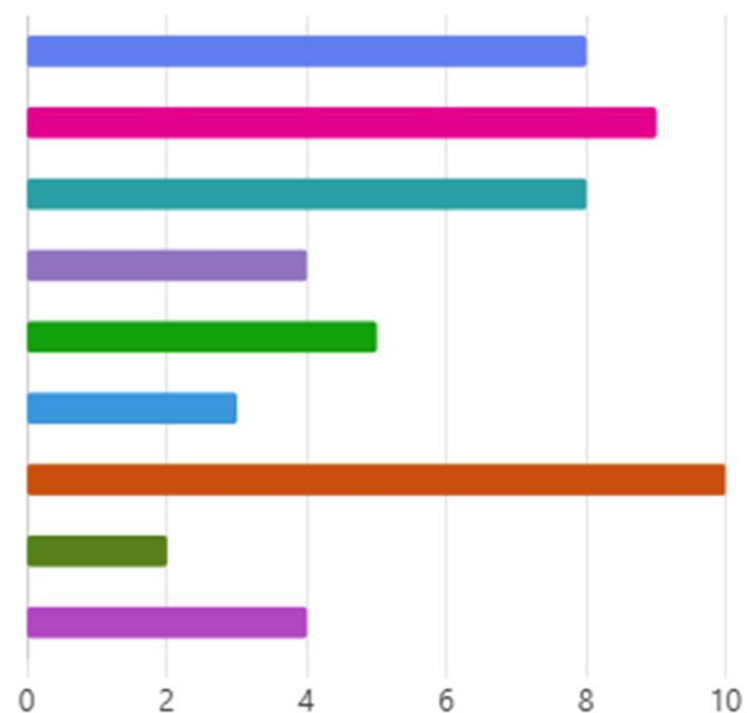
8. What size of trees do you import? (you can select multiple options)

● Plugs	2
● Whips	9
● 1/4 standards	3
● Feathered	6
● 1/2 standards	6
● 3/4 standards	3
● Standard trees	10
● Heavy standard	9
● Very large mature trees	6
● Other	2



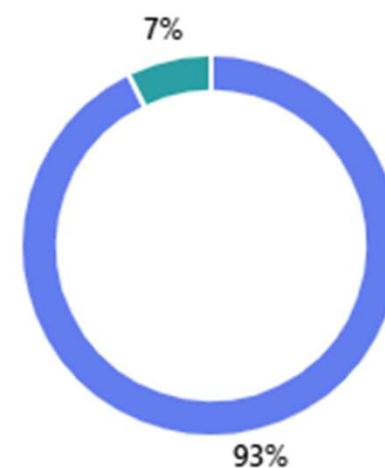
9. Why do you import trees? (you can select multiple options)

● Price - it's cheaper	8
● Greater availability of species	9
● Great availability of sizes	8
● Quicker	4
● Easier	5
● Customers demand it	3
● Availability of specialist growers	10
● Availability of new cultivars	2
● Other	4



10. Would you buy UK grown trees if they were available?

● Yes	13
● No	0
● Other	1



7 respondents (54%) answered UK for this question.



# KEY FINDINGS





# Strong market confidence and demand for British trees is vital for growth

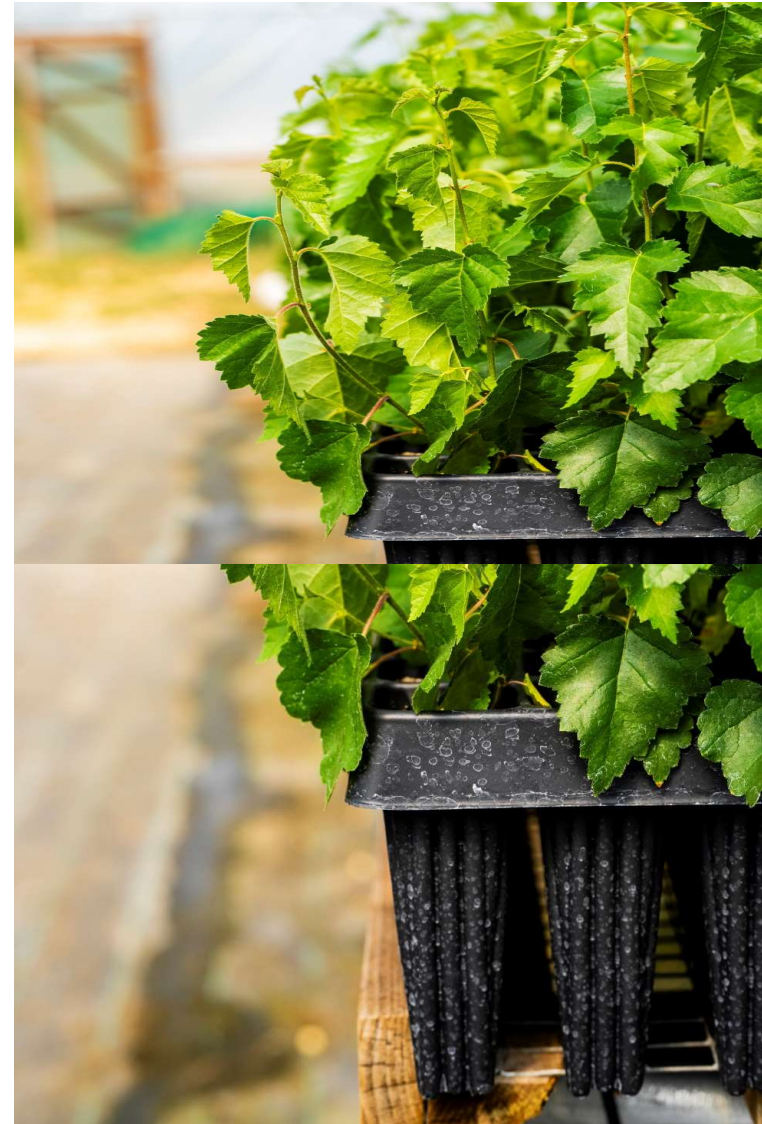
93% of nurseries said demand forecasting is a barrier

- Essential for forestry nurseries
- Highlighted number one barrier
- High forestry capacity
- Scottish Government cuts have impacted sector
- Created further uncertainty & lack of confidence

*‘A consistent UK market with  
consistent long-term funding to give  
confidence in the market to grow  
more trees’*

*‘Stability and confidence in the  
marketplace’*

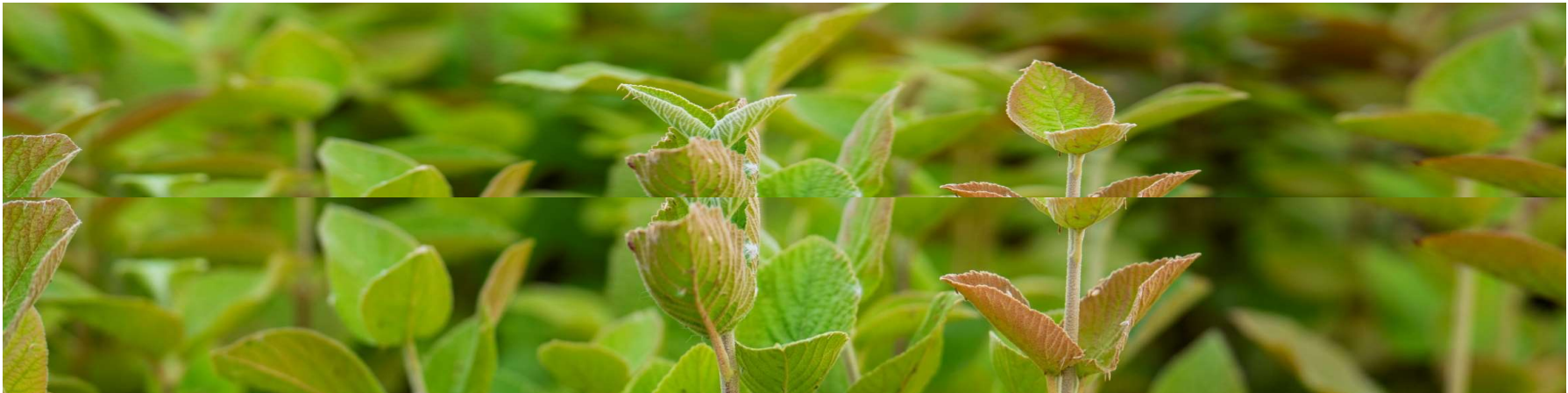
*‘Certainty of demand and planting  
numbers’*



# Demand for homegrown stock

All importers surveyed would prefer UK grown stock if it was available

- 83% of nurseries would use a British grown logo



# Seed supply can be limited due to natural fluctuations and poor market confidence

86% of nurseries said seed supply can be a limiting factor

- Demand forecasting also an issue
- Not always storable
- Some species and provenances commercially unviable
- Seed stands lack commercial viability



# Britain lacks a rootstock production sector

- Breeding often occurs in other European countries
- Mother tree collections are held for scion, but rootstocks remain largely imported.





# Tree production grants have aided production of *forestry* saplings but need to be expanded

Significant investment has been made in England but future uncertain

- 71% of tree nurseries accessed grant support
- Need to include non-forestry trees
- Issues with ‘confusing’ the market





# Labour and skills gaps prevent expansion of the sector

- Big concern for amenity growers
- 71% of forestry and 86% of fruit, nut and ornamental nurseries
- Known from various horticultural reports, especially an issue for hort production



# Research and innovation are essential to increase production efficiencies

- Sector not large enough for innovation
- Products get stuck in the ‘valley of death’
- 78% nurseries had invested in automation
- Grants need multiple quotes









# Community tree nurseries face financial and regulatory barriers

- Crucial for species and provenances which are less commercially valuable
- Government grants are inaccessible, and others are a postcode lottery







Kickstarting an action plan and  
commitments from Defra, Welsh  
Government and Scottish Government



# Top five strategic recommendations

1. Establish a GB Tree Procurement Unit
2. Conduct a feasibility study on what percentage of imported material could be grown in Britain
3. Develop an action plan for productive and ornamental trees
4. Establish a tree production research group with research institutions
5. Create and promote a logo for British-grown trees

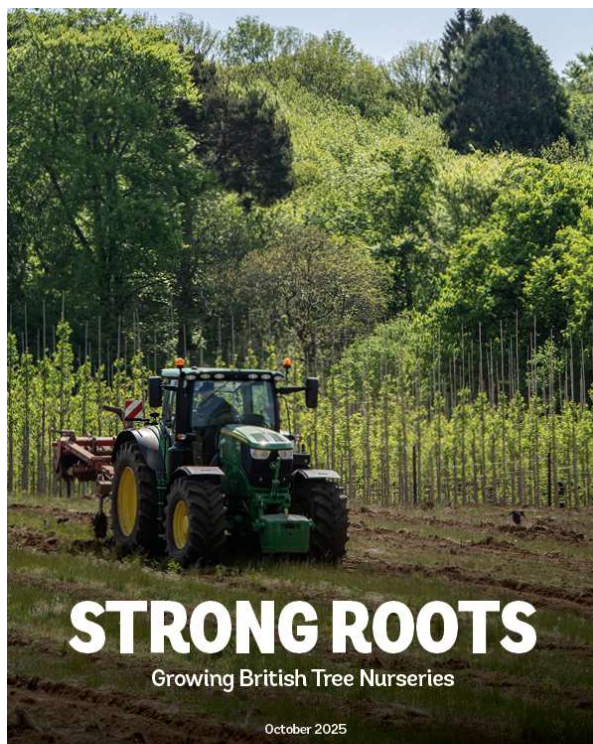


# Changes for growth in the short & medium term...

6. Increase alignment between tree supply, demand, and planting grants.
7. Support landowners to contract grow trees when using government planting grants.
8. Publish regular and clear data on imports of woody stemmed species, such as trees, shrubs, topiary, and hedging.
9. Commit to the establishment and management of seed sources
10. Sensitive revisit seed collection procedures on protected sites, including SSSI, to open the genetic resources of these sites.
11. Revise the current outdated seed provenance zones.
12. Support competition and diversification of seed supply. and future skills needs.

# Changes for growth in the short & medium term

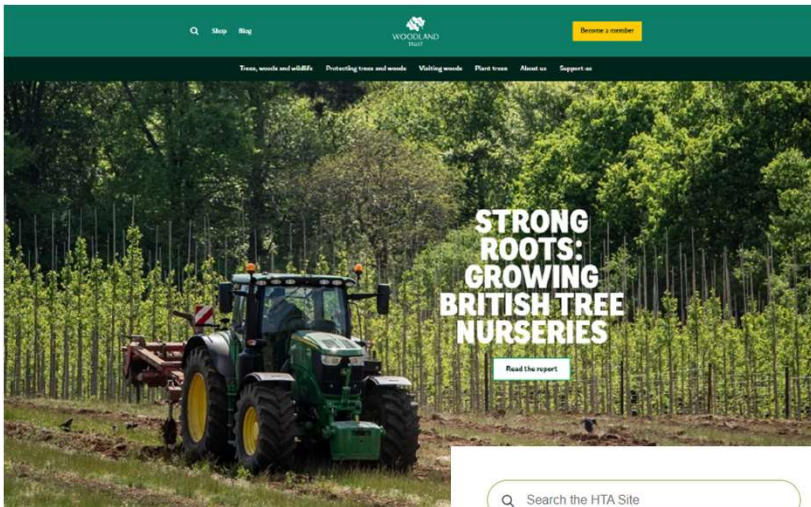
- 13. Aid uptake of automation.
- 14. Ensure courses and apprenticeship opportunities meet current and future skills needs
- 15. Embed tree production across the national curriculum as part of horticultural education.
- 16. Increase tree production skills using publicly owned facilities.
- 17. Launch a project on how impacts of climate change may affect tree production.
- 18. Provide accessible government funding for CTNs and small nurseries.
- 19. Commit to sustained funding to support CTN networks.



Full report – English & Welsh  
Executive Summary – English & Welsh







Trees are essential to sustaining biodiversity, mitigating climate change, and enhancing public wellbeing. They improve air quality, provide habitats, store carbon, reduce flood risk, and support local economies. In 2023/24, Britain planted over 20,000 hectares of new woodland, the highest in 35 years, yet meeting future planting targets will require a dramatic increase in domestic tree production.

That's why the Strong Roots project aimed to:

- explore the key barriers to domestic tree production
- identify solutions to increase availability of homegrown trees
- produce evidence-based recommendations for improved governmental support for the sector.

The report applies to Great Britain and involves the collating of existing evidence, two online surveys, and interviews. It was a collaboration between the Horticultural Trades Association, National Trust, and the Royal Horticultural Society.

#### Benefits of British-grown trees

The tree nursery, planting and management sector is a vital contributor to the economy.

[About Us](#)
[Committees](#)
[Develop Your Business](#)
[Events](#)
[HTA Memberships](#)
[National Garden](#)

[HTA | Develop Your Business | Strong Roots](#)

# Strong Roots: Growing British Tree Nurseries

Trees play an essential role in sustaining biodiversity, mitigating climate change, and enhancing public wellbeing. They improve air quality, provide habitats, store carbon, reduce flooding, and support local economies. In 2023/24, Britain planted over 20,000 hectares of new woodland, the highest in 35 years, yet meeting future planting targets will require a dramatic increase in domestic tree production.

The Strong Roots project, a collaborative project involving the Woodland Trust, Horticultural Trades Association, National Trust and Royal Horticultural Society, explored the key barriers to domestic tree production and identified solutions to increase the availability of homegrown trees, producing evidence-based recommendations for improved governmental support for the sector.

[Get involved](#)
[Gardening](#)
[Shows](#)
[Gardens](#)
[Learn](#)
[Science](#)
[Shop](#)

[About](#)
[My RHS](#)

[Become a member](#)

[Science](#)
[Mains 2 Rains](#)
[Daffodil Diaries](#)
[Research areas](#)
[What's on](#)
[Sustainability](#)
[Industry Roundtable](#)
[Science team](#)

## Help Great Britain grow vital trees for the future

[RHS Science](#)

[14 Oct, 2025](#)

[Back](#)





















**Grown in Britain**

1,311 followers  
2d •

+ Follow

Grown in Britain welcomes the Strong Roots report.

We support the [Royal Horticultural Society's](#) report, highlighting the need to provide greater security and resilience to those in the tree production supply chain.

Movement of plant material is one of the key ways that pests can spread and Grown in Britain has been instrumental in setting standards of biosecurity in the sector through the roll out of the [Healthy Certification Scheme](#).

Our ability to make UK supply chains more resilient can be improved by making them more secure.

Read the full report here: <https://lnkd.in/d4YY4tzA>

#StrongRoots #Biosecurity #TreeNurseries



**British Association of Landscape In**

13,108 followers  
5d •

BALI supports the Strong Roots report – a united call for action to improve tree production.

BALI's Head of Policy, [Amy Cobbett](#), joined sector leaders at the launch of Strong Roots: Growing British Tree Nurseries. The report was produced by [The Woodland Trust](#), [Horticultural Trades Association](#), [National Trust](#), and [Royal Horticultural Society](#).

The report calls for increased investment and support to strengthen domestic supply chains, create skilled jobs, and improve the nation's climate and biodiversity goals.

With many BALI members growing, planting and maintaining trees every day, we proudly support these recommendations to champion sustainable, high-quality landscaping across the country.

Read more <https://lnkd.in/gj2d5W3X>

#BALI #StrongRoots #BritishTrees #Landscaping #Biodiversity #TreeNurseries #ClimateAction #Pollination



**Barcham Trees PLC**

7,072 followers  
5d • Edited •

Strong Roots Report

Today, Barcham Trees was invited to join sector leaders at RHS Garden Wisley, for the launch of the Strong Roots Report: Growing British Tree Nurseries.

Our Managing Director [Warren Holmes-Chatfield](#) and Sales Director [Ellen Thurman-Carvey](#) were invited as they contributed to the research for this important work, produced by [The Woodland Trust](#), [Horticultural Trades Association](#), [National Trust](#) and [Royal Horticultural Society](#).

Collaborated on by industry experts and scientists, this report provides undeniable statistics about the importance of British-grown trees and recommendations to put forward to the government.

We encourage those in and out of the industry to read this report. <https://bit.ly/4ohQeb5>

#strongroots #treereport #britishgrowntrees



**Hillier Nurseries Ltd**

7,589 followers  
4d • Edited •

Our Production and Amenity Director, [Adam Dunnnett](#), was proud to represent the British tree production industry at the launch of the Strong Roots report.

This report, a collaboration between [The Woodland Trust](#), [Horticultural Trades Association](#), [National Trust](#), and [Royal Horticultural Society](#), explores the key barriers to domestic tree production and offers evidence-based recommendations to strengthen support for the sector. With the report, we hope to ensure a bright future for UK tree production. Strong Roots report shows how trees play in sustaining biodiversity.

+ Follow

Joining panel alongside [Mary Creagh CBE MP](#) (Secretary of State for Nature), [Arit Anderson](#) (Garden Secretary), and [Abi Bunker](#) (Woodland Trust Director of Environmental Affairs).

Read the full report here: <https://lnkd.in/ejqMNCrf>

#strongroots #sustainability #treeproduction



**Frank P Matthews Ltd**

869 followers  
4d •

This week [Stephanie Dunn James](#) headed to RHS Wisley to attend the launch of Strong Roots! Together the [Horticultural Trades Association](#), [National Trust](#), [The Woodland Trust](#) and [Royal Horticultural Society](#) has created the newly released Strong Roots report, a vital call to action for the UK's future.

As the UK grapples with climate change, biodiversity loss and ecological pressures, this report highlights the urgent need to strengthen domestic tree production.

It's not just about planting trees, it's about ensuring those trees are grown here, with care, expertise and a long-term vision.

Learn how the UK can achieve this in the new Strong Roots report, produced by Horticulture Trades Association, The Woodland Trust, National Trust and The Royal Horticultural Society. <https://lnkd.in/ejqMNCrf>

If you're interested in our thoughts on the report then have a read at [https://lnkd.in/eq\\_GZUrX](https://lnkd.in/eq_GZUrX)

#BritishTrees #StrongRoots #EnvironmentalHorticulture



hta.org.uk



## Next steps

- On-going advocacy in all three nations
- Sharing the report with interested stakeholders
- Working with the industry to understand how the recommendations and situation is evolving
- Getting MPs out to tree nurseries
- HTA have produced a “GB Tree Production” briefing for HTA members to share alongside Strong Roots





**Thank you  
Questions?**

