



Seahaven Academy
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TREE PLANTING AT SEAHAVEN ACADEMY



In 2025 pupils at Seahaven Academy planted over 60 meters of native hedge, an orchard and some additional tree plants.

The process resulted in some really great learning opportunities for all. We hope that collating our experiences will help others in United Learning Trust if they are planning to plant trees.



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BENEFITS

Planting trees brings many positive benefits to the school environment

AESTHETICS

They look good. A better looking school environment may aid the school in attracting more pupils as families find the setting more appealing.

SHADE PROVISION

Trees can create cooler spaces during summer months and provide protection from harmful sun exposure.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Nature provides many opportunities for learning. Biodiversity gains from planting the right specimens attracts more species to the site.

AIR QUALITY

Trees purify the air by absorbing harmful gases, reducing carbon dioxide and creating oxygen.

HEALTH

Trees can support good physical and mental health. Whether it is via play opportunities, climbing, maintaining or simply interacting with them by any sensory means.

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES

Trees and hedges provide sustainable learning resources. Their leaves, berries, flowers and branches can be utilised for dying, cooking, identification skills, craft, fuel and building.

SOIL IMPROVEMENT

Trees improve soil health. Their roots help soil to absorb water, their leaves create organic matter (which helps to create top soil) they stop soil erosion, improve soil fertility, sink carbon and attract large populations of soil microorganisms.

PROVIDE FOOD

Tackling food insecurity/assisting with healthy eating habits. Planting fruit trees on school grounds provides students access to a free supply of healthy fruit.

FLOOD DEFENCE

Tree roots improve the soils capacity to retain water



TREE PLANTING AT SEAHAVEN ACADEMY

CONSIDERATIONS

We confronted some resistance during the planning and process. The main concerns were the cost, maintenance, safety, litter and concerns about the space the trees would occupy.

MAINTENANCE

The ongoing cost of maintenance was a cause for concern.

Long term costs can be reduced in several ways. Planting tree plants and managing them as wildlife hedges can mean ongoing maintenance is easier. Regular pruning or cutting back prevents hedge plants and trees from getting out of control. This can be undertaken by the students themselves via gardening clubs, a school Forest School type arrangement, Duke of Edinburgh students looking to fulfil their volunteering or skills element or by making contact with a local volunteer group who can advise and support your Academy.

In our case we made a connection with our local Tree Warden group who are happy to help with ongoing support and advice. At Seahaven Academy we have an Eco Club that include gardening in their activities, their Forest School provision have tree care in the site management plan for their outdoor learning area and we are working on developing a linkage with the Duke of Edinburgh team so we can get as many young people involved in the tree care as we can.





TREE PLANTING AT SEAHAVEN ACADEMY

CONSIDERATIONS

SAFETY

The safety aspect is an important consideration, but if trees are managed regularly to stay fairly small this can make it much easier to remove limbs that are damaged or diseased without needing outside help (preventing large bills from tree surgeons).

The safety improvements gained by creating shade, reducing wind speeds, stabilising soil and absorbing water could also be considered by site managers.

LITTER

It was suggested that hedges would trap litter, but interestingly, we invested in some litter pickers for Seahaven Academy and the young people love them. It is worth considering incorporating litter picking as part of a regular gardening group or other outdoor group activity. It is widely regarded at Seahaven Academy to be one of the most fun elements of their Eco Club actions.

INCLUSION

Before planting tree's we suggest you try to include as many of the school community as you can (not just site teams, business managers, premises management and senior leadership). PE departments may need areas kept clear so they don't impact activities such as cross country. Including Food Tech in the decision making when thinking about fruit trees is a great idea. Shortlisting the fruits that are useful ingredients for recipes regularly cooked in lessons can save the school money and help with species selection. DT/Art departments may have material requirements (such as Willow or Elder).



TREE PLANTING AT SEAHAVEN ACADEMY

SPECIES LIST

Native Hedge

Guelder rose
Wayfaring Tree
Spindle
Purging Buckthorn
Alder Buckthorn
Red dogwood
Whitebeam
Hawthorn
Hornbeam
Hazel

Tree Plants

Elderflower
Rowan
Silver Birch

PLANTS AND PLANTING

The school accessed free tree's and hedge plants from the Woodland Trust <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk> (ordered prior to our engagement with the school).

These free plants are very small (only 20-30cms high). This presents problems for schools because their grounds maintenance is often subcontracted out and these are easily mown down unless the area can be clearly marked and the new plants protected. We decided to increase the area designated for hedging and plant a larger area so needed to order more plants in order to get the meterage required.

We were able to link to some additional grant funding to supplement the free plants with some larger specimens from a local hedge plant specialist and a few even larger specimens from Ashridge Nurseries <https://www.ashridgetrees.co.uk/> (60-80cms and a few 1.2-1.6m plants). These made the hedge more 'visible'.

Getting the young people involved in planting was really important to us, but getting groups of students off timetable can be difficult. If it can be worked into curriculum studies, we believe this is the best case scenario. At Seahaven Academy we worked with students as part of their Alternative Provision program. Small groups of students helped to dig trenches and remove turf. This was fantastic for self regulation and provided learning opportunities. We found interest was sparked in the things we unearthed, identifying rock types and various mini beasts. We also worked with students in an established Eco Club who attend during period 6 to plant the trees.

TREE PLANTING AT SEAHAVEN ACADEMY

METHOD

REMOVE TURF

remove turf in a long line keeping the turf in a pile separate from the soil.

DIG TRENCH

Dig soil out to a spade depth (40cm ish) and keep soil in a pile (on an old sheet or towel can help make refilling easier).

FILL TRENCH

We added the turf back upside down (grass facing the ground) and chopped it up into smaller pieces at the base of the trench, we then added soil back mixed with fresh compost.

PLANT

We planted the hedge plants around 40 cm's apart. This can be done as a single line or a double line, keep the same spacing but zig zag the planting. Maintaining a single line, is easier, but a double line will be thicker if you are looking to create a barrier or wind break for example).

COVER

We placed cardboard (all tape and stickers removed) on top of the soil and added wood chips on top.

EDGE

We edged with some branches that were removed from an unmanaged hedge on the grounds. You don't need to do this, but it helps to stop unwanted strimming.

MAINTAIN

Remove weeds for first few years while the plants establish. Pruning is generally done in the winter when the plant is dormant. Water plants.





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SIGNAGE

To maximise the impact of learning opportunities we created a sign that has been erected next to the hedge. It is a lectern style sign mounted on an oak pillar.

There is space for a QR code which can link to the school website or additional learning resources (worksheets, ID guides etc).

This artwork is available for others to use. Nature Sign Design have agreed to change the colours, logos and font free of charge to anyone who wishes to use it.

<https://www.naturesigndesign.co.uk/>

Seahaven Academy Wildlife Hedge

Hedges are incredibly important.

Hedges give animals shelter, safe travel routes, nesting spots, and even help bats find their way. Their leaves, flowers, and berries feed birds, mammals, insects, and reptiles.

Hedges also:

- Improve soil
- Clean air
- Store carbon
- Reduce flooding
- Improve wellbeing

This hedge acts as a wildlife corridor, linking habitats and helping animals find food, shelter – and mates.

Why This Matters

Wildlife friendly plants boost biodiversity. Thoughtfully planted gardens and balconies can also support nature by creating stepping stones for life to thrive.

What can you see in our hedge?

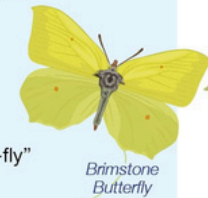


Purging Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)

- Also called common buckthorn
- Male and female flowers grow on different trees
- Food for the Brimstone butterfly

Brimstone Butterfly

- Their colour may have inspired the name "butter-fly"



Brimstone Butterfly



Spindle

Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*)

- Good food source for many insects, birds and caterpillars



Hawthorn

Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)

- White flowers in May turn into red berries (haws) in Autumn
- Hawthorn Shield bugs live and breed here



Hawthorn Shield Bug

Hawthorn Shield Bug

- They shed skins in stages called instars
- Known as "stink bugs" due to a smelly defence



Dogwood

Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*)

- Bright red twigs in winter
- Small black fruits are sometimes called 'dogberries'

Goldfinch

- Finches love to eat Dogwood fruits



Goldfinch



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FRUIT TREE PLANTING AT SEAHAVEN ACADEMY



ORCHARD

We planted 5 trees at Seahaven Academy.

A local Permaculture Trust, Community Orchard, Tree Warden Group or similar organisation may be a good connection to make for advice on varieties and planting in your area. They may have funding for out reach and be happy to run a workshop to help with teaching you how to plant and maintain.

Bare root trees are cheaper but must be planted when dormant (winter). Potted trees can be planted year round, but best to avoid summer.

New trees will need watering regularly in their first year and keeping weeds free around the base.

VARIETIES

Apple: Red Falstaff

Apple: Braeburn

Apple: Newton Wonder (cooking)

Apple: Laxton Superb

Pear: Conference



FRUIT TREE PLANTING AT SEAHAVEN ACADEMY

METHOD

REMOVE TURF

Remove turf in a square around 40 cms wide (if using a potted tree this would need to be roughly double the diameter of the pot). Keep the turf in a pile separate from the soil.

DIG A HOLE

Dig soil out to a spade depth (40cm ish) and keep soil in a pile (on an old sheet or towel can help make refilling easier).

REPLACE TURF

We added the turf back upside down (grass facing the ground) and chopped it up into smaller pieces at the base of the hole.

FILL

Ensure that the hole is refilled with soil and compost mix and that the tree roots are below ground level and the trunk is above ground and straight. It can be useful to plant in pairs, one holding plant in position, the other filling the hole. Make sure no air gaps around root ball.

HEEL IN

Using your heel, compress the soil around the plant so the plant is firmly in. Be careful not to damage the roots, but ensure no air gaps around roots.

STAKE

Use tree stakes to stabilise tree (use a mallet to drive stakes firmly into ground)

COVER

We placed cardboard (all tape and stickers removed) on top of the soil and added wood chips on top.

MAINTAIN

Water well after planting and regularly in the first year. Remove weeds for first few years while the plants establish. Winter and summer pruning is beneficial.

