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Transform your garden this National Tree Week with British Garden Centres

As National Tree Week approaches (November 22nd – 30th), gardeners across the UK are being encouraged to plant trees that will transform their gardens and make a positive contribution to the environment. While many people associate planting with springtime, winter offers a prime opportunity for planting trees, especially bare-root varieties, that can establish strong root systems during their dormant phase. British Garden Centres has put together this guide to understand why now is an excellent season for tree planting, what types of trees to select, and how to care for them through the colder months.

Why plant trees in winter?

Winter planting coincides with the trees' natural dormant period. During dormancy, deciduous trees shed their leaves and put energy into root growth rather than foliage, flowers, or fruit. This means that when planted in winter, trees can focus on establishing a robust root system without the stress of supporting leaves. Winter planted trees also require less maintenance and watering because the UK's wetter and cooler conditions help keep the soil moist and reduce evaporation.

Certain types of trees, such as bareroot trees, are sold with no soil on their roots and are best planted between November and March. Planting bareroot trees during winter gives them the best chance of thriving compared to planting them in other seasons.

Choosing the right trees for winter planting

Popular options include native deciduous trees such as **oak, silver birch, rowan, and hawthorn**, as well as hedging plants like **cherry laurel, privet, and box**.

For gardeners with limited space, ornamental trees are excellent choices as they combine beauty with manageable size. Our top tips are:

Amelanchier lamarckii (Juneberry): A graceful tree with attractive white spring flowers and red-tinged autumn foliage, perfect for multi-season interest.

Crab Apple (Malus species): Offers stunning blossom in spring, colourful fruits in autumn, and supports local wildlife.

Cornus kousa (Kousa Dogwood): Known for its striking white bracts in early summer and vibrant red berries.



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Acer palmatum (Japanese Maple): Valued for its delicate, colourful foliage that changes from green to brilliant reds and oranges in autumn.

Preparing to plant your tree

Before planting, choose a well-drained spot with ample room for tree roots to spread. It's best to avoid waterlogged or frozen ground, which can impede root growth and cause damage. Dig a hole that is wide and deep enough to comfortably house the roots without crowding.

When planting bare-root trees, soak the roots in a bucket of water for a few hours beforehand to rehydrate them. Dig the hole slightly wider than the root spread and square-shaped to encourage roots to grow outward rather than circling in a round hole.

Plant the tree at the same depth it was growing previously, backfill with soil gently, and press firmly to remove air pockets. After planting, apply a thick mulch layer around the base of the tree. Mulch moderates soil temperature, retains moisture, prevents weeds, and protects roots from frost.

Care tips

Young trees can be vulnerable to harsh winter winds, frost, and animals, so it's important to give them some extra care through the colder months. Stake tall or top-heavy trees to provide stability against strong winds and use tree guards or fencing to prevent damage from rodents and other wildlife. Check soil moisture regularly, watering during dry spells but avoiding waterlogged conditions. Keep the base of the tree clear by removing any competing weeds or plants. As spring approaches and the tree begins to break dormancy, continue watering and feed lightly with a balanced fertiliser to support healthy new growth.

Benefits beyond the garden

Planting trees is about more than just beautifying your garden. Trees provide essential habitats for wildlife, improving biodiversity by offering food and shelter to birds, insects, and small mammals. They also help improve air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, combat climate change, reduce soil erosion, and provide shade and shelter.

Julian Palphramand, Head of Plants at British Garden Centres, said: "National Tree Week is a great opportunity for gardeners to connect with nature and make a lasting difference by planting young trees. Whether you're



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transforming your garden with a statement tree or adding structure and interest with seasonal colour, now is the perfect time to plant. Our centres nationwide have a fantastic range of trees and expert teams on hand to help you choose the perfect tree to enjoy for years to come.”

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About the business:

British Garden Centres (BGC) is the UK’s largest family-owned garden centre group with 65 centres around the country. The group is owned and led by The Stubbs family, who also own and operate Woodthorpe Leisure Park in Lincolnshire.

BGC was launched in 1987 with the opening of Woodthorpe Garden Centre funded by brothers Charles and Robert Stubbs. Since 2018 it has expanded rapidly with the acquisition of 50 garden centres allowing it to grow from its heartland to the business it is now with 65 garden centres spread from Carmarthen to Ramsgate, Wimborne to East Durham.

The group has a team of 2,700 colleagues working across the garden centres, restaurants, 2 growing nurseries, 4 distribution centres and Woodthorpe Leisure Park and Woody’s Restaurant & Bar.

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