

True Service Tree

In countries where the tree is considered native it can be found from sea level to 900m in altitude and it is particularly widespread in low mountains and hills.

Figure 1. European distribution of *Sorbus domestica*.

The first recognised true service tree found in England was the Wyre Forest tree, or Wyre Forest Whitty Pear, described in 1678 by Alderman Edmund Pitt of Worcester in a letter to the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society. This original tree was burnt down by a poacher in 1862, but by this point interest in the tree was such that a number of cuttings had been propagated and raised at Arley Castle. These young trees were subsequently planted at locations throughout Worcestershire and nearby counties including Arley Arboretum, Croome Park, Kyre Park, Worcester Cathedral, Bewdley and the Botanical Gardens in Oxford.

In 1916 a new tree (a direct descendent of the original) was also planted to replace the one lost in Wyre Forest and this still survives today. When the Glamorgan and Gloucestershire trees were discovered in the mid-1980s, genetic analysis revealed close similarities between these trees, European trees, and those descended from the original Wyre tree. These studies are however incomplete and the conclusions may require revision. One of the trees at the Glamorgan site was estimated at the time of discovery to be 400 years old.

2.3 Legislation

There is no legal protection of the true service tree in Great Britain.

2.4 Summary of important sites

There are currently 30 known *Sorbus domestica* trees growing in W

4.2 Site management and programmes of action

None currently in Worcestershire.

4.3 Survey, research and monitoring

A research project undertaken by Frances Claxton in 1999 looked at the current status and distribution of the true service tree in Worcestershire. The project was intended to inform the production of the first True Service Tree SAP in the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan and also to provide tissue samples for genetic analysis at Kew.

5. Associated Plans

Woodland, Ancient and Veteran Trees.

6. Conservation Aim

The origins of the true service tree within Worcestershire are better understood and the protection of all recorded trees is maximised

7. Conservation Objectives

Tree Preservation Orders placed on vulnerable trees

Identify suitable potential planting locations within the Wyre Forest SSSI

Identify a local nursery partner who will propagate trees from local seed

Carry out DNA analysis work on Worcestershire trees

Carry out further focused survey within the county to collect new records, based on knowledge of known favoured site conditions.

Produce a short ID guide to the different *Sorbus* spp. and engage with key people e.g. local authority tree officers

References and further information

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