

Oxfordshire Woodfuel Programme bulletin

Chalara / ash die-back: You will probably have heard about chalara in the news. It is a spore-borne disease which is expected to kill nearly all ash in the coming years. A small proportion – maybe one in 100 trees – will be immune. As ash trees come into leaf, it will become apparent if they have chalara or not. Signs of the disease include wilting leaves, brown veins in the leaves, and browning of young stems. Forestry Commission advice is not to fell ash trees unless they are ill: the felled tree might be in the 1% that are immune. Besides, the spores can travel huge distances so felling trees as a prophylactic measure is not effective. If you are aware of ash trees with chalara, www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara gives advice on what to do. they can be used as firewood unless the government places a special order on the trees that prohibits their movement.

Time to buy firewood and stoves/boilers: The woodfuel cutting year may be over, but this is the time to buy firewood and store it for next autumn, and also to think about installing a wood stove or boiler. The website www.oxonwoodfuel.org.uk, provides lots of advice on this, including information on the Renewable Heat Incentive and lists of woodfuel and wood stove suppliers.

Woodfuel study visits: There will be three woodfuel themed study visits in the coming months: on 15 April, 1 June and 8 June. The first and last of these will each involve a visit to a woodland, a wood processor and an interesting wood boiler. The 1 June event is a unique opportunity to visit a woodland in a Ministry of Defence site, and taste wild rabbit if you want. The cost is £25-£30 and numbers are limited. More information is at www.oxonwoodfuel.org.uk/woodfuel-site-visits.

Logs for labour: Thank you to everyone who contacted me about this. We have had five successful events this spring, and hope to roll out the programme much more widely next autumn. If you are a woodland owner who could use some free help with woodland management in return for people taking some firewood (labour for your logs), or if you would like to work outdoors in return for some firewood (logs for your labour), please get in touch with me. More information is at www.oxonwoodfuel.org.uk/logs-for-labour.

Firewood quality standard: The Oxfordshire Woodfuel Programme is setting up a quality standard for small-scale firewood suppliers in Oxfordshire, called 'OxLogs'. It aims to provide transparency about the amount, type, length and moisture content of firewood, and in time improve firewood quality. OxLogs suppliers will state the amount of wood in 'cubic metres tossed' (tossed is how it comes off the truck; a tossed cubic metre is about 0.7 stacked cubic metres); type as hardwood, softwood or mixed; and moisture content as $\leq 25\%$ which is ready to burn, or unclassified which buyers would need to season themselves. Please ask your supplier if they provide OxLogs.

Riki Therivel, manager@oxonwoodfuel.org.uk, 01865 243488