



KEEPING OUR TOWN SPECIAL

## Lewes Urban Arboretum

Managed by the Trees  
Committee of Friends of  
Lewes,  
(the Civic Society of Lewes,  
East Sussex, England)

***Our vision: Lewes as  
“a town in the trees”***

## What are we doing?

- Planting trees in verges and green spaces
- Planting wildlife hedgerows
- Looking after all the trees and hedges we have planted
- Responding to applications for tree works
- Responding to consultations on new developments

## Why are we doing it?

- To increase tree canopy cover for climate resilience
- To improve biodiversity for wildlife and for us

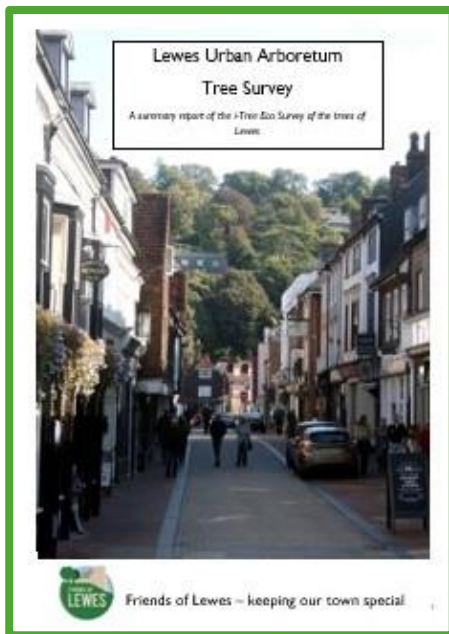
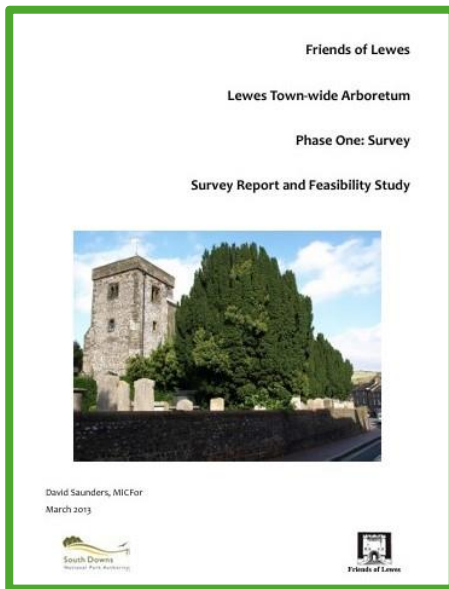


## How did we start?

In 2012 Friends of Lewes received two substantial legacies for tree planting – so the current Trees Committee was formed.

To identify significant trees and gaps in the planting, we commissioned a survey of the trees in Lewes with a grant from South Downs National Park.

We organised an i-Tree Ecosurvey of Lewes to record the ecosystem values of our existing trees. This estimated our current tree canopy cover as 11.5%, compared to the recommended minimum of 20%. This data has helped us to gain support from the community and in our grant applications.





## Our first planting project!

The initial survey of trees in Lewes showed that the industrial sites were quite bare of trees.

So, our first project was to plant these: *Acer platanoides*, *Sorbus intermedia*, *Ulmus Americana*, *Prunus avium* and *Alnus incana*.





## Trees for Birds!

In December 2010, a flock of Waxwings landed on a *Sorbus hupehensis* growing on a green bank beside a block of flats.

By 2016, the council had felled the tree because it was dying. To replace the tree, and hopefully attract more Waxwings in future, we planted a selection of twelve trees to provide seeds and berries for the birds: *Sorbus aria Majestica*, *Prunus avium*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Betula utilis Jacquemontii* and *Acer campestre*.

## **Trees for Bees!**

Lewes Cemetery is designated as a Local Wildlife Site because it is recognised as having substantive nature conservation value.

Since 2020, bee surveys have recorded several rare bees there.

We got together with Lewes District Council to plant 32 trees and three lengths of native hedgerows which would provide sources of food for bees and other pollinators throughout most of the year.





## Involving the community

Through social media and our calendar of walks, talks, and events, we encourage residents to value our trees and to suggest new sites where we might plant some more.

For example, in 2021, we planted 34 trees around a residential area at places where the residents said that they would like trees – and would help to look after them.

We were asked to plant some of these trees to waymark “Tingle’s Way”, an offshoot of the South Downs Way which takes you past some lovely trees in Lewes.

## Involving children in planting trees

We are planting trees for the future. For them to be cared for in the long term, it is important that the next generations understand and appreciate their value! We have involved children in several projects where they now feel they have “ownership” of the small tree whips they have planted themselves in wildlife hedgerows.

So far, this has included groups of Forest School children, parents and toddlers of a pre-school group, and Beaver Scouts. We also spent four enjoyable days enabling all 550 pupils of two Lewes primary schools to plant native whips around the perimeter of their shared school field.







## **Tree Nursery**

In 2022, as part of the Lewes Nature Mosaic Project, we got together with Wildflower Lewes and the Railway Land Nature Reserve to bid for grant funding so that we could develop a tree and wildflower nursery where we could raise native trees and wildflowers from seed collected locally.

We planted over 400 tree seeds in November 2022, and those which have not been dug up by squirrels will be ready for planting out in November 2024.

The plan is to use them to make a wildlife hedge at the border of a Forest School area at our local secondary school.

## Specimen trees

As well as native trees, we also have also chosen to plant a range of specimen trees – for their ornamental value and their possible resistance to the changing climate. These have included *Celtis australis*, *Ostrya carpinifolia*, *Liriodendron tulipifera* and *Styphnolobium japonicum* – one of which is shown here.

To date, we have planted, labelled, and looked after 67 different varieties of trees, which has enabled Lewes to be accredited as an arboretum town by ArbNet.





## Restoring the streetscape

This photograph from 1923 shows seven Elm trees in Lewes High Street. By 2017, only three remained and they had to be felled because of Dutch Elm Disease.

From 2017 to 2023 we raised funds towards joint projects with East Sussex County Council and Lewes District Council to engage contractors to plant seven disease-resistant *Ulmus* “New Horizon” in large tree pits in the pavement.

## Gateway Trees

Our most recent projects include planting “Gateway Trees” to welcome people into Lewes – an arboretum town!

Because there has been a Sussex campaign to “bring back the Elms” to replace all those lost to DED, many of the gateway trees are disease resistant Elms, such as these ten *Ulmus Lutece*.

We have plans to plant ten more Elms here later in the year.

