TDAG Seminar Series 2026

Registration will be available at least four weeks ahead of each seminar

Trees & Design Action Group

Working in collaboration for better places

TDAG Seminar Series 2026

We will provide full details of each seminar as part of a rolling programme

Trees as critical urban infrastructure

Well-functioning infrastructure is at the heart of making places at all scales liveable. It includes transportation, communications, water (both drought and flood management), power, community services such as schools, hospitals, housing as well as economic activities and nature i.e. everything that can create health and wellbeing for both people and the natural environment which need to support one another while reducing and avoiding risk.

When we say that trees should be considered as part of critical urban infrastructure, we are recognising their role as the largest living element capable of living long, transgenerational lives and delivering multiple benefits across the social, environmental and economic spectrum.

The TDAG seminars for 2026 will explore the role of trees in this context.

Seminar One: Tree success stories
11th February, 2-4pm GMT **(See Past Events)**

Seminar Two: Designing with trees – Part 1: above ground ambitions
11th March, 2-4pm GMT **(See Past Events)**

Seminar Three: Designing with trees – Part 2: below ground challenges
22nd April, 2-4pm BST **(See Past Events)**

Seminar Four: Urban trees – biodiversity value, climate resilience and canopy cover – what we need to know
13th May, 11.30-12.15 BST. In person at Futurebuild + UK Construction Week, ExCel, London **(See Past Events)**

Seminar Five: Integrating Trees and Buildings – they don't have to be in conflict!
14th May, 13.30-14.15 BST. In person at Futurebuild + UK Construction Week, ExCel, London **(See Past Events)**

Seminar Six: Getting it right for trees – Part 1 – getting back to basics
10th June, 2-4pm BST **(See Past Events)**

Seminar Seven: Getting it right for trees – Part 2 – monitoring and evaluation to support establishment and growth
15th July, 2-4pm BST **(See Past Events)**

Seminar Eight: Trees and the law in plain English – what we all need to know
23rd September, 2-4pm BST **(See Past Events)**

Seminar Nine: Trees and Planning – tools for planners and design teams
21st October, 2-4pm BST

Seminar Ten: Growing a resilient research base for urban trees – the Second TDAG/Mersey Forest Ideas Lab Early Career Research Prize
18th November, 2-4pm GMT

Seminar Eleven: Trees in the townscape 2035 – what will it look like?
9th December, 2-4pm GMT

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Seminar One

Tree success stories

Date
11th February

Time
2-4pm GMT

Place
Zoom

There is widespread concern that many tree planting projects do not have the rate of success that they should. This seminar considers the issues under 4 themes to demonstrate what success looks like and how it was achieved.

Agenda

Chair: Tony Kirkham MBE, author, tree expert, TDAG Patron and former Head of the Arboretum, and Horticultural Services at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

A project that has stood the test of time
Jane Findlay, Founder, Fira and Past-President of the Landscape Institute

The importance of social and cultural values for resilient treescapes
Rachel Bryan, Green and Healthy City Project Officer, City of Portsmouth

Achieving tree success in complex, dense urban environments
Sharon Durdant-Hollamby, Director, Sharon Hosegood Associates

Regeneration led by landscape – Sighthill, Glasgow
Rory Wilson and Kirstin Taylor, Directors, LDA Design

Partners: Landscape Institute, Town and Country Planning Association, Urban Design Group

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Seminar Two

Designing with trees – Part 1: above ground ambitions

Date
11th March

Time
2-4pm GMT

Place
Zoom

It is now well understood that urban trees deliver multiple environmental, social and economic benefits, but how well the trees can deliver depends on how we design with them – both to retain existing trees (which is vital) and also planting new trees. If we are to achieve our above ground ambitions, we will need collaboration amongst the key players in understanding the issues and resolving the conflicts so that trees can be integrated as part of our critical urban infrastructure for long term success.

Agenda

Chair: Saira Ali, President-Elect, Landscape Institute and Team Leader for Landscape, Design and Conservation at Bradford Council

Tree selection – What is the right place? What is the right tree?
Harry Watkins, Landscape Architect and Director, St Andrews Botanic Garden

Lighting for trees, nature and safety
Lorraine Calcott, Director and Principal Designer, it does Lighting Ltd

Trees in urban design
Christopher Martin, Co-founder, Managing Director and Head of Design, Urban Movement

Success with trees in open urban landscapes
Poppy George, Tree Planting Programme Officer, LB Lambeth

Partners: Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, Institute of Highway Engineers, Landscape Institute, Urban Design Group

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Seminar Three

Designing with trees – Part 2: below ground challenges

Date
22nd April

Time
2-4pm BST

Place
Zoom

It is recognised that there are challenges to resolve with some urban tree locations especially urban streets – both in new developments and retrofitting – and in constrained urban sites where trees and green infrastructure compete with density and below ground congestion. All these challenges need to be understood and overcome if city dwellers are to have access to nature and greenspace as recommended by the 3-30-300 rule, for example, and the vital need to increase biodiversity and ensure improved human mental and physical health and wellbeing. This seminar will examine some of the practical challenges and how they can be resolved.

Agenda

Chair: Holger Kessler, Senior Stakeholder Manager, Atkins Réalis

Legal rights to the subsurface
Sarah Dodd, Founding Director, Tree Law

What do tree roots need and can we predict their behaviour?
Andrew Hirons, Director at Urban Plant Lab and a Senior Lecturer in Arboriculture and Urban Forestry at University Centre Myerscough

Trees, SuDS and utilities can co-exist
Katrina Wylie, Associate Civil Engineer, Team Civic

Partners: Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, Institute of Highway Engineers, Landscape Institute, Urban Design Group

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Seminar Four

Urban trees – biodiversity value, climate resilience and canopy cover – what we need to know

Date
13th May

Time
11.30-12.15

Place
ExCel, London

Registration for Futurebuild and the seminar for free here

We are told that we must 'plant the right tree in the right place' – but what is 'right' when we need to ensure increased biodiversity and trees that will be able to reach maturity and live their potentially long lives in a changing climate? At the same time responding to the impact of climate change also requires and increase in urban tree canopy cover – but how much and where? These are challenges for designers, specifiers, and developers.

Finding the right answers is explored in this seminar.

Agenda

Chair: Melissa Arthur, Head of Biodiversity, Barratt Redrow (checking diary dates)

Reporting our research outcomes on trees species and biodiversity value
Dr Andrew Hirons, Director at Urban Plant Lab and a Senior Lecturer in Arboriculture and Urban Forestry at University Centre Myerscough

Tree species selection with projected climate changes in the UK
Kevin Martin, Head of Tree Collections, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

How much canopy cover should we aim for and where?
Kieron Doick, Head Urban Forest Research Group, Forest Research

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Seminar Five

Integrating Trees and Buildings – they don't have to be in conflict!

Date
14th May

Time
13.30-14.15

Place
ExCel, London

Registration for Futurebuild and the seminar for free here

Trees in proximity to buildings, particularly low-rise buildings, can provide multiple benefits including shading of the buildings themselves, shading of the external spaces from glare from the buildings, generally improved environments for people's physical and mental health. So, what is the problem? Why is there a reluctance by both developers and insurance companies to support the role of trees in proximity to buildings? What do designers and planners need to know to overcome these concerns? This seminar will explore the issues and outline the solutions.

Agenda

Chair: Richard Smith, Head of Standards, Innovation and Research, NHBC and Past-President, CABE

How trees benefit both building performance and the spaces between
Julie Futcher, Urban Climate Consultant

Tree-Building Relationships
Gary Winn, architect, building engineer and arboriculturist, Arbitect Ltd

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Seminar Six

Getting it right for trees – Part 1 – getting back to basics

Date
10th June

Time
2-4pm BST

Place
Zoom

In response to requests from TDAG members, this seminar works from the premise that all permissions and community backing have been achieved and goes back to basics to consider the practicalities of getting the tree in the ground. If trees are to function fully as part of our critical infrastructure, then we need to get it right from the outset so that they can do so:

1) identify the tree benefits sought,
2) procure the right trees with due regard to biosecurity and benefitting from procurement model,
3) make sure you get the trees you ordered, and the trees are delivered, stored, and planted correctly,
4) plant them in the right way,
5) get the right budget including the cost of aftercare and establishment,
6) monitor the intended outcomes, maintaining necessary aftercare.

We will explore issues 1-5 in this seminar and focus on monitoring and evaluation in Part 2 on 15th July.

Agenda

Chair: Scott Chalmers, Head of Green Infrastructure, Urban & Civic plc

Why do you want to plant the tree?
Catherine Nuttgens, Founder, Nuttgens Urban Forestry, Senior Associate, Treeconomics Strategy Lead for the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership and the Project Manager for Trees Together

The vital role of procurement – getting it right for your project
Michael Ripley, Assistant Arboricultural Officer, Hampshire County Council Highways

A Standard for planting trees in living landscapes
Lee Heykoop, Technical Manager – Sustainability, Homes England

Planting in Hard Landscapes – experimental evidence
Mark Syrett, Place Directorate Surrey County Council

The right budget for planting and establishment aftercare
Paul Nolan, Director, The Mersey Forest

Knowledge partners: Arboricultural Association, Fund4Trees, Institute of Chartered Foresters, Institute of Highway Engineers, Landscape Institute, Urban Design Group

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Seminar Seven

Getting it right for trees – Part 2 – monitoring and evaluation to support establishment and growth

Date
15th July

Time
2-4pm BST

Place
Zoom

If trees are to function fully as part of our critical infrastructure, then we need to monitor and maintain tree establishment and growth to prevent tree failure. There are now a range of 'tools' that enable good decision making and ways of monitoring delivery over time.

Agenda

Chair: Kate Sheldon, Chief Executive, Trees for Cities

The 'performance gap' – what does the global literature say?
Deanne Brettle, PhD candidate, University of Birmingham

Good practice for successful establishment
Rob Murison, Director, Thrive and Champion for Young Tree Establishment & Resilient Urban Forests

How to measure your baseline and short-term (<10 years) change
Oli Back, Schools & Operations Manager, Street Trees for Living

Measuring longer-term tree change
Simon Needle, Green Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Lead, Birmingham City Council

Knowledge Partners: Arboricultural Association, Fund4Trees, Institute of Chartered Foresters, Institute of Highway Engineers, Landscape Institute, Urban Design Group

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Seminar Eight

Trees and the law in plain English – what we all need to know

Date
23rd September

Time
2-4pm BST

Place
Zoom

One of the most watched seminars from 2024 was about tree protection, but there are wider issues relating to tree law. We carried out a survey to identify the legal issues relating to trees that most concern TDAG members. Apart from the perennial issues of subsidence and trees and highways, the three main areas of concern that we will explore in this seminar are:

1. Conservation areas versus TPOs
2. Safety and risk
3. Conflicts with neighbouring land owners including boundary issues and loss of light

In this seminar we will outline the issues so that all of us engaged with urban trees are better equipped to retain our existing trees and extend the urban forest.

Agenda

Chair: Sarah Dodd, Founder and CEO, Tree Law

Understanding the protection for trees in conservation areas versus TPOs
Sarah Dodd, Founder and CEO, Tree Law

Tree risk and safety – exploring the psychology of how risk can be perceived and the likelihood of it occurring
Ana Farewell, Environmental Psychologist, Maplesky

Resolving conflicts – trees, hedges and neighbours
Charles Mynors, Lawyer; author The Law of Trees, Forests and Hedges

Knowledge Partners: AA, ICF, IHE,LI, UDG

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Seminar Nine

Trees and Planning – tools for planners and design teams

Date
21st October

Time
2-4pm BST

Place
Zoom

Planning has a critical role in ensuring that trees are both protected and that new trees are added to developments, whether through new developments or the regeneration of existing urban areas, to achieve maximum benefits for people, nature and place.

This seminar will explore the various tools that can help both planners and design teams to deliver the maximum benefits from trees and green infrastructure by examining some of the following issues:

- Why all local authorities need evidence-based, adopted tree strategies/urban forest strategies or masterplans.
- What tools are available to both design teams and planning authorities.
- What is the 3-30-300 rule or principle and what does it mean in practice?
- How to deliver tree value.
- The benefits of canopy cover and how to determine what is needed locally.
- How to achieve green infrastructure equity.

Agenda

Chair: Claire Stafford, Planning and Policy Advisor, Royal Town Planning Institute

From Managing Trees to Leading an Urban Forest – The evolution of Cambridge's Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036
Matthew Magrath, Urban Forestry Manager, Cambridge City Council

Tools for Planners:

3-30-300 Principle in Practice
John Rose, Urban Forest Consultant, Treeconomics

Tree Value Visions Tool: A New Free-to-Use Tool for Councils and Communities
Alison Dyke, Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute, University of York
Peter Wood, Associate Lecturer, Social Science and Global Studies, the Open University in Scotland

Urban Tree Canopy Cover User Guide: Progress Report
Nicola Brown, Senior Officer, Green Infrastructure, Natural England

Assessment of Green Infrastructure Equity (AGIE Methodology): Plymouth Case Study
Martha Crockatt, Researcher (Ecosystems & Biodiversity Programme), Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford

Knowledge Partners: AA, ICF, IHE, LI, UDG

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Seminar Ten

Growing a resilient research base for urban trees – the Second TDAG/Mersey Forest Ideas Lab Early Career Research Prize

Date
18th November

Time
2-4pm GMT

A short list of submissions will be invited to present their research at an online seminar on 18th November from 2-4pm.

There is a first prize of £500 and two runner up prizes of £250 each – with many thanks to The Mersey Forest for sponsoring again.

The first prize winner in 2025, Elle Smith, went on to also win Young European Urban Forestry Researcher of the year. European Young Urban Forester of the Year awarded to Elle Smith | Leeds Ecosystem, Atmosphere & Forest (LEAF) Centre

To submit your research project: Please complete this short form https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/09AP4mtt1W by **9th October 2026**. We will let you know by **2nd November** if your research has been chosen for a presentation on **18th November**. The seminar audience will make the final decision.

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Seminar Eleven

Trees in the townscape 2035 – what will it look like?

Date
9th December

Time
2-4pm GMT

Details for this seminar are in development.

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