

Please enter all your records on the Ancient Tree Hunt website at www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk. The recording form looks like this:

Record the girth in metres and centimetres. Never presume the first attempt is correct, slide or walk the tape around the tree a couple of times. Always make sure the tape is level.



best if it has a release and rewind mechanism
if you can, use a 1.5m or longer linear metric plastic or flexible steel tape to measure the girth of a tree. If not, string, a dog lead or a belt can all be used!

Where on the tree do I measure?



For trees with a good single stem (trunk) always measure at 1.5m above ground level. Historically, 5ft was the height large timber trees were measured to avoid root buttresses and allows us to compare measurements more accurately.



1.5m stick to stand next to the tree for accuracy. Also useful for branches/netts (friends) for fun and safety



notepad

camera (if you have one)



remember to check your tape for damage

What you need to measure a tree

handy metal hook - can be attached to the bark



Why measure the girth of a tree?

- Measuring a tree gives it an identity and helps highlight its importance as perhaps the largest specimen in the locality.
- Without historical references the girth of a tree is important to help estimate its age. Periodic measuring provides information for a more scientific study to assess growth rates and age.
- To experience the excitement of finding that the tree you have just measured is the largest of its species, either locally or nationally!

TIP
Measuring trees is not an exact science, but to ensure we can compare trees as accurately as possible, please follow these guidelines.



The Ancient Tree Hunt

The Ancient Tree Hunt is a five year project to find and map all the fat old trees across the UK.



This online interactive project is led by the Woodland Trust in partnership with the Ancient Tree Forum and the Tree Register of the British Isles, and is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Scottish Natural Heritage.

We need your help to discover and measure the forgotten treasures all around us and put them on the map. Every tree you find and measure can be added to our interactive ancient tree map with the click of a mouse. Visit www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk for more.



A brief history of tree measuring

One of the first references to tree measuring can be found in parish records of 1630 relating to the ancient churchyard yew at Crowhurst in Surrey. An exceptional elm tree was measured in 1636 after it had been felled in a field in Uttoxter, Staffordshire and in 1664 John Evelyn's *Silva* described a number of remarkable trees for the first time in print. Measurements are sparse up until the 19th century and the first prolific tree measurer was John Claudius Loudon, whose impressive 8 volume *Arboretum et Fruticetum Britannicum* (1834-37) provides us with more than 500 historical tree measurements. Between 1880-1895 Robert Hutchison measured nearly 1,000 trees, mostly in Scotland and more than 3,500 records appear throughout the volumes of *Trees of Britain and Ireland* by Elwes and Henry (1900-1913). Modern day tree measuring reached new heights with the late Alan Mitchell who measured more than 100,000 trees between 1953-1995 and co-founded the Tree Register of the British Isles.



All records submitted will be verified by a network of trained volunteers.

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Registered charity number 294344.

Tree illustrations by Neville Fay www.treeworks.co.uk

and English Nature's *Veteran Trees: a guide to good management*

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TIP

UK online centres offer free or lowcost access to email and the internet. To find your nearest centre call free on 0800 77 1234



The Ancient Tree Hunt

Measuring the girth of a tree



girth
noun

The distance around the outside of a thick or fat object, like a tree or a body:

The oak was five metres in girth.



Measuring trees – frequently asked questions...

How do I measure a tree on sloping ground?

Always measure at 1.5m from the ground on the upper side of any slope or the highest part of ground if uneven.

Make a note if there appears to be unusual ground disturbance which may artificially have raised soil levels or if erosion has taken place. **Record all relevant notes in the comments box on the recording form at www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk**



How do I measure a leaning tree?

A leaning tree should always be recorded by measuring 1.5m up the underneath side.



Leaning tree

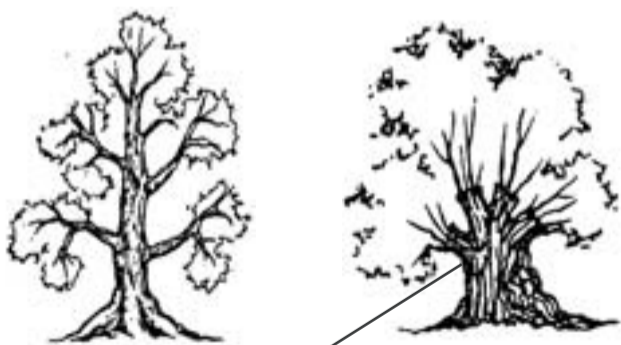
TIP

Ensure when measuring the girth that the tape is perpendicular to the trunk and follow all other points as if measuring a standing tree.

What do I do if the tree forks at 1.5m?

If the tree forks or abnormally swells at or below 1.5m, then the smallest measurement below 1.5m must be recorded and the height from ground noted.

Most trees will be recorded as a maiden or a pollard (see pictures below).



Maiden

Pollard

evidence that the tree was regularly cut in the past

What do I do if the tree forks below 1.5m?

With small or very low branches it may be possible to still record at 1.5m, measuring above the branch. Try to record the girth where it would compare best if it had a clean unbranched trunk. Remember to record the height at which you measured.

TIP

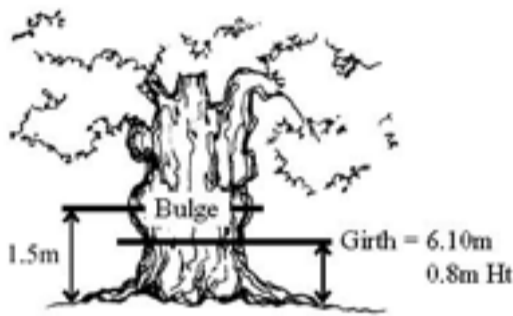
A tree that forks low down may be multi stemmed – see to the right

How do I measure a burred or knobbly tree?

Where burrs or swellings are evident at 1.5m, put the tape around the stem at various points below 1.5m to find and record the smallest girth measurement.

Keeping the tape level may include abnormally large burrs that exaggerate the girth and notes must be recorded of such a measurement. In this situation, it is acceptable to provide a girth measurement with a tape that is not level, thus enabling you to avoid the burrs and measure the smallest girth. Occasionally, a tree may be completely burred on its main stem exaggerating all measurements. **Record all relevant notes in the comments box on the recording form.**

The girth of a normal forest tree tapers evenly and is smaller at 1.5m than any point below. Therefore, if a smaller girth can be obtained below 1.5m this should be recorded as it will be more comparable with other trees.



TIP

Record several measurements at various heights above ground level, such as at 0.3m, 1m and 1.5m, to confirm where the smallest girth is.

How do I measure a twinned or multiple stemmed tree?

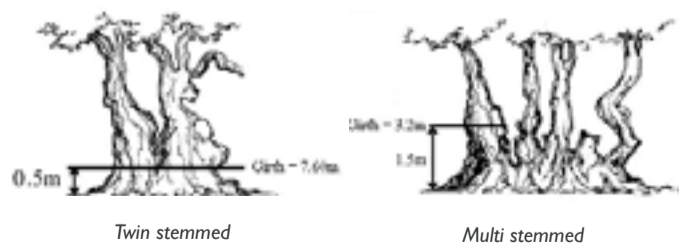
Trees growing without a clearly defined single stem at ground level may be considered as a multiple stem or arising from a coppice stool. Trees arising either naturally or deliberately planted in this way are not always easy to identify. Trees planted deliberately as a bundle are included here.

Where stems appear to arise from a single tree, rather than from a coppice stool (see top right), treat it as though measuring a single stem by finding and recording the smallest girth around all stems between ground and 1.5m. Measure and record the height above ground you have done this. Add comments on the recording form to describe what you have done.

If multiple stems arise close to the ground and it appears as though the stems may not all be part of the same tree, each stem should be treated and recorded as an individual tree. Where stems are close together this may not be possible and you must treat them as though measuring a single stem by finding and recording the smallest girth around all stems between ground and 1.5m. Measure and record the height above ground where you have done this.

Add comments on the recording form to describe what you have done.

The tree will be recorded as a multiple stemmed or coppice (see pictures below).



Twin stemmed

Multi stemmed

TIP

A multiple stemmed tree is one where the girth recorded is exaggerated by a second, or more, stems and is therefore not comparable with a tree with a defined single stem.

How do I measure a coppice stool?

Although coppice stools are not being actively recorded as part of the Ancient Tree Hunt, they do create great interest and the following information can be recorded.

- Measure around the whole stool at the narrowest point.
- Count the number of stems.
- Measure the stems at 1.5m above ground level (or at least the largest two or three).
- Record as with a multiple stemmed tree.

Enter records at www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk

The tree will be recorded as a coppice.



Are pollarded trees important?

Record all pollards that are clearly of traditional origin, even if the girth is quite small.

Can I estimate the girth?

A tree that is growing on private property where permission has not been obtained from the landowner; within a hedge; surrounded by dense undergrowth; or on the opposite side of a ditch or river, will have to be estimated.

Estimating girth from a distance is only gained by experience. Try estimating the diameter (thickness) of the stem and multiply by three.

Enter records at www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk making it clear if the tree is on private land.

All estimated measurements must be recorded on the Ancient Tree Hunt recording form in 'hugs'. One 'hug' is considered to be 1.5m. For example: recording a tree as 3 hugs, would mean an estimated diameter of 4.5m

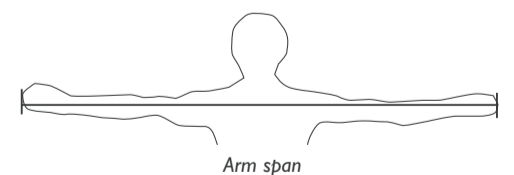
Do not record an estimated measurement other than in hugs, otherwise it will be presumed the tree has been accurately measured.



Photographer's name

TIP

If you know the measurement of your own 'hug', (the length of your total arm span between outstretched fingers) you can estimate the girth of a tree if you have forgotten your tape measure!



Arm span

Can I measure trees on private property?

Always ask permission first if you want to measure trees on privately owned land.

Take care!

Look out for roots, rabbit holes and brambles that might trip you. Beware of low branches, deep water and livestock.

No tree is worth risking future tree hunting!