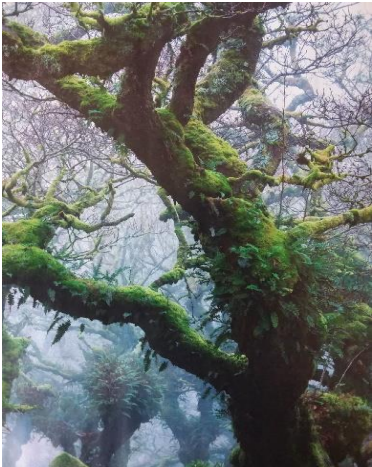


TREES AND CARBON CAPTURE



Most of us are much more aware now of the unavoidable fact that humans are by far the most destructive species on this planet. Thankfully, we are also more aware of what we can do to change our behaviours, rebalance our relationship with the natural world and repair some of the damage we have done.

An important concern with regard to increasing global warming is the vital issue of carbon capture and the role of trees. As with all these complex environmental challenges, our responses need to be equally multifaceted and thought through to ensure long term benefits. We can do this.

High quality research is ongoing in the UK and beyond, and the Woodland Trust and Wildlife Trusts are doing fantastic work on our responses, along with many environmentalists, Defra and other organisations. This all helps, a lot.

We know that trees are excellent at capturing and storing carbon, but which are the best and how can we intelligently plan ahead to reduce climate change and restore some of the vast losses of natural habitats for wildlife? It is not enough to just pledge to plant vast numbers of trees in the UK. We need to know what to plant, where to plant and to avoid the mistakes we made with huge conifer plantations. We must also stop stripping the soil of all its nutrients with chemicals and overgrazing. As I have said before, many times, if we have poor soil, we cannot have healthy plants and without plants, we will ultimately, have nothing....

So, a huge challenge faces us, but we have reflection, intelligence (with notable well known exceptions!) and environmental sciences to help us plan well and make a real, positive difference. Phew.

Here are some useful facts about carbon capture from the Woodland Trust:

Broadleaf trees are better at storing carbon than conifers, with beech trees in the top 5 for locking up destructive CO₂. This is due to their high timber density. Fast growing conifers are good for easy financial gain, but not for long term sustainability, eco-diversity and reducing climate change. Soils store a

huge 72% of the total carbon capture for a wood, with tree trunks, limbs and leaves locking up 17%, tree roots 6% and deadwood 5%.UK woodland captures 20million tonnes of CO 2 annually, and we can improve on this by planting trees most effectively across our small island.

We may not all have the resources or space to contribute to mass tree planting, but we are all aware of the small, incrementally useful things we can do to help now:

If you have a garden, or community space, plant a new tree if you can. Autumn is the best time to do this, when the earth is still warm and the trees have time to establish before new growth in the springtime. Think small and native, and make a square planting hole as the roots establish more firmly than in a round one. Ensure it is well watered in the first few years of growth.

All the usual daily eco-helpers of reduce, reuse, recycle to avoid waste.

Don't fly! Leave that to our perfectly adapted feathered friends, but do put out some sustaining seeds and water for them throughout the cooler months.

Enjoy the glorious colours of autumn as our broadleaf trees lose their leaves and prepare for a period of dormancy over winter.

If you get the chance, read *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben, an inspiring book for the longer evenings.