

# Fellowship of the Trees CIC



## Community Tree Nursery Collaborative

### Year 3 Engagement Report



**November 2023 – October 2024**

## 1. Overview of the year

We're proud to mark our third birthday as the Community Tree Nursery Collaborative (CTNC). A significant milestone for any new initiative, it's a testament to the dedication of our community and the growth that has taken place.

This report presents the continuation of the CTNC's journey, from its inception to now completing our third year, spanning November 2023 to October 2024. Our third annual report provides an overview of the collaborative's key achievements, engagement insights, and qualitative findings from its diverse events and site visits. Additionally, it marks a step change in our growth with the partnership with the Woodland Trust to deliver the Growing Diversity project.

Our growth is a reflection of the thriving community tree nursery sector, with approximately 80 community tree nurseries (CTNs) in the UK, as per research by The Tree Council and Norfolk County Council<sup>1</sup>. These CTNs collectively grow approximately 250,000 trees per annum, either given away or sold at minimal costs. As part of this growth, our member base has expanded from 38 in the first year to 64 in the third year.

The CTNC continues to play a vital role in nurturing peer-to-peer learning, fostering growth, and promoting sustainability within the sector. Alongside our core programme, we have successfully delivered the Growing Diversity project in partnership with the Woodland Trust and hosted engaging webinars and in-person events.

This year has also seen a personnel change with Hayley Rogers stepping down as Network and Events Officer and John Hardy taking on her role. Hilary Campbell has continued in the role of Growing Diversity Project Officer.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we're excited about our plans for future growth, yet our immediate priority remains securing funding beyond March 2025 to ensure the CTNC's continued success.

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<sup>1</sup> [Boosting community tree nurseries - The Tree Council](#) - "We found approximately 80 CTNs in the UK and an appetite for more"

## **2. About the CTNC**

### **2.1 Our purpose**

The Community Tree Nursery Collaborative (CTNC) was founded in November 2021 as a peer-to-peer learning network to enable community tree nurseries in the UK to share good practice and consider common issues, challenges and opportunities.

Our dream is to inspire and nurture the successful growth of hundreds of community tree nurseries across the UK, bringing people together to cultivate locally sourced trees to increase tree cover for ecological and community well-being.

Our goals are to:

- Create a peer-to-peer learning network to enable community tree nurseries to share good practice and consider common issues, challenges and opportunities
- Nurture the successful growth of new and emerging community tree nurseries.

### **2.2 Our governance**

The CTNC is hosted by Fellowship of the Trees CIC and guided by a Core Group of established CTNs. The Core Group is made up of Forus Tree, Moor Trees, Living Woods NE CIC, Special Branch Community Tree Nursery and Mull Community Native Tree Nursery, providing a range of experience from across Britain.



The Core Group, along with the Network and Events Coordinator and a Director from Fellowship of the Trees met online every two months to set strategy for the CTNC and oversee its implementation.

### **2.3 Our staff**

We were very sorry that Hayley Rogers had to leave us in August due to health reasons. And grateful that we were able to appoint John Hardy as our new CTNC Events & Network Coordinator.

John has joined our team alongside Hilary, our Growing Diversity Project Coordinator. Both have been employed by Fellowship of the Trees CIC (FOTT) until March 2025 with funding from the Trees Outside Woodland Fund via Norfolk County Council and the Forestry Commission respectively. A key priority for us to secure funding to continue to have the staff resource needed to support the CTNC's growth and deliver our programme of activities.

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<p><b>John Hardy</b> CTNC Events &amp; Network Coordinator</p>	<p><b>Hilary Campbell</b> Growing Diversity Project Coordinator</p>
 A portrait of John Hardy, a man with a beard and a cap, standing outdoors near a body of water.	 A portrait of Hilary Campbell, a woman with long dark hair, smiling indoors.
<p><b>Responsible for coordinating the Community Tree Nursery Collaborative (CTNC)</b></p> <p><u>Key Objectives:</u> Maintain a peer-to-peer learning network to enable community tree nurseries to share good practice and consider common issues, challenges and opportunities. Nurture the successful growth of new and emerging CTNs..</p>	<p><b>Responsible for coordinating the Growing Diversity project</b></p> <p><u>Key Objectives:</u> To support CTNs in regions where little or no seed collection is occurring. In particular to enable the increase in collection of prioritised species that are hard to source and grow.</p>

### 3. CTNC core programme

#### 3.1 Training webinars

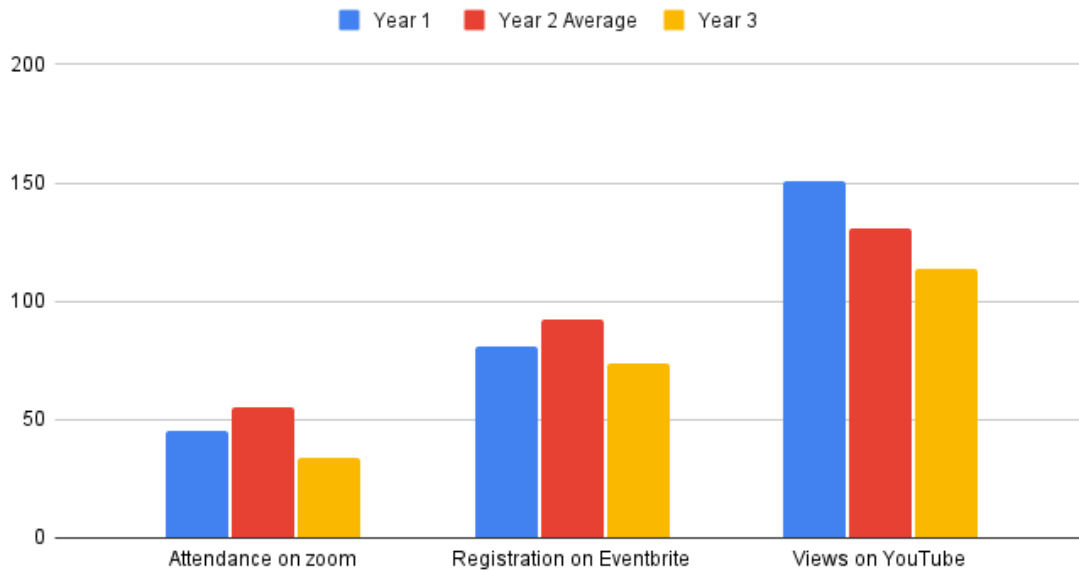
In our third year we have continued a programme of themed educational webinars together with five open space sessions for members to collaborate.

The CTNC always takes guidance from the core group and wider collaborative to ensure these events are as helpful as possible. The events have been held on a Tuesday evening from 18.30-20.00. We continue to enjoy a healthy attendance rate for these sessions reflecting a strong core demand among Community Tree Nursery members for information and instruction. We planned to hold five webinars over the year but due to staff illness were only able to host three.

**Table 1 - CTNC webinar engagement**

	CTNC Webinars	Speakers	Date	Registration	Attendance on Zoom	YouTube views
1	How to set up a Community Tree Nursery	Rod Richardson, Emmaus Community Trees, Anisha Bahkta & Stephen Hill, Plymouth & South Down CTN	30/01/24	100	53	181
2	Gaining Ground: Composting for Community Tree Nurseries	Ben Bryant, Sustainable South Hams and Jack Corin, Symbiosis Soil Lab	03/06/24	69	21	86
3	Rooted in Community: Exploring Permaculture through Community Tree Nurseries	Mark Shipperlee, North East Living Woods CIC	15/09/24	55	27	76
				<b>224</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>343</b>

**Graph 1: CTNC webinar engagement year on year comparisons (averages)**



### 3.2 Open Space sessions

The core group led “Open Space” online sessions continue to be well attended and useful for the collaborative members and these have continued to be held every other month where funding and resources have allowed. They continue to add value by providing a more informal and unstructured session for CTN members to ask questions, discuss issues and develop community.



**Table 2 - CTNC Open Space session engagement**

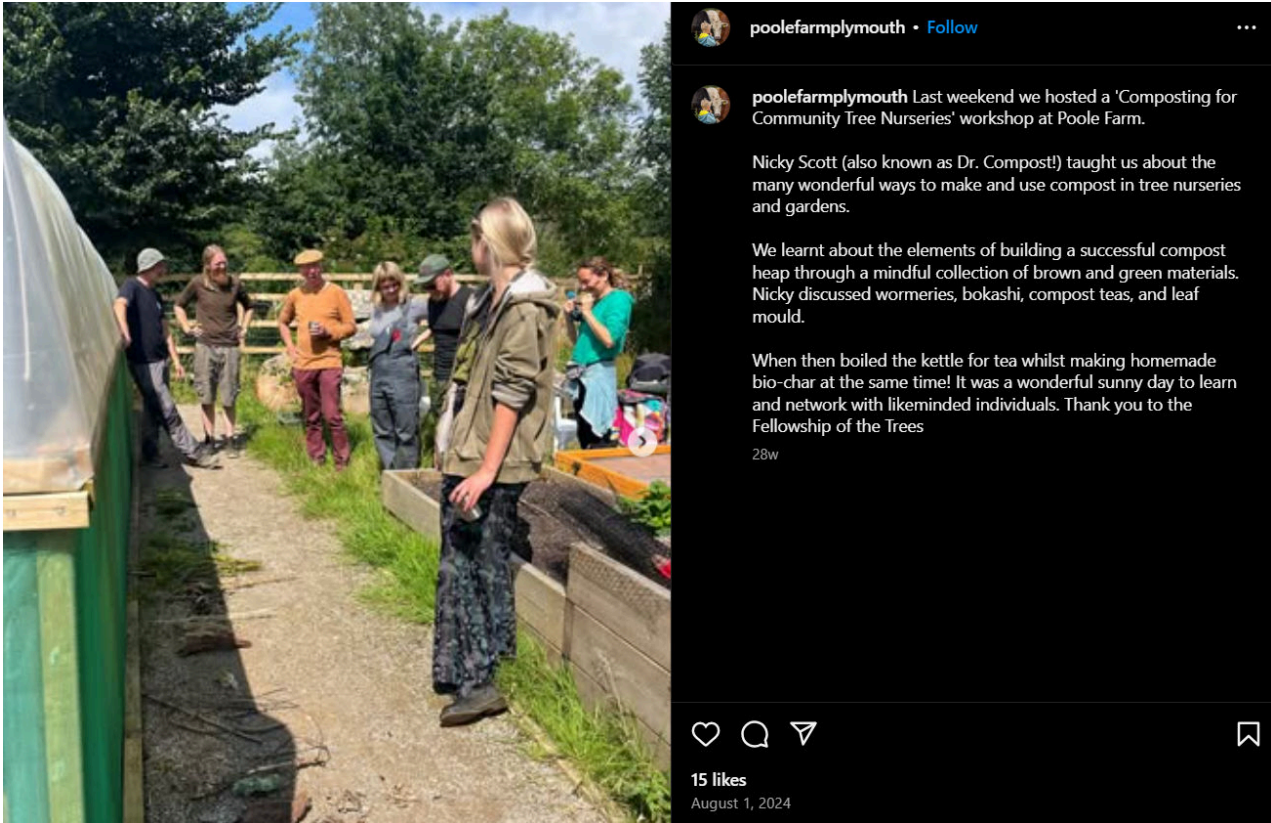
<b>Date</b>	<b>Registration</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Key topics covered</b>
12/12/23	21	12	Pest and disease management, funding opportunities in 2024, propagation and stratification
20/02/24	17	9	Community engagement, planting for the future (climate change), plans for 2024
23/04/24	19	10	Germination rates from 2023 seeds, compost, plastic reduction, watering rates
20/08/24	11	7	Rare species locations, biosecurity certification, topics for webinars, DEFRA budget/funding
22/10/24	44	14	Availability of seeds this season, insurance costs, funding for CTN start-up, biosecurity certification
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>52</b>	

### 3.3 Site visits/In-person events

In addition to our online learning and knowledge sharing programme, the CTNC organised two in-person events during Year 3. In today's digital age, the importance of in-person events cannot be underestimated, particularly in fostering strong connections within community networks. While online platforms serve as a vital tool for communication and collaboration, face-to-face interactions provide unique opportunities for deeper engagement, collaboration, and hands-on learning.

In-person events allow participants to share knowledge, exchange ideas, and build relationships in a way that virtual gatherings often cannot replicate. These gatherings create a sense of community and belonging that is essential for the sustainability and growth of initiatives like the CTNC. During this reporting period, we held two significant in-person events that exemplified our commitment to enhancing knowledge sharing among community tree nurseries across the UK.

The first event, titled "**Gaining Ground: Composting Workshops for Community Tree Nurseries,**" took place on July 27, 2024, at Poole Farm in Plymouth. This workshop attracted 10 enthusiastic participants who engaged in hands-on composting activities tailored to the specific needs of community nurseries. Attendees shared valuable insights on best practices, while gaining practical skills in composting techniques that support tree health and sustainability. The collaborative atmosphere fostered both learning and networking, empowering participants to implement new composting methods back in their own communities.



The second event, "**Seeds for Change: Growing Trees from Seed in a Northern Climate**," was held on October 12, 2024, at Darroch Nurseries near Linlithgow, Scotland. Although we had 10 people registered, stormy weather impacted attendance, resulting in only 7 participants being able to join. Despite the weather challenges, the event proved to be a success as attendees engaged in discussions about seed propagation techniques suited for northern climates, sharing their experiences and challenges.

The intimate size of the group allowed for rich discussions and the exchange of local knowledge, enhancing the shared understanding of climate-specific tree nursery practices. The group also included a community gardener from London who had travelled all the way to Scotland to learn about CTNs as they were unable to find an in-person course in their area.

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***"It gives a more comprehensive view of nursery management, and I have a better idea of where to seek support if I set up a tree nursery in the future."***

**Rowena, participant, Seeds of Change**

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*Participants at the Seeds for Change: Growing Trees from Seed in a Northern Climate hosted by Darroch Nurseries near Linlithgow, Scotland in October 2024*

Both events highlighted the resilience and commitment of the community tree nursery network. Attendees left with practical skills, enhanced networks, and renewed motivation to contribute to their local environments. Looking ahead, we hope to continue bridging the gap between online platforms and in-person gatherings, thereby reinforcing the foundations of collaboration and camaraderie within the community tree nursery movement.



## 4. Growing Diversity Project

The Growing Diversity project is a collaboration between the Woodland Trust (WT) and FotT and is funded through the Tree Protection Innovation Fund (TPIF) run by the Forestry Commission. The project runs from August 2023 to March 2025. In this report we cover the project's activities up to the end of October 2024.

The project aim is to support CTNs to increase and diversify domestic tree supply including those considered as 'hard to grow' native broadleaf species. The project basis came from a recognition that local CTNs in certain provenance zones were more able to access and propagate these species in comparison to larger commercial nurseries.

By targeting provenance areas with little or no seed collection, the project anticipated obtaining seeds that have developed genetic resilience to withstand local stressors such as pollution, weather conditions and climate change. CTNs collection and production of hard-to-grow species would diversify tree stock nationally and thus provide a unique selling point and increase their commercial value.

Seven CTNs from the CTNC network have been involved in presenting at webinars and in-person events: Moor Trees, Bolghen CTN, Two Fields Community Farm and CTN, Children's Forest, Gressenhall CTN, The Deer Wood Trust, Forus Tree. A commercial nursery Elsoms Trees Ltd. provided a speaker for a webinar on the business of community tree nurseries. The project has also networked with other community groups and organisations including tree wardens and the National Trust.

**Table 3: Growing Diversity webinar events and attendance**

	Growing Diversity Webinars	Speakers	Date	Registration	Attendance on Zoom	Views on YouTube
1	The Business of Community tree nurseries	Helen Aldis, & Dave Lewis Moor Trees CTN & Rodney Shearer, Elsoms Trees.	21/12/23	74	38	53
2	Healthy Community trees	Rebecca Gosling Woodland Trust.	23/01/24	97	45	30
3	Biosecurity Certification and Assurance Schemes	Jessica Stanton & Adam Rayner Bolghen Trees CIC Cornwall	07/02/24	58	27	30
4	Hard to Grow Species - Germination Protocols	Adam Rayner, Bolghen CTN	12/03/24	80	28	0*

5	Growing Volunteers	Richard Higgs and Emma Jones, More Trees BANES	14/05/24	56	20	74
6	Introduction to growing trees in CTNs part one	Adam Owen, consultant	11/06/24	87	30	199
7	Introduction to growing trees in CTNs part two	Adam Owen, consultant	16/07/24	60	22	97
<b>Total</b>				<b>512</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>483</b>

\* This recording is not available for public viewing

The number of attendees at webinars, and overall registrations represents a positive response to the project, as they are higher than anticipated. There has been positive feedback from the webinars and in general within the project.

**Table 4: Growing Diversity project in-person events:**

<b>EVENT NAME</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>REGISTERED</b>	<b>ATTENDEES</b>
Introduction to Growing	Gressenhall CTN, Norfolk	18/05/24	7	4
Trees in the Ground and Hope in Hearts	Children's Forest	02/06/24	6	6
Growing Trees for Climate Resilience and Agroforestry	Two Fields CTN, Debenham, Suffolk	21/09/24	20	15
Holistic approaches to growing trees from seeds	Deer Wood Trust, Devon	28/09/24	10	6
Seed collection event	Moor Trees, Avon Valley Woods, Devon	04/10/24	20	18
Seed collection event	Gressenhall CTN, Norfolk	05/10/24	12	10
Seed collection event	ForusTree, Centre Vale Park, Todmorden	19/10/24	20	12
<b>Total</b>			<b>95</b>	<b>71</b>

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***'Thank you all so much for this informative, friendly and useful day, such a good way to learn and share knowledge with other like minded people'.  
Susan, attendee 'Growing Trees for Climate Resilience and Agroforestry'.***

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Plans for the remainder of the project include:

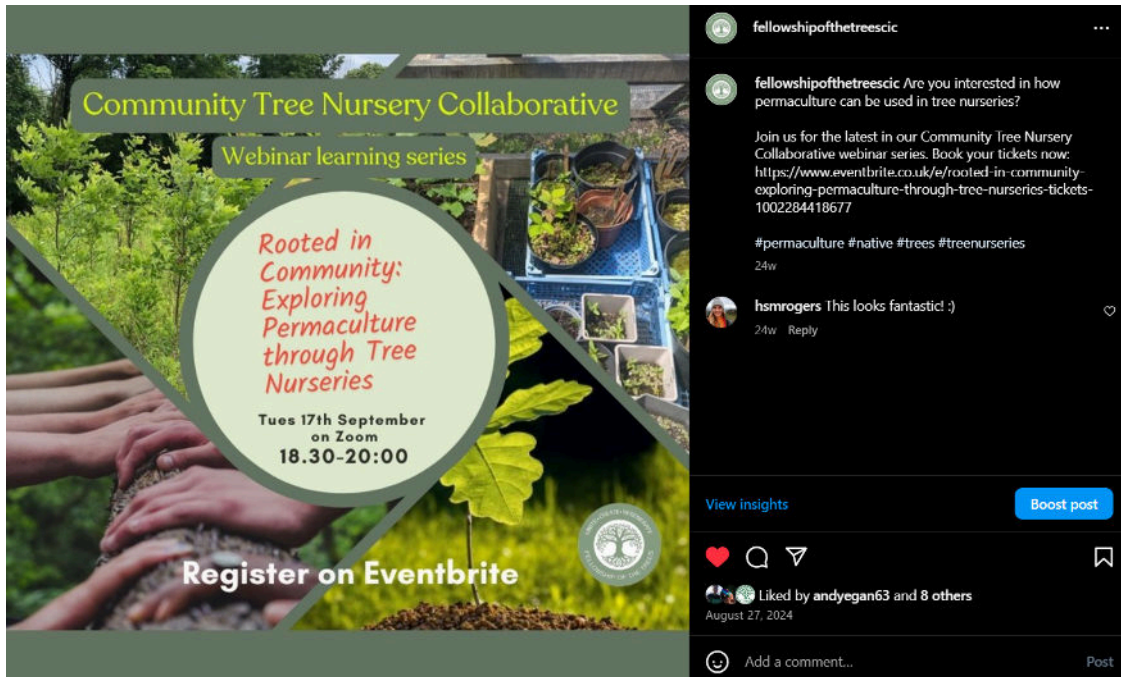
- A Substack for the project. There will be a post for each event with useful resources and links
- Short films. The production of four short films to provide useful tips, guidance and resources for supporting CTNs on a range of topics

Some of our reflections on the ways this project could be improved are related to comparison to the CTNC. It could be that providing an 'open space' aspect will allow for fostering of community and therefore build engagement between and for the webinars and site visits. The events could have benefitted from a space where community tree nursery folk could come and share ideas, network in relation to the GD project and ask further questions.



*Seed collecting at Gressenhall CTN, Norfolk in October 2024*

## 5. Social Media



Posts promoting the CTNC events continue to be posted on all the main social media platforms, predominantly via Fellowship of the Trees accounts. Registrations for events are through Eventbrite with no paid advertising provided. Email campaigns are created for all events through the Eventbrite marketing tool to previous participants of events and to all those who are registered with the CTNC (through a Google form). Generally over 50% of recipients continue to open the email on any given campaign from Eventbrite.

**Twitter:** 340 followers for FOTT account (<https://twitter.com/FellowshipTrees>), up from 318 in Year 2. CTNC posts are featured regularly including for all the events.

**Instagram:** ([Fellowship of the Trees CIC \(@fellowshipofthetrees\)](https://www.instagram.com/fellowshipofthetrees)) - has 304 followers, up from 252 in Year 2.

**LinkedIn:** FOTT account (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/fellowship-of-the-trees>) with 271 followers, up from 244 in Year 2, includes posts of CTNC events.

**Facebook:** There are two pages that promote and share updates related to the CTNC:

**The Fellowship of the Trees page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/fellowshipofthetrees>

The main Fellowship of the Trees Facebook page has over 2,000 likes and 2,260 followers.

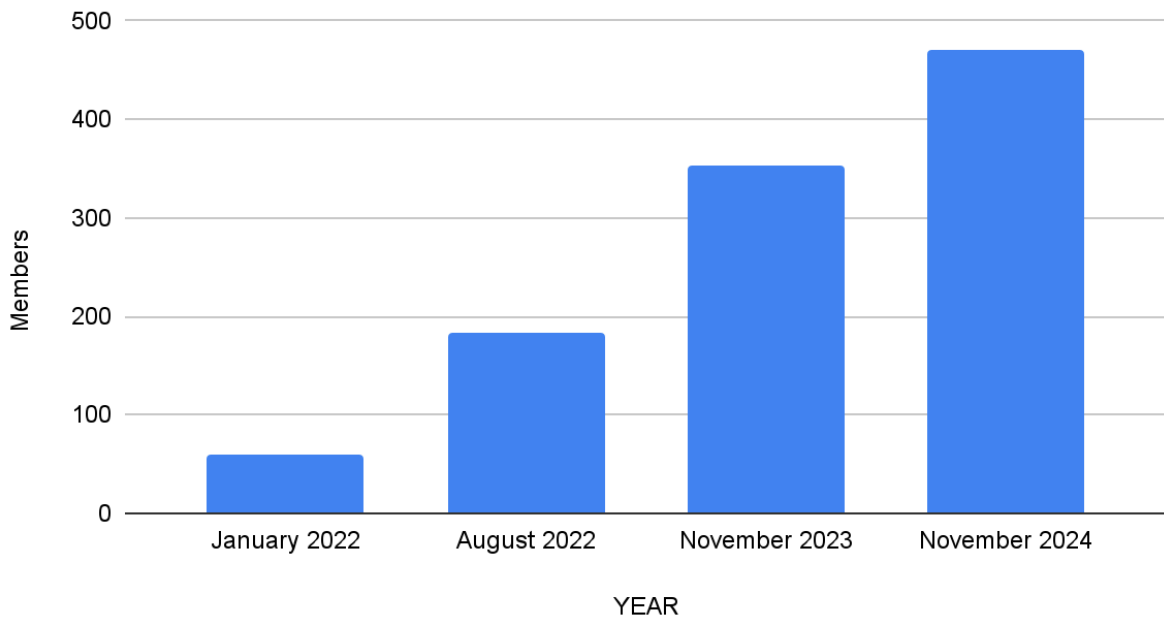
**The CTNC Private Facebook Group**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/communitytreenurserycollaborative>

The private Facebook group remains the key platform for CTN members to share their experiences and ask questions.

Membership has grown steadily, from 60 members in January 2022 to 184 members in August 2022, to 354 members in November 2023 and 470 members in November 2024.

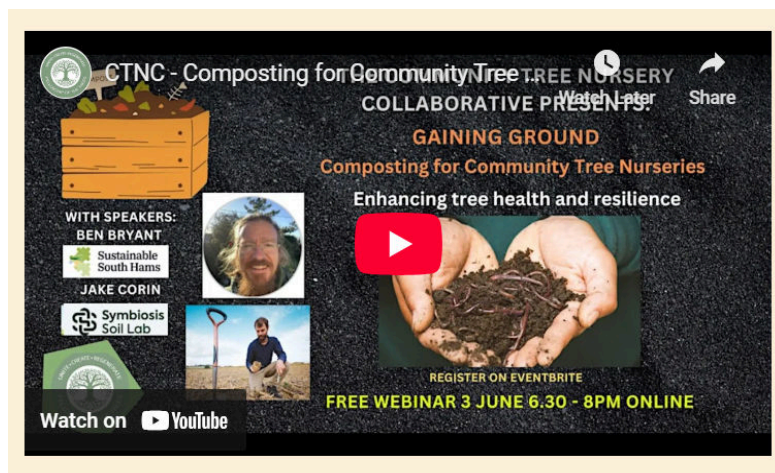
### Membership of CTNC Private Facebook Group



### YouTube

Our YouTube channel has 192 subscribers at the end of year 3. Sharing our webinars online allows attendees to rewatch, enables those who were unable to attend to learn and provides an opportunity for those not involved in the CTNC to discover to our work and share in the knowledge provided.

The CTNC published all three of the webinars produced in year 3 on to YouTube and altogether these received 785 views. In total, there were 13 videos on YouTube from the CTNC at the end of year 3 with a collective total of 2,478 views.



## 6. CTNC growth

In December 2021 an online registration form for CTNs to register with the CTNC was created. The purpose is to quantify the size of the CTN community in the UK and to understand their structure, training and support needs. The link to the registration form is available on the private Facebook group, the CTNC page on the FOTT website and is included in event emails.

The number of CTNs who have registered has grown steadily over the year with 14 CTNs joining the network, taking the total from 50 in November 2023 to 64 at the end of October 2024, a 28% increase (see Appendix 1 for full list).

Registered CTNs receive emails regarding upcoming events and updates about other CTNC matters (such as sharing resources via a private Google drive folder).

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***"A realisation of a growing biodiversity crisis followed by a realisation of just how important trees are in an urban environment were my first steps towards growing trees from seed, then an awareness of Community Tree Nurseries led The Rainham Tree Group to lobby for the establishment of a CTN locally.***

***At every stage inspiration has been taken from the existence of other CTNs while knowledge made available and support provided through the CTNC has been essential in providing the confidence to move forward."***

**Leon Roskilly, The Rainham Tree Group**

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## 7. Interagency Collaboration

A key element in the continuous advancement of events and activities for the CTNC is the effective communication and collaboration between FOTT, CTNC, and various partner organisations. Our partnership with the Trees Outside Woods project at Norfolk County Council has played a crucial role in sustaining the CTNC, providing essential funding for events and the position of a Coordinator.

In October 2023, we were invited to participate in DEFRA's monthly meetings of key stakeholders involved in supporting the community tree nursery sector. These focus on collaboration to strengthen support for the CTN sector on a national level. We attend regularly, as they provide a valuable platform for networking, engaging with decision-makers, and bringing attention to issues affecting the sector.

Our ongoing relationships with Coventry University's Growing Connections project, The Tree Council, Woodland Trust, Forest Research, and International Tree Foundation foster cohesive discussions on how to effectively leverage available resources and funding. This collaboration has the potential to amplify the CTNC's collective voice in UK-wide decision-making processes led by DEFRA and the Forestry Commission regarding tree provision for the UK tree markets.

## 8. Future development

In our fourth year, we will focus on several key objectives:

1. Ensure the long-term viability of the CTNC by securing sustainable funding.
2. Collaborate with the Core Group and the broader network to define the CTNC's role in fostering the continued development of community tree nurseries (CTNs).
3. Develop a bespoke website for the CTNC including an online Resource Hub.
4. Launch an interactive online map of the CTN network to facilitate collaboration among members.
5. Advance our social media strategy in line with a comprehensive digital marketing approach from FOTT, recognising that the CTNC currently sees the highest levels of engagement and responses on Facebook. This would include a separate social media identity for the CTNC with specific accounts and handles on , for example, Instagram and Facebook.
6. Seek partnerships with socially diverse groups and organizations to promote greater equity, diversity, and inclusiveness in community tree nursery initiatives.

We are committed to working together with our collaborators to achieve these goals and strengthen the impact of the CTNC.

## 9. Last words

As we celebrate our third year, we're reminded of the power of community and the vital role the CTNC plays in fostering a sustainable future. The growth we've witnessed, both in the number of nurseries and the knowledge shared, is a testament to the dedication of our members and the unwavering spirit of the CTNC.

From the workshops to the webinars, we've seen firsthand how collaboration and shared learning can transform practices and empower individuals. The CTNC is more than just a network; it's a movement. It's a community of passionate individuals committed to growing trees, building connections, and nurturing the health of our planet.

While we have achieved so much, our work is far from finished. The demand for locally sourced trees continues to grow, and the challenges we face – from securing funding to addressing climate change – are significant. But we are confident that, with our shared determination and collaborative approach, we can overcome these obstacles. We must continue to support the growth of new nurseries, share knowledge, and advocate for policies that promote the expansion of community-led tree planting.

As we look to the future, let us remember the core principles that have guided us: collaboration, learning, and sustainability. Let us reaffirm our commitment to the CTNC and the vital role it plays in building a greener, healthier world for all. Let's ensure the CTNC continues its important work

**APPENDIX 1: CTNC members**

NEW IN YEAR 3	
Abbots Leigh Trees	Meridian One Community Garden
Broadford Community Tree Nursery	Poole Farm Community Tree Nursery
Edibleculture	Purbeck Community Tree Nursery CIC
Essex Forest Initiative	The Sherwood Seed Bank
Future Forests Project	The Steel Valley Project
Horsemans Hill Farm	Treelink Stirling
Manx Wildlife Trust	Wild Holm Grown

JOINED IN YEARS 1 AND 2	
2 Fields - A Community Supported Farm	Moor Trees CIC
Arboria (A Common Ground Cooperative)	More Trees BANES
Bolsover Woodlands Enterprise Ltd	Mull Community Native Tree Nursery
Children's Forest Tree Nursery	North Pennines AONB Partnership
Chiltern Rangers CIC	Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest - Poole Farm Community Tree Nursery
Claver Hill Tree Nursery and Coppice	Remember The Future
Coed Y Tor Trees	Ribble Rivers Trust
Coeden Fach Community Tree Nursery	Salhouse Community Tree Nursery
Community Native Tree Nursery	Sandwich Community Tree Nursery
Cornwood and Lutton Tree Nursery	Scolton Manor Tree Nursery
Dare Valley Community Woodland	Sherwood Forest Trust
Emmaus Cornwall Tree Nursery	Sirhowy Hill Tree Nursery
Fferm Goedwig Gymunedol Dyffryn Tanat	Sirhowyhill Woodlands CIC Tree Nursery
Forest Canopy Design	Special Branch Community Tree Nursery
ForusTree	The Gaia Trust
Foxley Wood Tree Nursery	The Rewilding Community CIC
Gressenhall Community Tree Nursery	The Tree Musketeers
Harborough Woodland	Transition Town Dorchester
Hayfield Community Tree Nursery	Treecycling Macclesfield
Ketton Green Spaces Group	Troserch Woodland Society
Let's Plant Together, Let's Grow Together	Tulgey Woods Sanctuary CIC
Living Woods North East CIC	Valley Community Woodland Farm CIC
Llyn Parc Mawr	We Together CIC

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Meeth Quarry - Devon Wildlife Trust	WeSEE Trees Community Tree Nursery
Meithinfra Coed Cymunedol Gwaith Powdwr Community Tree Nursery	Woodland Skills Centre