



MEDIA INFORMATION  
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Majestic Trees announces dramatic advances to peat-free tree production, showcasing AirPot grown, specimen trees at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival 2024

Majestic Trees is proud to announce significant strides in its transition to peat-free tree production using AirPot technology, without the need for additional watering or feed. The award-winning nursery, industry leaders in supplying specimen and mature trees to both trade and the public, will exhibit several peat-free AirPot grown trees at the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival 2-7<sup>th</sup> July 2024, including a multi-stem *Prunus x yedoensis* in the 'RHS Peat Free Garden' designed by Arit Anderson.

In response to the urgent need for more sustainable horticultural practices, coupled with a growing demand for mature pot-grown trees, Majestic Trees has made significant advancements in its commitment to peat-free tree production. Trials have been ongoing for 12 years, and in 2023/24 included over 1,500 trees across more than 100 different genera\*, representing over 90% of the 500+ varieties grown at the nursery. The trials have shown promising success in some of the most challenging pot-grown tree species including *Stewartia*, *Styrax*, *Cornus* and *Magnolia*, the latter of which will be exhibited at RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival 2024, as well as great leaps forward in more resilient species such as *Acer*, *Prunus*, *Quercus* and *Fagus*.

Steve McCurdy, Managing Director at Majestic Trees, says *"We have been working diligently towards a future without horticultural peat use for the past 12 years and take our commitment to sustainability very seriously. Growing large trees, peat-free, in AirPots – some as large as 5,000 litre – is not a straightforward process. It requires long-term trials, constant analysis, careful monitoring and new thinking that is taking time to perfect."*

The trials at Majestic Trees initially confirmed what is widely accepted by many nurseries, that peat-free pot-growing requires more water and fertiliser. However, not only is this approach unsustainable, the poor structure and water-retention capability of existing peat-free compost solutions was drawing tree roots directly to the bottom of the pot, leading to root-ball disintegration when the AirPot is removed.

Steve McCurdy continues: *"Over the last three years, largely thanks to the dedication of our trials lead Ellen Underwood, we have made some really positive leaps forward. We have invested in research and development into environmentally friendly wetting agents, bio-stimulants, mulches and adapted irrigation techniques, all with great success. But to produce high-quality mature trees, with large root-ball systems suitable for transport, some of which are pot-grown for up to 20 years, we need to continue to innovate and be realistic about the future."*

Since its inception, Majestic Trees has used AirPot technology to produce the highest quality, dense, fibrous root-ball systems that are not hidden behind rigid pots (which create additional handling challenges), that transfer very successfully to their final growing locations. The nursery is committed to this premium standard of tree for its customers and while peat-free trials have highlighted the complexities of the transition process, they have also shown it is possible to establish a new industry standard with innovative and pioneering production methods.

Steve McCurdy advocates for a realistic transition to peat-free production for mature trees, suggesting that the current 2026 deadline set by the RHS for 100% peat-free plants across its shows and gardens is too ambitious and that a 2030 deadline, in line with current, though changeable, UK government guidelines, is more achievable. He concludes: *"While many nurseries are finding it relatively easy to adopt peat-free methods for crops that take 6 weeks to 6 months to grow, Majestic Trees is focused on maintaining the structural integrity and moisture retention of peat-*



*free compost for long-term tree health and overcoming the challenges of growing ericaceous plants peat-free. Rushing the process could lead to these genera being imported from Europe, with associated increased carbon footprints and biosecurity risks. A more achievable target for the RHS and UK government would be 2030, allowing sufficient time for data collection, analysis and hopefully success.”*

To view the full range of trees available from Majestic Trees, and to arrange to visit the nursery to discuss your tree requirements, visit <https://majestictrees.co.uk> or visit the Majestic Trees stand at RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival 2024.

\* Genera – plural of genus. A class of similar things, especially a group of animals or plants that includes several closely related species.

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For further information, to arrange interviews or request high-res images, please contact Bloom PR & Communications – [hello@bloom-pr.co.uk](mailto:hello@bloom-pr.co.uk)

### **About Majestic Trees**

Majestic Trees is one the UK's leading independent nurseries specialising in specimen, semi-mature and mature trees. Its 27-acre site in Hertfordshire grows over 500 varieties of tree, all grown in 35 to 4,000 litre AirPots. Majestic Trees is recognised annually with industry awards for its exceptional quality and innovative, sustainable practices.  
[www.majestictrees.co.uk](http://www.majestictrees.co.uk)

### **RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival**

Majestic Trees is exhibiting at the [RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival](https://www.rhs.org.uk/hamptoncourt) 2-7<sup>th</sup> July 2024. Steve McCurdy and the team will be available on Stand HC320 (Garden Avenue 1) to showcase the results of the long-term trials they have undertaken and can advise on the best peat-free options for tree-health and climate resilience.  
[www.rhs.org.uk/hamptoncourt](https://www.rhs.org.uk/hamptoncourt)