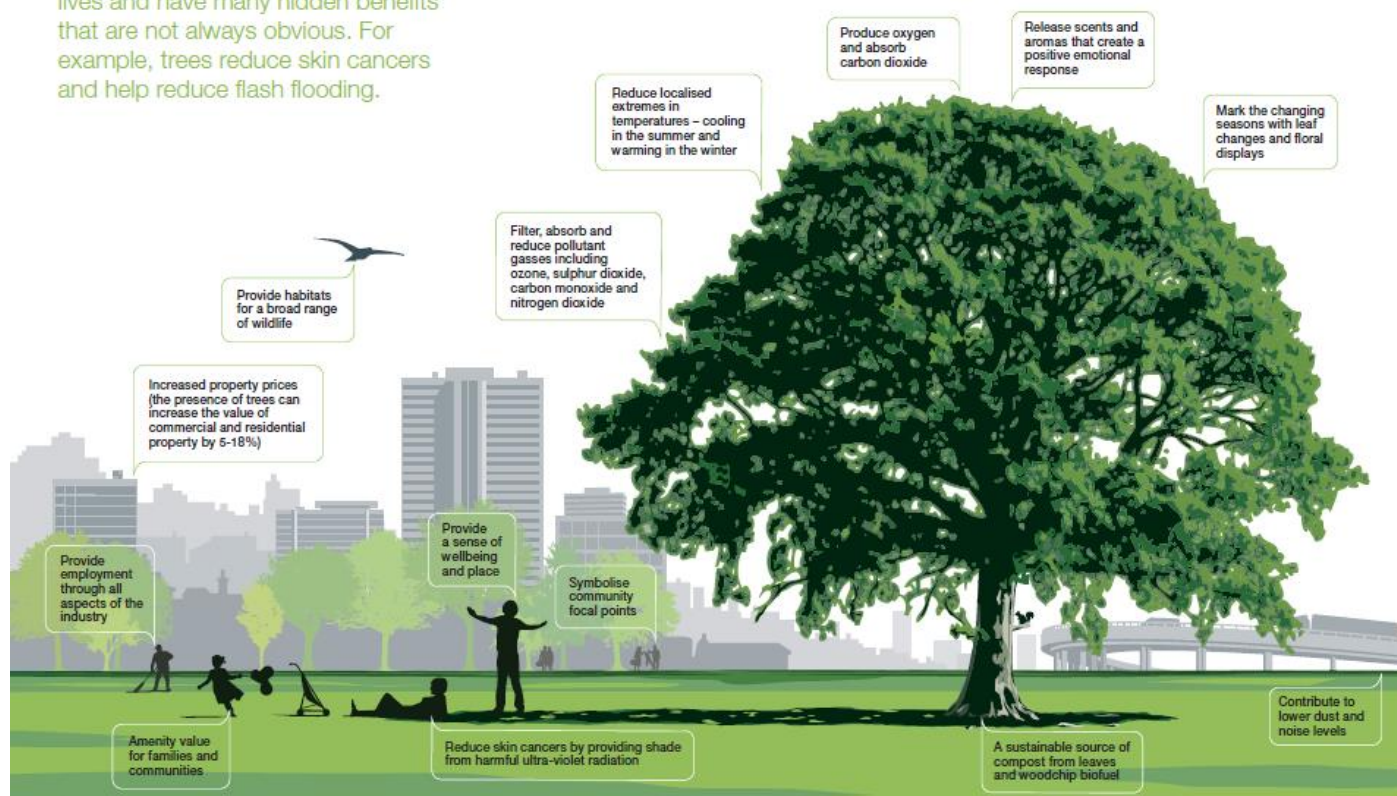


Career profile - Arboricultural Officer (Tree Officer)



Arboricultural officers are responsible for managing trees, in order to maintain and improve the amenity, environmental and wildlife benefits of the tree population. They protect trees from development, pests and diseases and mismanagement. Arboricultural officers are responsible for managing new planting projects, which guarantee the future of this valuable resource. They also “speak for the trees”, collaborating between residents, community groups, developers and politicians to deepen engagement with the environment. Without arboricultural officers, the multitude of benefits that trees provide local communities could be lost.

Trees are an important part of our lives and have many hidden benefits that are not always obvious. For example, trees reduce skin cancers and help reduce flash flooding.



What do arboricultural officers do?

Arboricultural officer roles vary, but typically include:

- Carrying out tree inspections on streets, housing estates, parks, cemeteries and schools
- Liaising with and providing tree expertise to stakeholders
- Managing the statutory system of tree protection **tree preservation order (TPO)** and **conservation area** applications
- Protecting threatened trees by creating new tree preservation orders
- Providing advice on planning applications with respect to trees
- Supervising tree maintenance and tree planting contracts

- Organising tree planting schemes
- Using GIS systems to record and analyse tree stocks

While arboricultural officers oversee tree maintenance, the actual pruning work is carried out by **tree surgeons**, which is a distinct career.

What are the job practicalities?

- Employed by a local authority or its contractor
- Salary of £20-40k, 25-30 days annual leave
- Working 35-40 hours per week split between the office and site visits
- Mix of independent working and collaboration between departments
- Usual benefits include generous pension, flexi-time, training budget, mileage allowance
- Often requires own bike or car, depending on location
- May be required to serve on a call-out rota to handle tree emergencies out of hours

What is a typical day?

A typical day might begin in the office, checking emails/voicemails and preparing surveys and site visits. The next stage is heading out on site to inspect trees, either on a routine basis or as the result of ad hoc requests from residents. Then it's back to the office to upload the survey data and follow up on enquiries. If the role includes planning responsibilities, there will also be time spent assessing applications, visiting sites, writing reports and issuing decisions.

What is an unusual day?

An unusual day may involve a storm event, training programme, or court case. In the aftermath of storms an arboricultural officers may need to make many site visits and will need to prioritise jobs based on potential risk. Another day could involve professional development such as an LTOA seminar or Arboricultural Association training course. Infrequently, officers may represent their council in Court, at Planning Inquiries or Hearings as an expert witness relating to tree issues within the borough.

What skills are involved in being an arboricultural officer?

Being a tree officer requires a mix of skills gained through formal education, work experience or on the job training.

- Tree expertise: tree biology, tree risk management, tree maintenance
- Pests and diseases: knowledge of current biological threats to trees in the UK
- Legislation: covering areas such as Highways, Wildlife, Planning and Tree Protection
- Local and National Guidance: including planning policies, British Standards 3998, 5837, and 8545
- Technology: use of information technology, including tree management software and diagnostic equipment
- Self-motivation: able to work independently, managing time and resources without direct management

- Communication: able to communicate effectively orally and in writing to a range of stakeholders including residents, councillors, and contractors
- People skills: able exercise diplomacy, persuade and influence and negotiate successful outcomes.
- Organisation: attention to detail, consistent and methodical approach, effective recordkeeping.
- Creativity: problem-solving and finding innovative solutions.
- Financial: prioritising works according to budgets.

What qualifications are required to be an arboricultural officer?

Arboricultural officer roles require a formal arboricultural qualification. The Arboricultural Association provides a useful overview of [what's available](#) and [where](#). Many entrants have been educated purely in arboriculture, however, an increasing number of officers are coming to arboriculture, with a qualification in a different subject, “topped up” with an arboriculture qualification and outside work experience.

There are also useful certificates available, such as the [LANTRA Professional Tree Inspection](#) or the [ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification](#).

Tree surgery qualifications, e.g. [LANTRA Felling and Processing Trees over 380mm](#), are not required.

What experience might assist in becoming an arboricultural officer?

Prior to working as an arboricultural officer, options to gain relevant experience include:

- Working as a [tree inspector](#)
- Working as a [groundsperson, climber, or team leader with a tree surgery firm](#)
- Working in similar fields, for example planning, ecology, landscape architecture
- Volunteering with a local authority or organisations such as [Trees for Cities](#), [Royal Parks](#), [National Trust](#), and [Forestry Commission](#)
- Serving as a [local tree warden](#)
- Joining the [Arboriculture Association](#) or the [International Society of Arboriculture](#)

What is the career progression?

Many arboricultural officers pursue further education while working, by taking additional qualifications such as the [Level 6 Professional Diploma](#), an MSc, or [ICF accreditation](#).

Career development may lead to other roles including:

- Arboricultural Manager: supervise a team of arboricultural officers, carry out more strategic functions, including contract negotiation, tree strategy development and budget management
- Arboricultural Consultant: work either self-employed or employed as a consultant advising clients on tree condition and management, tree safety or trees in relation to development.
- Arboricultural Contract Manager: work on the contractor side, managing the relationship between the tree surgery firm and its client, the local authority
- Training Provider/Lecturer: educate the next generation of arboriculturists

Where can I learn more?

Career Profiles:

- [Arboriculture Association – Careers](#)
- [LG Careers Wales – Tree Officer](#)
- [Horticulture Week – Local Authority Tree Officer](#)

Educators include:

- [Arboriculture Association – Directory of Educational Providers](#)
- [Capel Manor College – Arboriculture, Agriculture and Environmental Conservation](#)
- [Merrist Wood College – Arboriculture and Forestry](#)
- [Myerscough College – Arboriculture](#)
- [Persore College – Arboriculture](#)

Job Listings:

- [Arbjobs – Tree Officer Listings](#)
- [Horticulture Week jobs](#)
- [CTC Recruitment – Temporary Tree Officer and Tree Inspector Listings](#)
- [LTOA – Job Listings](#)