

**Help to protect Britain's trees – get involved in the OPAL Tree Health Survey
in your neighbourhood this summer**



National nature survey for all ages and abilities ends next month.

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For immediate release

SCIENTISTS are urging people across Britain to get outdoors and examine the health of the trees in their gardens, local parks or woodlands before the end of September.

The OPAL Tree Health Survey, which launched in May 2013, gives people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to learn more about our trees and help scientists protect them from pests and diseases including Chalara Dieback of ash and Oak Processionary Moth.

The survey is best carried out when leaves are still on the trees and signs of pests and diseases are easier to spot. So survey organisers are encouraging as many people as possible to take part during August and September, before trees start to shed their leaves.

People can still order OPAL's free survey packs – which include a full-colour tree ID poster – or download all the resources from the OPAL website: www.opalexplornature.org/TreeSurvey

After taking part, simply send OPAL the completed survey forms using the freepost address or enter the results online.

Dr Linda Davies, Director of OPAL at Imperial College London, said: *"We need as many people as possible to take part in the OPAL Tree Health Survey this summer and send in their results – whatever they find. Whether the tree appears to have a clean bill of health, or they're the first person to spot a potentially harmful pest or disease, every survey really does count."*

The survey has been developed by OPAL, the Open Air Laboratories initiative, in partnership with the Forestry Commission's Forest Research agency, and the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), and is taking place across England, Scotland and Wales.

The results will be analysed by experts at Forest Research to help them to draw a picture of tree health across Britain. The data could even help to prevent OPAL's six 'Most Unwanted' pests, such as the deadly Emerald Ash Borer, from becoming established in this country.

This survey is the seventh created by OPAL, and there is still time for people to get involved in the other surveys too and study their local environment, from the soils under their feet to the skies above them. Just visit www.opalexplornature.org/surveys for more information.

ENDS

For media enquiries, please contact Kate Martin, OPAL Communications, on k.martin@imperial.ac.uk / 020 7594 9339.

High resolution images can be downloaded for media use at <https://icseclzt.cc.ic.ac.uk/pickup.php> using claim ID KCDjSwCA2tBzdxcv and claim passcode NWvtFF2EGu8pnMeV

Notes to editors

1. Open Air Laboratories (OPAL), led by Imperial College London (www.imperial.ac.uk), is a nationwide partnership initiative that inspires communities to discover, enjoy and protect their local environment. OPAL provides the skills and materials needed for the first national community-led study of the world around us. OPAL is funded by a Big Lottery Fund – Changing Spaces grant. For more information, please visit www.opalexplornature.org or follow us on Twitter [@OPALNature](https://twitter.com/OPALNature)
2. More information about the ‘Most Unwanted’ and the other pests and diseases covered by the OPAL Tree Health Survey can be found at www.opalexplornature.org/tree-pests-diseases
3. OPAL is committed to the environment. The survey is printed on 100% recycled paper, totally chlorine free and received the Forestry Stewardship Council Chain of Custody certification. All printed materials use vegetable-based inks, which makes the de-inking stage of paper recycling much easier. The pack is also supplied in a clear plastic bag made from biodegradable cornstarch.
4. The Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera) is an Executive Agency of the UK Government’s Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Its remit is to provide robust evidence, rigorous analysis and expert professional advice to government, international organisations and the private sector, in order to support and develop a sustainable and secure food chain, a healthy natural environment, and to protect the global community from biological and chemical risks. www.fera.defra.gov.uk
5. Forest Research is the Forestry Commission's research agency and is the UK's foremost body for forest and tree-related research, including tree health issues, surveying and monitoring, silviculture, ecology and social science. It also has expertise in hydrology, land stability and urban greening and leads in forestry adaptation and the contribution of forestry to climate change mitigation. Forest Research's work informs the development and delivery of UK Government and devolved administration policies for sustainable management and protection of trees, woods and forests. www.forestry.gov.uk/forestresearch
6. The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been providing grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. It was established by Parliament on 1 December 2006. Full details of the work of the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards are available at www.biglotteryfund.org.uk