

2007 Report for Donors to the British and Irish Hardwoods Improvement Programme, funded by Donations from the British and Irish Hardwoods Trust, Coford and Forestry Commission.

Ash Group

- A Provenance Region 30 ash clonal orchard was planted in Devon in 2006, and a similar orchard for Region 40 in November 2007 at Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham.
- EMR have collected more plus trees. There are now over 350, and most are in clonal genebanks, held both in Kilmacurra in Ireland and at Bradbourne in Kent.

Birch Group

- 43 silver birch plus trees were identified during the last year in North England/ South Scotland, bringing the total for all 4 regional populations to about 160 individuals included on the database.
- A first harvest from the polyhouse seed orchard of Tayside selected trees was made in 2007.

Cherry Group

- With the decision of EMR to stop working on forest trees, the Cherry Group has been undertaking a “rescue operation” to ensure that the clones and plus tree material that have so painstakingly been collected since the 1980s are not lost. Grafts of the material are being collected at several sites in Britain and Ireland to permit future work and for the establishment of more seed orchards.

Oak Group

- An investigation in to ploidy levels of all oaks in the BSOs was carried out as triploids can be infertile (and should therefore be eliminated). All turned out to be diploid.
- No new plus trees were identified during the year, but there are plans to resume this task.
- All orchards are currently (November/December 2007) being measured for 5 year growth data. Analyses and reports due next summer.
- Many oaks are in clonal gene banks at Little Wittenham, Sotterley and Kilmacurra in Ireland.

Sycamore Group

- Ten superior seed-bearing stands have now been identified and registered for the species in Britain and Ireland. Seven of these are in Britain and three in Ireland - two in the Republic of Ireland and one in Northern Ireland. This means that for the first time improved seed is available to the nursery trade.
- Almost 200 plus trees were identified between 2006 and 2007 in Britain and Ireland and scion collection from these is in progress for the establishment of conservation collections and in due course the development of clonal and seedling seed orchards. This will lead to far greater improvements in the planting stock for the species than from registered seed stands alone.

Sweet Chestnut Group

- A major field investigation is being undertaken in Ireland in an attempt to identify 100 plus trees for future breeding work. One new seed stand was also identified and registered in Ireland in 2007.

Walnut Group

- Funds were provided to commission Forest Research to prepare yield models for *Juglans regia* and *J. nigra* under different climate scenarios. A report is due in March.

All Species database

- This unique database will give the details and numbers of all the “plus” trees identified in our 7 species, their locations, quality, sex, dimensions, owners etc when completed. It will be added to as new “plus” trees are identified across our species range or deleted as trees are eliminated. We are hoping all will be collated and up and running by end March 2008.

Performance Plans and breeding strategies

- Most species groups have now produced very professional performance plans and targets. The next stage is to prepare breeding strategies for each.

Beech

- Beech is an important tree, but we have not yet considered it a sufficient priority to create a separate Species Group, to locate new “plus “ trees, create seed orchards and agree and implement breeding programmes. However a considerable amount of valuable work was done 30 years ago. We considered it important to rescue this work for possible future use. We commissioned and have completed a report summarising the extent of current work, so that a decision can be made at a future date..