

# Veteran Tree Management Guide

Durham Biodiversity Partnership

**Veteran  
Trees  
Project**



## 2 Identifying Veteran Trees



*A Sycamore showing characteristics of a veteran tree*

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There are a number of characteristics that veteran trees display:

- Natural loss of canopy (including wind damage)
- Decaying wood in the crown
- Decaying wood on the ground
- Water pockets and rot-holes
- Aerial Roots and dead wood in the trunk



*Dead wood in the canopy, Sweet Chestnut*  
© John Bragg



*Rot holes in Veteran Beech*  
© Doug Moffatt



*Decaying Beech wood on the ground* © John Bragg

- Hollowing branches
- Hollowing trunk
- Fungal blooms

However a veteran tree would not necessarily show all of these, three or four would be enough! Many people believe that fungi can be found inside the tree from when it is a seed. The fruiting bodies that you might see on the outside of the tree only become visible when there is enough dead wood for the fungus to feed on and oxygen in the air to provide energy to reproduce, unless it is a predatory fungi species such as honey



*Hollowing branches on a Sycamore*  
© Durham Biodiversity Partnership



*Hollowing trunk in Sweet Chestnut*  
© John Bragg



*An elm tree in Spain that has developed aerial roots known as hawsers to help stabilise the tree and stop it from collapsing*  
© Ted Green



*Fungal blooms on a Beech*  
© John Bragg

fungus, which can attack living wood.

In addition the tree may also:

- Have a pollard form or show indications of past management
- Have a cultural/historic value
- Be in a prominent position in the landscape

All trees show most or all of these traits at some point in their lives, even smaller species such as birch and hawthorn. Species that may not be seen as trees (such as elder) should be treated in the same respect as they still provide valuable deadwood habitat.

One note of caution is that young trees which have been physically damaged by things like vandalism or weather can show the features above, and at the same time some veterans may exhibit very few habitat features.



*A standing dead beech tree covered in Ganoderma adspersum (Bracket fungus)*  
© John Bragg



*A veteran hawthorn at Ivesley; smaller trees can also provide considerable dead wood habitats*  
© Jesse Meredith