

successor on the same site), now a stump set in concrete and surrounded by broken shards of glass. Is this where it all happened? Mankind's loss of innocence and disconnect from nature? Forced into agriculture, our evolution changed enormously from that of tree dweller.

We move through the last one to two thousand years to arrive at the 21st century. Colonisation by European settlers from the 15th century onwards has been a key factor in the domination over many indigenous peoples, but Wood suggests there was a closer harmonisation between human activities and nature in these earlier days than we perhaps now choose to remember. The levels of exploitation and unsustainable practices we are now familiar with mainly started with the Industrial Revolution and increased in intensity thereafter.

I found plenty of substance in this book, including milestones such as the Malthusian principle, published anonymously – presumably because his topic was so sensitive – by Thomas Malthus in 1798, arguing that there must come a point at which we can no longer feed a rapidly growing population. Often referred to today as the Malthusian fallacy – because humans have continually overcome these problems in the short term – we now have greater recognition of the cost to the environment in solving these major challenges. We also learn about Jean-Baptiste Fourier, who in 1824 identified carbon dioxide and methane as heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere; Ralph Waldo Emerson, who in 1836 questioned why many people fail to see nature's beauty and how our spirits can be corrupted by the external environment; George Perkins Marsh, who in 1864 criticised man's detrimental impact on the environment; and John Muir, who not only persuaded Roosevelt to designate Yosemite as a national park in 1890 but convinced him to do likewise in five other areas.

Wood's summing up is that, for millennia, humans have been closely connected with trees. We need to relearn that we are very much part of an interconnected web and not a separate entity within nature. We are the trees and they are us. Indigenous peoples know best how to manage their forests. We need to give them space. In doing so, we will all benefit. We need this for our survival.

John Browne



## A GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS COVER FORESTRY PRACTICE IN IRELAND

BY SEAN HOSKINS

Pro Silva Ireland, 2025 | 103pp, €15+P&P

Continuous cover forestry (CCF) is now recognised as one of the most important strategies for increasing forest resilience to climate change and other environmental threats. Very much the mainstream approach to silviculture in central Europe, in other regions CCF remains underdeveloped and of secondary importance to rotational forest management. Several barriers to wider adoption of CCF have been identified<sup>1</sup>, and high on this list is the need for practical guidance to support foresters in new skills and methods of individual tree and irregular forest management.

Ireland, like Scotland, currently has a relatively young forest estate dominated by even-aged conifer plantations. Clear-felling is the primary silvicultural system, and irregular forestry has not been widely adopted. However, since the founding in 2000 of Pro Silva Ireland, a group of dedicated foresters, ecologists and woodland owners has been pursuing an alternative path forward. Informed by experience of CCF elsewhere in Europe, this group (of which this reviewer is a member) has been working to translate CCF principles to meet the needs of forests in the milder but windier conditions of the Atlantic seaboard.

This commitment in time and effort now bears fruit in the form of the first technical guide for CCF practice in Ireland, which is made possible with support from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Written by Sean Hoskins, a respected forester and CCF practitioner, this important new publication is testament to the power of shared knowledge and collaboration. The author has worked with a small team of colleagues and drawn examples from woodlands in Ireland that are actively being transformed to CCF. The text is highly accessible to a wide audience of professionals and woodland owners. All the photographs are from Irish forests. With a high production quality, this beautiful new guide is a source of technical information and inspiration in equal measure.

**Main image:** A 19th century illustration of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, featured in *The Great Tree Story* by Levison Wood.

The handbook follows a logical structure explaining what CCF is and outlining its principles and purpose. CCF is often defined in terms of what it is not (i.e. clear-felling). Here we have a confident definition that declares CCF as 'forest management that works with natural processes to produce quality timber, while maintaining and enhancing other forest functions within a permanent forest structure'. Central to the thinking is adaptive management that responds to changing conditions and avoids forcing a site to fit one particular treatment template.

From here, the reader learns more about the practical and operational considerations associated with woodlands being transformed from plantations to irregular structure. Key elements include tree assessment, crown thinning, developing skills in tree marking, and planning felling operations that take into account biodiversity and other stand attributes. There is a strong link between forest cultivation and marketing of value-added outputs; without an economic driver, most sustainable forestry would not be possible. In addition, there is useful information on measurement and monitoring. The accumulation of data about individual tree/ecosystem performance is emphasised as critical for future stand management.

Among the most innovative elements of the book is a chapter on CCF forest establishment. This is where mixed-species stands are created using compatible species, and planted in intimate and grouped arrangements. Planning enables woodland owners to access establishment grants where their long-term management objective is CCF woodland.

Beyond the silviculture of stand transformation, the book includes a number of 'field sheets' to support decision making and implementation of CCF operations. These include a standard protocol for tree marking adopted throughout Ireland to minimise

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the risk of confusion between foresters and harvester operators when it comes to the correct trees to retain or remove during stand interventions. This is supported with information on the identification of 'bio trees', retained for their inherent biological and ecological contribution, and on requirements for natural regeneration. For those new to CCF, the glossary is essential reading. It includes terms that are familiar to CCF practitioners but which may be new to colleagues more familiar with rotational forest management systems.

This new guide is of very high relevance to readers in Scotland. It demonstrates that CCF is achievable in oceanic forests dominated by Sitka spruce and other fast-growing exotic commercial species, where soil conditions, wind risk and thinning history are taken into account. The similarities between Irish and Scottish forestry are such that Hoskins' book can be safely recommended as the most relevant guidance for practitioners in Scotland at the present time. The case for CCF as an effective strategy for multifunctional and resilient forest management could not now be stronger.

The book concludes with an Irish perspective on the path forward for CCF. It presents a positive view of 'a work in progress' and the value of shared experience and partnership at a time when priorities are shifting and changing. CCF emerges as real-time management of changing environmental conditions and their impacts. Perhaps most prescient to foresters in Scotland are some of the concluding recommendations in the book. Hoskins states that 'adaptation will require a significant reintegration of native species into Irish commercial woodlands to help with, amongst other things, the development of forest conditions engendering stability and enhancing biodiversity'. Adaptive management is clearly a process of learning

from the forest and embracing change.

This is a most valuable addition to the currently available texts on continuous cover forestry. It is a handbook with wide application, written by and for forestry practitioners, and certainly marks a step forward in Irish forestry. We learn above all that, like a fine cask of 'whiskey', evolution in the practice of forestry is an art and science that requires teamwork, patience and close observation of nature.

**Edward Wilson**

<sup>1</sup> Mason, W. L., Diaci, J., Carvalho, J., Valkonen, S. (2022) Continuous cover forestry in Europe: usage and the knowledge gaps and challenges to wider adoption. *Forestry*. 95 (1), 1-12.



### TREE HUNTING: 1,000 TREES TO FIND IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND'S TOWNS AND CITIES

BY PAUL WOOD

Particular Books, 2025 | Hardback, 507pp, £30  
ISBN 9780241502051

I knew I would enjoy *Tree Hunting*, having read Wood's *London's Street Trees*. They are similar in aim, but the scope here is greater and, as space is limited (a thousand trees means at least a thousand paragraphs of text), most trees do not have an accompanying photo.

Wood hopes readers will get out and about, searching out trees, starting locally to 'look afresh at your hometown'. My own, Edinburgh, features on the cover, and I could visualise many of the selected trees simply from the dots on the map. All the photos are stunning and most are full-page, accompanied by appealing names and descriptions. Once I had made a start, I was eager to know more.

The enticing photo of No.534, The Kensington Postbox Tree, shows a London plane consuming its Edwardian post box. This is cross-referenced with No.838, The Greedy Tree, in Cardiff and No.941, The Hungry Tree, in Dublin. Further delving reveals No.45, Bicycle Tree, Callander, which tells its own story. I am hooked, and want to visit all four trees.

Sometimes a single paragraph is enough to entice me to go out of my way. Having previously visited No.365, Meavy Feted Oak, on the edge of Dartmoor after reading Gabriel Hemery's entry for it in *The New Sylva*, I found both authors' descriptions similarly inspiring. Even when the text is not accompanied by a photograph, as for No.528, Herne Hill Hanami Tree, I am often tempted to visit.

I was curious to see how easy it might be to find some of the featured trees on a trip to London in August. The book has a focus on urban areas, and I very much appreciate

the strong connections between trees and people. I entered the what3words references of some tempting candidates into my phone and easily located No.547, The Marylebone Elm, No.557 (pictured left), Poor Susan's Plane and No.558, St Magnus's Headache. The author intends to add a digital map and database of all the trees to his website at [thetreetree.com](http://thetreetree.com), making tree-spotting even easier. The site also offers guided walks.

Wood spent four years extensively travelling to select 'the most marvellous trees growing in Britain and Ireland today'. After initial research, he would travel to an area, engage local experts and make his selection on the basis of whether the tree has an interesting story, its accessibility on foot and whether it is free to visit (there are only a few exceptions). Further explaining his selections, Wood reveals some personal favourite species: London plane, beech, cedar of Lebanon and sycamore. Sometimes a tree would be encountered by chance, as at Beaulieu when, searching out the famous ancient elm only to find it dead, a magnificent sycamore was spotted within a few metres, which became No.13, Consolation Sycamore.

This is a marvellous book for dipping into and being inspired. Every time I mention one of the trees to friends and colleagues, they become equally enthused by the story behind the plant. When I say a sweet chestnut was planted to commemorate the visit to Strathpeffer in 1550 of Mary of Guise – mother of Mary Queen of Scots – I receive a barrage of questions wanting to know more.

Every reader will have their favourites to search out. Next on my own wishlist is No.88, Corstorphine's Plane, a replacement for the original Corstorphine sycamore that blew down in 1998. It is another planting from this wonderful cultivar, brightening Edinburgh in the spring with its wonderful golden leaves. This is a book which, together with its online resources, will encourage you to get out there.

**John Browne**



### HOW TO DRAW A TREE BY ALEX BOON

David & Charles Ltd, 2025  
Hardback, 128pp, £14.99  
ISBN 9781446314791

As a leisure nature artist, the chance to review *How to Draw a Tree* had instant appeal for me. Now that I have read it through, I am certain that I will refer to the text many times.

This book is a drawing instruction manual with a focus on trees and woodland. It is hardback in A5 format, and clearly and cleverly laid out with 16 lessons across four chapters. The lessons are illustrated with graphite pencil, black ink fineline and coloured pencil drawings, as well as coloured photographs. Whilst the book is compact,