



Barrell on ... responses vital for best trees standard

Horticulture Week Opinion (5 August 2011)

BTC/56/2011



Barrell on ... responses vital for best trees standard



Planting a tree is easy. Getting it to survive, thrive and mature to deliver its full array of benefits is much trickier. We know that success rates of close to 100 per cent are possible because specialists such as Kew regularly achieve it, but the challenge is to make that aspiration a reality across the UK.

That is the goal of a new British Standard, BS 8545 *Code of practice for trees from nursery to independence in the landscape*, which is being worked up as a draft for public comment.

This initiative was prompted by inconsistent planting success rates, with dead or moribund trees providing evidence of widespread failures, contrasted by isolated islands of excellence. Such a range of performance begs the question: what are some doing so well and others so badly?

The panel, assembled from a spectrum of specialists including growers, contractors, managers, researchers and environmental consultants, believes that most of the answers are out there and its task is to find them.

In an unusual step for a British Standard, the panel is seeking the views of practitioners on the ground before the draft is written (www.surveymonkey.com/s/XS6GXDD). Feedback from this online survey will help produce a draft with a keen focus on identifying the practices that are delivering the best long-term planting success.

Early expectations are that a route-map format rather than a solution-based approach will be most appropriate, leaving it up to individual practitioners to select the path that best suits their particular circumstances. This is very much aligned to the coalition's "Big Society" agenda, allowing local needs to drive the detail within a broader, nationally recognised framework.

From my planning perspective, I regularly see new trees fail on developments because of insufficient adjacent rooting volume and I will be making that point. If you have observations of what works well and where you see it all going wrong, then access the survey and contribute to the process.

This standard has the potential to make a real difference to our national tree canopy cover, but only if it reliably captures the best of what is happening on the ground.

Jeremy Barrell is Managing Director of Barrell Tree Consultancy