

# Tree Champion, Brightling & Dallington Parish Councils

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## Ash Dieback Disease – Should I Do Anything This Year?

What's all the fuss about Ash Dieback? A few trees will lose their leaves and die, so what. Why should I worry?

Well, if you own land where Ash trees grow, and none of them pose a danger to public highways, rights of way or to buildings then you're right – you have little need to worry. In fact when they die (and almost all of them certainly will over the next year or so) those standing, and eventually fallen, dead trees will be a valuable habitat and food source for the birds, small mammals, fungi and very importantly our increasingly rare saproxylic insects like Stag Beetles that depend on old, dead wood.

However, if any of your Ash trees are close to a road, public footpath, bridleway or building then the situation is very different. To avoid risks posed by falling trees or branches they will need to be pruned or felled and the resulting timber and brash managed appropriately - all at the landowner's cost.

The advice I've been given by professional arborists is that very soon many Ash trees will become too brittle for an arborist to climb to reduce in size or fell the tree. Instead, other access methods will be needed such as the hire of mobile powered access platforms or 'cherry pickers' and operators.

For example: -

[A] **This year; Ash tree still safe to climb:** Arborist at around £200-350/day and, if next to a road, the cost and inconvenience of organising traffic management with East Sussex Highways.

[B] **Next year; Ash tree unsafe to climb:** Arborist at around £200-350/day, powered access platform at £250/week and £200 transportation costs, IPAF-certificated operator at £300/day and, if next to a road, the cost and inconvenience of organising traffic management with East Sussex Highways.

So what's my best course of action?

- 1) Where a tree might pose a risk as it dies, this year get professional advice from an arboricultural expert who has Professional Indemnity Insurance and who is prepared to give their opinion, in writing, about the risks involved.
- 2) This year or early next year, for trees already posing an unacceptable risk, employ a reputable arborist to reduce or fell the tree and manage the brash. If it's left in an appropriate place the timber from the felled trunk and large boughs provides a valuable habitat for saproxylics.

If you'd like further information please contact our Parish Tree Champion, **Doug Edworthy**.  
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