

Coronation Tree for Cornwall in Victoria Gardens

Context

His Majesty the King gifted each Lord Lieutenant across the country funding to plant a tree to commemorate the Coronation. Cornwall's Lord Lieutenant, Colonel Sir Edward Thomas Bolitho KCVO OBE, is keen to have the tree planted in Saltash, and at its October meeting the Town Council gave approval in principle to have it planted in Victoria Gardens.

A suggested location was submitted to the October meeting, but as a result of discussions since then a new location has been suggested: in the middle of the SEA bed, replacing the bird bath. I'd like to publicly thank SEA for their co-operation in agreeing to the new location, which is shown by the red circle in this photo:



The next decision is on the tree itself. I've spoken with the Lord Lieutenant, who is keen for the views of the Duchy's Head Forester and Cornwall Council's Forestry Officer to be taken in to account, but is content to leave the final decision to Saltash Town Council,

Having spoken with Geraint Richards (Head Forester to the Duchy of Cornwall and HM the King), Steve Harding (Cornwall Council's Forestry Officer), and the town's three tree wardens, there are three options for the choice of tree.

1. Ulmus Vada Wanoux (Elm) [Vada Elm 'Wanoux' - Barcham Trees](#)
2. Acer Pseudoplatanus Spaethii (Sycamore) [Acer pseudoplatanus Spaethii \(Red Sycamore\) - Barcham Trees](#)
3. Quercus petraea (Oak) [Quercus petraea \(Welsh Oak\) Tree for Sale - Barcham Trees](#)

Each of the three 'finalist trees' tolerates coastal, exposed conditions. Each has its pros and cons, but here are the views of the tree experts:

1. Ulmus Elm (mature height: 10-12m)

Barcham: A fast-growing tree that initially develops a conical to columnar shape, eventually forming an attractive oval crown. Covered in dense clusters of small green flowers during March and April, the broad, dark green leaves create a lush canopy during spring and summer. In autumn, the foliage transforms to a striking brown-yellow. Well-suited to wet soils, this elm also shows some resistance to Dutch Elm Disease.

Geraint: A good tree.

Tree wardens: An elm would be ideal because of its shape - not too broad.

Steve: Not too sure about elm cultivars, but this seems like a good one. It would be a great choice.

2. Acer Sycamore (mature height: 17-22m)

Barcham: Robust yet ornamental, this tree is an excellent choice for landscaping in exposed or coastal locations. The foliage, which is bright green on the upper surface and deep purple-red on the lower surface, turns orangey-red before falling.

Geraint: A good coastal tree. This is a very nice purple-coloured variety which HM The King likes.

Tree wardens: The leaf fall is very heavy and the leaves are large and shiny and slippery - they don't break down very quickly. It's just the wrong tree for all those paths and the slope, especially as the Gardens see high footfall..

Steve: A great variety, although I appreciate what the tree wardens say about the leaves.

3. Quercus oak - also called the Sessile Oak, Cornish Oak or Welsh oak (mature height: 20m+)

Barcham: Although the quercus oak can get to 20m+ in 50 years, the canopy is slightly narrower with a spread of between 12m - 15m. It has leaves that are broad for an oak, and evenly lobed. Flowers appear as small green catkins in the spring, with acorns developing over the 6 months following this. In autumn, the leaves turn brown before falling.

Geraint: I actually think an oak would be fine in that space and it's a very symbolic tree for such a place and purpose.

Tree wardens: An oak at that site might be overpowering - there isn't properly space here. (NB: these comments were before the suggestion of the sessile oak.)

Steve: I'm always supportive of planting oaks in parks due to their ability to transcend generations and tell stories for 100's of years. The setting is not particularly constrained with regards to rooting volume (as is demonstrated by the large Pine and Monkey Puzzle) and oaks do not have particularly aggressive roots so I wouldn't be too concerned about that. The site is quite exposed, but a sessile oak would tolerate the conditions well.

In Celtic mythology the oak is a tree of doors, believed to be a gateway between worlds, which would be appropriate as the gateway between one monarch and the next.

We are looking at a planting date in January 2025.

Report prepared by Hilary Frank