

# Arboricultural Careers

## Getting started

Working in arboriculture involves diverse activities such as chainsaw work, tree climbing, pruning and dismantling, using brushwood chippers or stump grinders, undertaking inspections and surveys of individual and woodland trees, advising landowners on how to care for their trees, or teaching others about the benefits of carefully managing trees.

There are two main routes to starting your successful career: academic or vocational; most qualifications include some elements of both. The most appropriate qualification for you will depend on your age, experience, existing qualifications and aspirations.

## Career Progression

For those already working in the industry, a vocational, academic or combined background, supported by relevant experience, can be a sound footing for moving into a managerial role. For example:

### Local Government –

the tree officer has considerable influence over prominent amenity trees and is usually either:

- Planning based – administering tree protection law and having most influence over privately owned trees, or
- Parks based – managing a council's own tree stock and advising the council on tree health and safety management issues.

### Arboricultural Consultant –

an arboricultural consultant provides advice and recommendations to tree owners and managers. This is likely to be in the form of written technical reports and may range from comments upon a tree's health and safety, through to representing clients in legal, insurance and planning matters.

### Arboricultural Contractor –

a successful practical arboriculture ('tree surgery') company will require effective management and control, often by a person who has worked their way up through the company. Depending on the size of the company, they may still undertake some practical tasks or may be devoted solely to its management.

# Background Information - Arboricultural Qualifications

## Academic

Completing academic qualifications such as GCSEs (Level 2) and A-levels (Level 3) can provide entry routes and may be a prerequisite to undertaking a range of arboricultural qualifications which are usually studied full or part time through a school, college or university. Usually classroom based, they are commonly assessed through formal exams or externally moderated coursework.

## Vocational

These are work-related qualifications which are designed to meet the needs of industry and are recognised and valued by employers. They prepare people for employment within an industry at various levels, or for progression onto higher level qualifications. They offer a mix of practice and theory and often include work experience. Some cover a broad range of content whilst others can be specific to a particular task or activity. They are commonly assessed by your tutor as you progress through the course, through practical assessment and coursework.

## Competence-based

Sometimes referred to as 'licence to practise' qualifications, these tend to be award-sized qualifications and are usually delivered as short, intensive practical courses. They include chainsaw use, tree climbing and aerial tree work, machinery operation (e.g. brushwood chippers, stump grinders, mobile elevating work platforms) and specific skills (e.g. planting, cable bracing, hand tool pruning), as well as specialised utility arboriculture qualifications for work near power lines and electrical equipment. It is a legal requirement that anyone working must be adequately trained and competent, and in some cases, such as using chainsaws, you must pass a competence-based test/qualification.

## Centre-based

These qualifications tend to be delivered within a college environment and provide a mix of hands-on practical learning alongside applied classroom-based theory.

## Work-based

Apprenticeships are government-funded training programmes aimed primarily at young people and reflect what employees are expected to do in a particular job. They offer the opportunity to 'earn and learn' – to learn the skills needed through a combination of on- and off-the-job training whilst being employed.

Apprentices usually undertake a Diploma in Work-based Trees and Timber, along with further qualifications in English and mathematics.

See the Lantra website for more details:  
www.lantra.co.uk/apprenticeships  
or email apprenticeships@lantra.co.uk  
or telephone 02476 696996.

Training is available from a number of sources including land-based colleges and independent trainers.

# Professional Accreditation

## For Consultants

The AA offers the Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant (AARC) scheme – a status that is conferred upon consultants who can demonstrate competence and expertise across a broad spectrum of arboricultural disciplines and provide technical information to a range of clients including homeowners, architects, planners and the courts.

The Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) also offers accreditation by awarding Chartered status to arboriculturists who meet similar criteria.

## For Contractors

For arboricultural contracting companies the AA offers the Arboricultural Association Approved Contractor (ArbAC) scheme – a status that can be achieved by a company of any size, demonstrating that it has the necessary competence and expertise to provide arboricultural contracting services to good practice standards of tree work, health and safety and customer care.

For individual arborists, the European Arboricultural Council (EAC) and the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) offer accreditation that demonstrates practical competence with underpinning knowledge.

# Professional Memberships

Membership of a professional organisation helps you keep up to date with industry developments, training events and sometimes employment opportunities.

The Arboricultural Association has a well-defined membership structure, from Student to Fellow grade. Membership is open to all at Ordinary and Associate levels. Progression to the upper membership grades is dependent on qualifications attained (currently Level 3 for entry at Technician level and Level 5 for Professional level) and in the case of Fellowship additional criteria including a satisfactory CPD record.

# Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Career progression will usually be linked to an individual's 'continuing professional development' (CPD). It is important to keep a record of CPD as a prospective employer may wish to review it as part of an interview process.

CPD can take a variety of forms:

- Formal training resulting in academic or vocational qualifications.
- Specialist training, e.g. conferences, seminars and workshops arranged by trade and professional organisations.
- Formal or industry-recognised refresher/update training events.
- Reading trade magazines and journals, undertaking committee or project work as part of a trade or professional organisation, and networking.

CPD will be an important element of the Register of Tree Work Operatives (R2) – the professional skills framework which will allow arboricultural workers to demonstrate their skill level within the industry.

# The levels and features of arboricultural qualifications and career opportunities

- A wide range of vocational and academic qualifications are available from a number of awarding organisations, so this table cannot be all-inclusive. The qualifications listed are accredited in the Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF).
- Qualification size is described by the number of credits. Generally 1 credit equates to 10 notional hours of the learning time (including assessment) required to complete the learning outcomes to the required standard; it does not indicate contact time.
- The level of a qualification indicates how difficult the learning is and, generally, as the level of the qualification increases, there is less practical and more theory content.

Qualifications	Entry and Level 1	Level 2	Level 3–4	Level 5–6	Level 7–8
Level of achievement, knowledge, understanding, application and accountability	The ability to undertake routine tasks under direction or guidance.	The ability to undertake varied tasks, some of which may be non-routine and complex, under direction or guidance.	The ability to undertake a range of non-routine and complex tasks, with responsibility for others, by exercising autonomy within certain boundaries.	The ability to undertake a broad range of non-routine and complex tasks with responsibility for planning work activities involving management and allocation of a broad range of resources.	The ability to lead the response to complex tasks and processes, taking responsibility for the work and role of others and for the advancement of professional practice.
Size of qualification	Entry level	Craft level	Supervisory level	Management/planning level	Leading practitioner level
<b>Award</b> 1–12 credits	BTEC (Entry Level 3) Award in Land-based Studies (6 credits)  C&G (Entry Levels 2 & 3) Award in Skills for Working Life (6 credits)  C&G Level 1 Award in Land-based Studies (6 credits)  BTEC Level 1 Award in Land-based Studies (7 credits)  BTEC Level 1 Award in Preparation and Operation of a Tractor (7 credits)	C&G/NPTC or Lantra Awards 'Licence to Practise' level 2 qualifications	C&G/NPTC or Lantra Awards 'Licence to Practise' level 3 qualifications  Lantra Awards Award in Aerial Tree Rescue Operations (Level 3, 3 credits)  ABC Awards Level 4 Award in Arboriculture (9 credits)		
<b>Certificate</b> 13–36 credits	C&G (Entry Levels 2 & 3) Certificate in Skills for Working Life (22 credits)  C&G Level 1 Certificate in Land-based Studies (18 credits)  BTEC Level 1 Certificate in Land-based Studies (13 credits)	BTEC or C&G Level 2 Certificate in Countryside & Environment (15 credits)  BTEC or C&G Level 2 Extended Certificate in Countryside & Environment (30 credits)  C&G Level 2 Certificate in Forestry & Arboriculture (15 credits)  C&G Level 2 Extended Certificate in Forestry & Arboriculture (30 credits)  ABC Awards Level 2 Certificate in Arboriculture (21 credits)	BTEC or C&G Level 3 Certificate in Forestry & Arboriculture (30 credits)  ABC Awards Level 4 Certificate in Arboriculture (31 credits)	ABC Awards Level 6 Certificate in Arboriculture (31 credits)	
<b>Diploma</b> 37+ credits	C&G (Entry Levels 2 & 3) Diploma in Skills for Working Life (37 credits)  C&G Level 1 Diploma in Land-based Studies (42 credits)  BTEC Level 1 Diploma in Land-based Studies (37 credits)	BTEC or C&G Level 2 Diploma in Countryside & Environment (60 credits)  C&G Level 2 Diploma in Forestry & Arboriculture (60 credits)  C&G Level 2 Diploma in Work-based Trees and Timber (Arboriculture) (37 credits)	BTEC or C&G Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Forestry & Arboriculture (60 credits)  BTEC or C&G Level 3 Diploma in Forestry & Arboriculture (90 or 120 credits)  BTEC or C&G Level 3 Extended Diploma in Forestry & Arboriculture (180 credits)  ABC Awards Level 4 Diploma in Arboriculture (49 credits)  C&G Level 3 Diploma in Work-based Trees and Timber (Arboriculture) (37 credits)	HND (Level 5, 240 credits)  FdSc (Level 5, 240 credits)  ABC Awards Level 6 Diploma in Arboriculture (60 credits)  BA/BSc Hons (Level 6, 360 credits)	Postgraduate certificate (Level 7, 60 credits)  MA/MSc (Level 7, 180 credits)  MPhil (Level 7, 360 credits)  Doctorate (Level 8, 540 credits)
<b>Examples of possible career opportunities</b>	Assistant arborist Assistant ground person	Climber Self-employed contractor Ground person Chainsaw operator Utility arborist	Supervisor of a tree-gang Assistant tree officer College technician/instructor Tree surveyor Utility arb surveyor	Owner/manager of a tree work company Arboricultural contracts manager Tree officer College lecturer Arboriculture/woodland consultant	Senior college/university lecturer Senior tree officer Researcher Senior arboriculture consultant Expert witness

## Further Information

The Arboricultural Association's website contains useful information with links to colleges and other organisations offering arboricultural training and qualifications. The Association's two accreditation schemes – AARC and ArbAC – are explained in more detail and the website also carries job adverts.

The Arboricultural Association often has a stand at industry shows and exhibitions from which we are able to provide individual advice and guidance on a face-to-face basis.

Advice and guidance can also be obtained from careers advisors attached to schools, colleges and universities, as well as from Lantra and directly from individual employers and businesses.

Arboricultural Association  
[www.trees.org.uk](http://www.trees.org.uk)

ABC Awards  
[www.abcawards.co.uk](http://www.abcawards.co.uk)

BTEC/Edexcel  
[www.edexcel.org.uk](http://www.edexcel.org.uk)

European Arboricultural Council (EAC)  
[www.eac-arboriculture.com](http://www.eac-arboriculture.com)

Institute of Chartered Foresters  
[www.charteredforesters.org](http://www.charteredforesters.org)

International Society of Arboriculture  
[www.isaarboriculture.co.uk](http://www.isaarboriculture.co.uk)

Lantra Awards  
[www.lantra-awards.co.uk](http://www.lantra-awards.co.uk)

Lantra Sector Skills Council  
[www.lantra.co.uk](http://www.lantra.co.uk)

City & Guilds/NPTC Land Based Services  
[www.nptc.org.uk](http://www.nptc.org.uk)

Royal Forestry Society  
[www.rfs.org.uk](http://www.rfs.org.uk)



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# A guide to qualifications and careers in arboriculture



CONTRACTOR  
TREE SURVEYOR

INSTRUCTOR/  
ASSESSOR  
RESEARCHER



CONSULTANT  
EXPERT WITNESS

LOCAL AUTHORITY  
TREE OFFICER

TEAM LEADER/  
SUPERVISOR



GROUND PERSON  
TRAINING PROVIDER  
LECTURER

CLIMBER  
TECHNICIAN  
UTILITY  
ARBORIST  
CHAINSAW OPERATOR

The Arboricultural Association

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