



National Proficiency Tests Council

Registered Charity No. 272305

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CATEGORY BASED TEST IN ARBORICULTURAL OPERATIONS (A01)

Planting

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RULES AND CONDITIONS FOR ARBORICULTURAL/FORESTRY AND RELATED MACHINERY OPERATION PROFICIENCY TESTS

A APPLICATION

1. The minimum age limit for Candidates taking proficiency tests is 16 years.
There is no upper age limit.
2. Application forms must be completed (including employer's declaration, where relevant), and sent with the appropriate assessment fee to the Assessment Centre before the test.
3. Candidates failing to attend for an assessment without prior notice will normally forfeit the assessment fee.
4. Personal Protective Equipment suitable for the test must be used.
5. Before coming forward for assessment Candidates should have had sufficient experience to enable them to have a reasonable chance of success and in MOST CASES ALSO HAVE RECEIVED EITHER FORMAL OR INFORMAL INSTRUCTION.

B CERTIFICATION

1. Upon the passing of an activity the successful Candidate will receive an acknowledgement.
2. Proficiency Test Certificates can be issued on request which may also act as certificates of competence for Health and Safety Purposes.

C ORGANISATION

1. Assessments are carried out by industrially based Assessors approved by NPTC. Under no circumstances can either instructors involved in the preparation of Candidates for an assessment or their work place supervisors assess those Candidates in that test.
2. Assessment items have been grouped in the assessment schedule for convenience but the order of assessment may be varied.
3. In the more extensive activities, and activities where seasonal work is involved, the assessment may be taken in parts but no acknowledgements will be issued until all the necessary parts have been completed.
4. Common activities are interchangeable between categories, e.g. Tractor Driving (but see 5 below), Pedestrian Controlled Rotary Cultivator, Manure Spreader, etc.
5. The successful completion of the Tractor Driving assessment activity qualifies the Candidate in any category based assessment activity, defined as Tractor Driving, and listed in the current 'List of Category Based Proficiency Tests for Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry'.
6. Before taking an activity involving the use of a tractor the Candidate must normally have passed the Tractor Driving proficiency assessment activity.
7. It is strongly recommended that first aid equipment complying with the Health and Safety (First Aid) 1981 regulations be available during the assessments and their organisation.
8. Insurance - comprehensive insurance arrangements have been made to cover assessment; details of the insurance cover are available on request.

D STANDARDS

1. Candidates will be assessed on a competent/not yet competent basis.
2. Assessors will ask questions and such questions will be of a practical nature and related to the assessment items concerned.

Questions must not be used as a substitute for performing a practical part of the assessment.

3. All assessments must be conducted with due regard to legal requirements and safety regulations. Any breach of safety regulations will constitute failure of the assessment. In the event of failure to observe reasonable safety precautions that may lead to damage or injury to persons, stock or equipment, the Assessor may, at his/her discretion, stop the assessment and fail the Candidate.
4. Provision of the correct facilities is normally the responsibility of the Assessment Centre; Assessors and Candidates have the right to refuse machinery/equipment which is not suitable or does not comply with safety regulations.

Candidates who provide their own equipment, do so on the understanding that if it is not of the required standard, they will forfeit their assessment entry fee.

5. Unless otherwise stated, options within any assessment or assessment activity are to be applied at the sole discretion of the Assessor who, in making the decision will take into account local practices.
6. Assessors may, at their discretion, stop the assessment and fail Candidates who exhibit such a degree of incompetence, in any part of the assessment, that would indicate their inability to operate the machine or perform the range of skills that the passing of the assessment would imply.
7. Where time standards are stated the Assessor may, at his/her discretion, vary these times when the circumstances make it necessary. In other cases the time allowed is at the discretion of the Assessor, according to the conditions and amount of work involved.
8. Where applicable an assistant may be allowed to assist the Candidate. No help may be given to the Candidate other than as instructed by the Candidate and approved by the Assessor.
9. In all cases where machinery/chemicals are involved the manufacturer's instruction book/directions must be made available to the Candidate.
10. Candidates failing up to 25% of an activity may, at the discretion of the Assessor and the Assessment Centre, retake only the parts failed; those failing more than 25% must retake the whole activity.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

The following Activities list has been produced in line with the requirements of the Royal Forestry Society Certificate in Arboriculture

AO	1	Planting
AO	2	Individual Protection - Metal/Wooden
AO	3	Bracing and Supporting
AO	4	Fencing- Strained Fencing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access - Garden Fencing
AO	5	Tractor Driving (<i>see the Certificate of Competence in Forest Machine Operations</i>)
AO	6	Brushwood Chipper
AO	7	Stump Grinder
AO	8	Chain Saw - Maintenance and Operation - Candidates must achieve CS Units 30,31, and 32 in the Certificate of Competence in Chain Saw and Related Operations
AO	9	Pruning Operations - Candidates must achieve CS Unit 40 in the Certificate of Competence in Chain Saw and Related Operations
AO	10	Dismantling Operations Candidates must achieve CS Unit 41 in the Certificate of Competence in Chain Saw and Related Operations
AO	11	Specialist Pruning
AO	12	Brushwood Cutters or Clearing Saws
AO	13	Machine Operations - Chain Saw Planking Attachment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mechanical Ditching (Candidates are assessed in the context of MO10) - Mechanical Hedge Trimming (Candidates are assessed in the context of MO 10) - Mobile Saw Bench - Mobile Peeler - Mechanical Weeding - Mobile Sawmill
AO	14	Brushing and Pruning with Hand Saw
AO	15	Weeding and Cleaning - Hand Weeding and Cleaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chemical Weeding and Cleaning - Candidates should refer to the relevant modules in the Certificate of Competence in the Use of Pesticides - Mechanical Weeding - Candidates are assessed in the context of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AO 12 Brushwood Cutters or Clearing Saws or - MO 7 Mowers Mounted or Trailed or - MO15 Mowers Self Propelled
AO	16	Machine Maintenance - Candidates undertaking this test are assessed in the context of MO 2 Machine Maintenance
AO	17	Marking and Volume Assessment
AO	18	Extraction (Skidder or Forwarder) (<i>this has now been replaced by the Certificate of Competence in Forest Machine Operations</i>)
AO	19	Hand Draining
AO	20	Hedge Laying
AO	21	Mobile Elevated Work Platforms

ACTIVITY AO 1 - PLANTING

Candidates are required to complete:

- Part I Forest Transplants and Whips
- Part II Containerised and balled stock
- Part III Feathered trees
- Part IV Standard trees
- Part V Semi-mature trees
- Part VI Aftercare

A Risk Assessment relevant to the operations involved in this activity must have been conducted by the Candidate and any necessary control measures implemented before commencement of the test.

Activities to be carried out in accordance with industry best practice guides
Tree sizes to meet specifications as laid down in BSI 3936

	Test Item	Guide Notes
Part I:	Forest Transplant and Whips	Candidates to complete sections 1 and 2
Section 1:	Plant handling prior to planting	Site: Depot/Amenity area Work to be done: Items (a) - (d) Suggested time allowed: 40 minutes FASTCo Safety Guides: 102, 103
a)	Demonstrate knowledge of pre-planting treatments which may be applied to plants	a) - regulations governing use of pesticides - safety precautions - safety clothing
b)	Store 20 bags of plants under shelter	b) - store upright in a single layer - protect against tearing and snagging - protect against sun, frost and pests - avoid damage to plants

- c) Transport 20 bundles or bags of plants
- d) Heel in 20 bundles of plants

- c) - careful packing of plants into vehicle
- demonstrate knowledge of need for prompt and careful heeling in on planting site
- avoid damage to plants
- d) - heel site is protected against pests
- suitability and preparation of heel
- position of plants in heel
- roots covered with soil to avoid air pockets
- avoid damage to plants

Section 2: Planting and beating up

Site: Amenity areas ready for planting and in need of beating up

Work to be done: Items (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) & (f)

Suggested time allowed: 30 minutes for planting, 30 minutes for beating up

FASTCo Safety Guide: 103

- a) Select tools

- Key points include:**
- a) - planting tool is appropriate to species and site
 - check security and condition of handle
 - cutting edge is kept sharp
 - identification of good features of a planting bag

- b) Fill planting bag

- b) - identify correct species to be planted
- protect roots in planting bag
- avoid damage to plants
- avoid over filling of bag

- c) Plant 20 trees

- c) - planting position as specified
- cut screef or remove brash (as appropriate)
- shape and size of planting cut
- selection of plant
- insertion and distribution of roots
- depth of planting
- firming of plant
- protect roots from drying during planting

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>d) Beat up stated areas, replacing 20 trees</p> <p>e) Protect five trees individually from rabbit damage</p> <p>f) Demonstrate knowledge of alternative guards/shelters</p> | <p>d) - identify trees in need of replacement
 - select correct species
 - selection of planting distance
 - cut screef or remove brash
 - shape and size of planting cut
 - selection of plant
 - insertion and distribution of roots
 - depth of planting
 - firming of plant
 - protect roots from drying during beating up</p> <p>Key points include:</p> <p>e) - choice of guard
 - correctly applied to trees
 - avoid damage to trees
 - site left tidy</p> <p>f) - different designs
 - suitability to purpose
 - advantages/disadvantages</p> |
|--|---|

Test Item

Guide Notes

Part II: Containerised and balled stock

Candidates to complete sections 1 and 2

Section 1: Plant handling and preparation prior to planting

Site: Amenity area/Nursery

Work to be done: Items (a) - (c)

Suggested time allowed: 10 minutes

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|---|---|
| <p>a) Demonstrate knowledge of hardening off process</p> <p>b) Demonstrate knowledge of storing of plants in store or in transportation</p> | <p>Key points include:</p> <p>a) - weather considerations to move plants from sheltered area
 - selection of storage area to protect from sun and frost</p> <p>b) - secure stacking of plants in store or in vehicle
 - protect against tearing or snagging
 - protect against sun, frost and pests
 - avoid damage to plants
 - protection against drying (containerised stock)
 - water if necessary</p> |
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c) Demonstrate knowledge of field lifting

- c) - select plants to specified size and quality
- lift rootballed stock
- wrap rootball
- grade stock if applicable
- store

Section 2: Planting

Site: Amenity area

Work to be done: Item (a)

Suggested time allowed: 20 minutes

a) Plant one containerised tree

- Key points include:**
- a) - pit size
 - separation of top and subsoil forking and mulching of pit
 - firming of pit base
 - formative pruning of crown if applicable
 - removal of container
 - spreading of roots
 - pruning of roots if necessary
 - position of tree in pit (depth/orientation)
 - support required as appropriate
 - backfilling and firming of soil
 - watering in
 - mulching of root area if appropriate
 - tidy site

**Part III: Test Item
Feathered Trees**

Guide Notes

Candidates to complete Sections 1 and 2

Section 1: Plant handling and Preparation prior to planting

Site: Amenity area/Nursery

Work to be done: Items (a) and (b)

Suggested time allowed: 15 minutes

a) Demonstrate knowledge of storing plants in store or in transportation

- Key points include:**
- a) - secure stacking of plants in store or in vehicle
 - protect against damage
 - protect against sun, frost and pests

b) Select and prepare plant

- b) - selection of correct species
- selection of desirable specimen
- roots covered and moist
- formative pruning of crown, if applicable
- pruning of roots, if applicable

Section 2: Planting

Site: Amenity Area

Work to be done: Items (a) - (c)

Suggested time allowed: 20 minutes

a) Prepare to plant one feathered tree

- Key points include:**
- a) - pit or notch size
 - separation of top and subsoil
 - forking and mulching of pit
 - firming of pit base

 - b) - selection of support system
 - position of stake(s) or guys
 - use of driveall or other tools to drive in stakes
 - PPE
 - depth of stake(s) and firmness
 - stake(s) upright, if applicable

 - c) - depth of root collar
 - spreading of roots
 - position of tree in pit/notch
 - backfilling and firming of soil
 - attachment of tree ties
 - water in as necessary
 - mulch as required
 - tidy site

b) Provide support for the tree

c) Plant the tree

**Part IV: Test Item
Standard Trees (bare rooted)**

Guide Notes
Candidates to complete Sections 1 and 2

Section 1: Plant handling and preparation prior to planting

Site: Amenity area/Nursery

Work to be done: Item (a)

Suggested time allowed: 10 minutes

- a) Select, store and prepare plant

Section 2: Planting

- a) Prepare to plant one standard tree
- b) Provide support for the tree
- c) Plant the tree

Part V: Test Item
Semi-mature trees

Section 1: Preparation and lifting of tree

- Key points include:**
- a) - selection of correct species
- selection of desirable specimen
- roots covered and moist
- formative pruning of crown, if applicable
- pruning of roots, if applicable

Site: Amenity area

Work to be done: Items (a) - (c)

Suggested time allowed: 20 minutes

- Key points include:**
- a) - pit size
- separation of top and subsoil
- forking and mulching of pit
- firming of pit base
- b) - selection of support system
- position of stake(s) or guys
- use of driveall or other tools to drive in stakes
- PPE
- depth of stake(s) and firmness
- stake(s) upright
- c) - depth of root collar
- spreading of roots
- position of tree in pit
- backfilling and firming of soil
- attachment of tree tie(s)
- water in as necessary
- mulch as required
- tidy site

Guide Notes
Candidates to complete sections 1 and 2

Site: Amenity area with suitable tree for consideration

Work to be done: Item (a)

Suggested time allowed: 10 minutes

- a) Demonstrate knowledge of root ball preparation

Section 2: Lifting and Planting

- a) Demonstrate knowledge of specialist tree moving equipment for lifting and planting of tree

Test Item
Part VI: Aftercare

- a) Demonstrate knowledge of post planting and long term after care

Key points include:

- a) - trench three sections at correct circumference in first year
- prune roots
- backfill with suitable material
- trench intermediate sections in second year
- prune roots
- backfill with suitable material

Site: Amenity area with suitable tree for consideration

Work to be done: Item (a)

Suggested time allowed: 10 minutes

Key points include:

- a) - criteria related to specific machine

Guide Notes

Site: Amenity area

Work to be done: Item (a)

Suggested time allowed: 10 minutes

Key points include:

- a) - watering as appropriate
- control of weeds
- protect against vermin
- protect against livestock
- protect against vandalism
- formative pruning if required
- adjustment and/or removal of support