

January 2018

A belated Happy New Year to you all!

The new year kicked off with an unusual task. A *Malus* tree needed to be cut down outside the nursery, but we were concerned that there may have been a bees' nest at the base of the stem. There had been some evidence of activity, but it did seem as though they had left the hive some time ago. As a precaution Dan had to wear a bee suit over the top of his chainsaw PPE. It was quite an amusing sight!



*Before and after at section 2*



*Section 17 looking a lot more tidy*



*Dan in his chainsaw and bee keeping gear*

We have been having a big tidy up in couple of sections of the Pinetum. On the left are images of a specimen rhododendron before and after weeding. It was overgrown with the invasive *Rhododendron ponticum*, *Gaultheria shallon*, brambles and some other unidentified weeds. We repeated this process throughout Section 2 revealing lots of beautiful specimens. Now that we have more people on our team we are able to tackle these 'off the beaten track' places and make them more welcoming for visitors.

We have also been working on Section 17 with the volunteers. This is an area filled with many delicate southern hemisphere trees. Everyone got stuck into clearing the area of fallen chestnut and *Rhododendron ponticum*. Lots of specimens were re-caged and the drainage system reinstated. We hope to plant more specimens here and make it a more accessible area.



*Phil watching hawfinches and  
bramblings*

This month we were lucky enough to have the opportunity to see hawfinches. These birds are incredibly hard to spot and rather rare in the UK. They can sometimes be seen in the Pinetum in an area not too far from the Gruffalo's Child.

We have also been taking care of some 'safety' trees on the mountain bike single track. These are sick or dying trees that we monitor that are within falling distance of the track. The image on the right shows one such tree that had to be removed.



*Safety tree removal on the  
mountain bike single track*

I'll leave you with this picture of the beautiful *Daphne bholua* (Nepalese paper plant). A shrub native to Nepal and China, the flowers have a delicious fragrance. I noticed this had started to flower a couple of weeks ago. Spring must surely be on the way!

