

TREE HEALTH AND CONDITION DESCRIPTORS

The purpose of tree health and condition descriptors

Descriptors justify the Health/Condition (H/C) rank awarded to each waymarker tree. They:

- Represent the state of the tree at the time of assessment.
- Indicate the capacity of the tree to continue/maintain life and reach full maturity.

Descriptors provide a general synopsis of tree health and condition. They:

- Briefly summarise tree/site-related affects/influences and concerns/issues.
- Simplify factors which are frequently complex when examined in detail.

A Rank/Term/Descriptor is not absolute – interpretation may be required. Health/Condition (H/C) ranks may be combined (say, A/B or C/D) where factors merge/overlap.

The application of tree health and condition descriptors

These simple arboriculture-focused descriptors apply a Health/Condition rank to each of the wild waymarker trees noted by AW and described within this compilation. They are indicative. They imply and infer a level of 'state' for each tree. Three important points should be acknowledged – these being AW's waymarker trees are:

- **Wild**
 - They stand on open land, completely unmaintained and unmanaged.
 - They live organically, without intervention from any individual or agency.
- **Natural**
 - They exist as seen at a point in time, within their species-specific lifespan.
 - They live/survive in the biological/ecological landscape around/within them.
- **Authentic**
 - They spread, perpetuating their kind and contributing to long-term woodland.
 - They are of immense ecological value, regardless of rank.

HEALTH (H) DESCRIPTORS		
Rank	Term	Descriptor
A	Excellent	Healthy, unrestricted, with exceptional vigour; typical leaf/shoot size/extension; rapid/complete damage/wound occlusion.
B	Good	Healthy, full grown, with normal vigour; acceptable leaf/shoot size/extension; active/functional damage/wound occlusion.
C	Average	Surviving, but constrained, with medium vigour; adequate leaf/shoot size/extension; slow/variable damage/wound occlusion.
D	Poor	Surviving, but moribund, with low vigour; reduced leaf/shoot size/extension; minimal/nil damage/wound occlusion.

A Health ranking is combined/matched with a Condition ranking.

CONDITION (C) DESCRIPTORS		
Rank	Term	Descriptor
A	Excellent	Balanced/typical complete crown development; undamaged, solid/sturdy structure; free from all signs/symptoms of debilitating/fatal decay/dieback and/or damage/impairment; all small injuries/wounds isolated/regulated; acceptable/negligible deadwood throughout canopy; intact/typical branch formation; strong bud growth, shoot extension; natural leaf shape/size; vigorous available energy; dynamic, 100% live canopy area coverage/density.
B	Good	Unbalanced/atypical crown development, due to minimal/partial loss/restriction; damaged, but sound/sturdy structure; some early signs/symptoms of debilitating decay/dieback and/or damage; some minor isolated/regulated wounds; only minimal deadwood throughout crown; intact/typical branch development; normal bud growth, shoot extension; normal leaf shape/size; full available energy; energetic, 70-90% live canopy area coverage/density.
C	Average	irregular/misshapen crown development; damaged, but with adapting/reiterating form; adversely affected/impacted due to wind loading and/or restriction/suppression; moderate/survivable damage from partial branch/canopy breakage/loss; moderate/significant decay/dieback/deadwood from pathogenic infection/infestation and/or physical vascular disconnection/disruption; unoccluded/unregulated wounds; indications of decreasing vitality and increasing plant stress; compromised bud growth, shoot extension; functional leaf shape/size, some smaller/deformed; reduced available energy; resilient, 50-70% live canopy area coverage/density.
D	Poor	Collapsed and/or damaged/deformed/lost crown; serious severe/un survivable impacts; multiple dysfunctional features associated with physical damage, pathogenic infection/infestation and/or environmental deterioration; advanced and extensive decay/dieback/deadwood; deteriorating and widespread disconnection/disruption of internal distribution/transport systems; minimal/nil bud growth and/or shoot extension; small/deformed/distorted leaf shape/size; declining available energy; failing, 20-50% live canopy area coverage/density.

Tree health/condition ranks signify a state

Considering the state of wild waymarker trees, acknowledge:

- Any denoted Rank for a waymarker tree does not infer inferiority or superiority – as in, say, D is ‘worse’ than A/B/C – or A is ‘better’ than B/C/D – but more, it suggests the *state* of Condition or Health.
- Rank A indicates a tree in peak health/condition – rank D denotes a tree in decline and/or under physical/physiological stress. A rank may relate to a period in a tree’s life – which is variable (from years to decades to centuries) – depending upon the extent of any damage/dysfunction sustained and/or the abiotic/biotic/environmental influences and the capacity/durability/tolerances of a species.
- Collectively, the presence of deadwood/cavities/hollows plus breakage, collapse or damage does not mean a loss of intrinsic landscape value. All waymarker trees are worthy, regardless of the rank attributed to them, due (quite apart from aesthetics and beauty) to the crucial ecological contribution they make to the natural environment. A tree ranked D is not ‘bad’ – it is merely in a dilapidated state of health/condition.