

Deadly disease threatens 80 million ash trees

Today, let's talk about trees, in particular, ash trees. This popular type of tree is found in many forests in Britain, especially in the east of England. The ash tree in Britain is under attack from a killer fungus disease that threatens to wipe out 80 million ash trees across the country. The presence of the new disease begs the question of how much longer the ash tree will be found in significant numbers in Britain.

Britain will therefore never be the same again, as the only solution so far, it appears, is to cut them down and burn the diseased trees. It definitely puts a whole new meaning into the phrase 'ashes to ashes'! Only in the last month have British newspapers brought this terrible story to the public's attention. In the south and east of England the National Trust has begun checking ancient ash trees on its grounds for signs of the fungus.

It is thought the ash disease first emerged in Poland in 1992 when large numbers of trees began dying of a mysterious illness. The fungal infection *chalara fraxinea*, which has ravaged other European countries including Denmark, has now spread to Britain. It kills 90% of the trees it infects.

The National Trust in Britain is concerned about its ash trees, some of which are more than 300 years-old. It warned that Britain now faces an environmental catastrophe on the scale of the Dutch elm disease outbreak, which killed 25 million trees in the late 1960s and early 70s. Britain's Horticultural Trades Association is "alarmed" by the damage caused by the new ash disease. It said that "Britain faces a repeat of the Dutch elm disease".

The new ash disease was first detected back in February in a nursery in Buckinghamshire, England, in a consignment of trees sent from a nursery in Holland. So far, it has spread to 20 sites. More than 100,000 trees have been destroyed in an attempt to stop the disease spreading. The disease is thought to have been carried in the wind over the Channel.

The first sign of an ash tree affected by the disease is when leaves begin to die at the crown of the tree. The fungus then spreads into the leaf and the stalk, and dark lesions begin to develop at the bottom of the branch.

Category: Nature / Trees / Ash trees

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. **Trees:** Think of three types of tree. Go round the room swapping details with others.

2. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) Was this an easy or difficult article to understand?
- d) **Discuss the article**

6. **Ash trees:** Think of five things you know about ash trees from the article. Then add five other things you know about them. Write them below. Discuss together. What are your conclusions?

From the article	Your own ideas
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

7. **Let's roleplay 1:** In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *Discussion FM* radio studio in London. Today's interview is about: *The ash tree disease in Britain. 10 minutes.*

1	A forest lover	3	A journalist
2	A nursery owner	4	Natural Trust representative

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

8. **Let's roleplay 2:** In pairs. You are in a nursery. Start a conversation about 'the ash tree disease'. *5-minutes.*

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9. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **trees**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

10. **A visit to a forest:** In pairs. You are spending the afternoon visiting a forest. Describe what you did, what you saw, who you saw, etc... *5-minutes*.

The teacher will choose some pairs to hear their stories in front of the class.

11. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Name the type of tree.
- 2) Name the infection.
- 3) Where did the disease start?
- 4) Name the disease that hit Britain in the 60s and 70s.
- 5) How many trees have been destroyed?

Student B

- 1) Describe the first sign of the disease.
- 2) Explain the phrase 'ashes to ashes'.
- 3) Name the countries the disease spread to.
- 4) What happened in February?
- 5) Who brought this disease to the British public's attention?

12. **Trees:** Think of six different types of tree that grow in your country. Write them below. Discuss together. What are your conclusions?

1	_____	4	_____
2	_____	5	_____
3	_____	6	_____

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

13. **Trees grown in far away countries:** Think of six different types of tree that grow in far away countries. Write them below. Discuss together. What are your conclusions? How do they compare with exercise 12 above? Are they imported into your country?

1	_____	4	_____
2	_____	5	_____
3	_____	6	_____

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

14. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Ash trees**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

15. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Ash trees _____
- b) The fungus _____
- c) My favourite tree _____

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DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) What type of trees do you have in your garden?
- 3) What are your favourite types of trees?
- 4) Have you ever planted a tree?
- 5) When was the last time you went for a walk in a forest?
- 6) Have you ever seen a tree with a disease?
- 7) Is Britain facing an environmental catastrophe with this new disease?
- 8) Did your country suffer from Dutch elm disease?
- 9) Does your country have this ash disease?
- 10) Have you learnt anything in today's English lesson?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) What should the British government do to stop this disease?
- 3) Why are trees so important to us?
- 4) When did you first hear about this story?
- 5) What does this article tell us?
- 6) Is the British horticultural Association right to be "alarmed" at this disease?
- 7) What advice would you offer people with ash trees in their garden?
- 8) Should 'a passport' control system be introduced for plants being imported into Britain?
- 9) What do you think will happen in Britain about this deadly disease in the next 12 months?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's play a game: A walk in a forest

Allow 10 minutes – As a class / small groups – in a circle in a clockwise direction...

I went for a walk in a forest and I saw...

Repeat the previous things mentioned then add one more...

Forget one and you are eliminated!

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Deadly disease threatens 80 million ash trees

Today, let's talk about (1)_____, in particular, (2)_____ trees. This popular type of tree is found in many forests in Britain, especially in the east of England. The ash tree in Britain is under attack from a killer fungus (3)_____ that threatens to (4)_____ out 80 million ash trees across the country. The presence of the new disease begs the question of how much longer the ash tree will be found in significant numbers in Britain. Britain will therefore never be the same again, as the only solution so far, it appears, is to cut them down and burn the diseased trees. It definitely puts a whole new meaning into the (5)_____ 'ashes to ashes'! Only in the last month have British newspapers brought this (6)_____ story to the public's attention. In the south and east of England the National Trust has begun checking (7)_____ ash trees on its grounds for signs of the (8)_____.

It is thought the ash disease first emerged in Poland in 1992 when large numbers of trees began (1)_____ of a (2)_____ illness. The fungal infection *chalara fraxinea*, which has ravaged other European countries including Denmark, has now spread to Britain. It kills 90% of the trees it infects. The National Trust in Britain is concerned about its ash trees, some of which are more than 300 years-old. It warned that Britain now faces an environmental (3)_____ on the (4)_____ of the Dutch elm disease outbreak, which killed 25 million trees in the late 1960s and early 70s. Britain's Horticultural Trades Association is "alarmed" by the damage caused by the new ash disease. It said that "Britain faces a repeat of the Dutch elm disease". The new ash disease was first detected back in February in a nursery in Buckinghamshire, England, in a (5)_____ of trees sent from a (6)_____ in Holland. So far, it has spread to 20 (7)_____. More than 100,000 trees have been destroyed in an attempt to stop the disease spreading. The disease is thought to have been carried in the (8)_____ over the Channel.

phrase

wipe out

terrible

disease

ancient

fungus

ash

trees

Wind

nursery

catastrophe

sites

scale

consignment

dying

mysterious

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GAP FILL: LISTENING:

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Deadly disease threatens 80 million ash trees

Today, _____, in particular, ash trees. This popular type of tree is found in many forests in Britain, especially in the east of England. The ash tree in Britain is under attack from a _____ that threatens to wipe out 80 million ash trees across the country. The presence of the new disease begs the question of how much longer the ash tree will be found in significant numbers in Britain.

Britain will therefore never _____, as the only solution so far, it appears, is to cut them down and burn the diseased trees. It definitely puts a whole new meaning into the phrase 'ashes to ashes'! Only in the last month have British newspapers brought this terrible story to _____. In the south and east of England the National Trust has begun checking ancient ash trees on its grounds for _____.

It is thought the ash disease first emerged in Poland in 1992 when large numbers of trees began dying of a _____. The fungal infection *chalara fraxinea*, which has ravaged other European countries including Denmark, has now spread to Britain. It kills 90% of the trees it infects.

The National Trust in Britain is concerned about its ash trees, some of which are more than 300 years-old. It warned that Britain now faces an environmental catastrophe on the scale of the _____ outbreak, which killed 25 million trees in the late 1960s and early 70s. Britain's Horticultural Trades Association is "alarmed" _____ by the new ash disease. It said that "Britain faces a repeat of the Dutch elm disease".

The new ash disease _____ back in February in a nursery in Buckinghamshire, England, in a consignment of trees sent from a nursery in Holland. So far, it has spread to 20 sites. More than 100,000 trees have been destroyed in an attempt to stop _____. The disease is thought to have been carried in the wind over the Channel.

The first sign of an ash tree affected by the disease is when leaves begin to die at _____. The fungus then spreads into the leaf and the stalk, and dark lesions begin to develop at the _____.

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Deadly disease threatens 80 million ash trees

Today, let's talk about trees, in particular, ash trees. (1)___ popular type of tree is found in (2)___ forests in Britain, especially in the east of England. The ash tree in Britain is under attack (3)___ a killer fungus disease (4)___ threatens to wipe out 80 million ash trees across the country. The presence of the new disease begs the question of how (5)___ longer the ash tree will be found in significant numbers in Britain.

Britain will therefore never be the same again, as the only solution so far, it appears, is to cut (6)___ down and burn the diseased trees. It definitely puts a whole new meaning (7)___ the phrase 'ashes to ashes'! (8)___ in the last month have British newspapers brought this terrible story to the public's attention. In the south and east of England the National Trust has begun checking ancient ash trees on its grounds for signs of the fungus.

It is thought the ash disease first emerged in Poland in 1992 when large numbers of trees began dying (1)___ a mysterious illness. The fungal infection *chalara fraxinea*, which has ravaged other European countries including Denmark, has now spread to Britain. It kills 90% of the trees (2)___ infects.

The National Trust in Britain is concerned about (3)___ ash trees, some of which are more than 300 years-old. It warned that Britain now faces an environmental catastrophe on the scale of the Dutch elm disease outbreak, which killed 25 million trees in the late 1960s and early 70s. Britain's Horticultural Trades Association is "alarmed" (4)___ the damage caused by the new ash disease. (5)___ said that "Britain faces a repeat of the Dutch elm disease".

The new ash disease was first detected back in February (6)___ a nursery in Buckinghamshire, England, in a consignment of trees sent from a nursery in Holland. (7)___ far, it has spread to 20 sites. More than 100,000 trees have been destroyed in (8)___ attempt to stop the disease spreading. The disease is thought to have been carried in the wind over the Channel.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	therefore	11	catastrophe
2	environmental	12	scale
3	nursery	13	fungus
4	thought	14	ash
5	disease	15	definitely
6	stalk	16	whole
7	forests	17	lesions
8	popular	18	horticultural
9	terrible	19	association
10	phrase	20	consignment

LINKS

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2226989/Passports-plants-As-ash-tree-crisis-deepens-radical-plan-prevent-outbreaks-killer-fungus.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/oct/29/ash-dieback-q-and-a>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2222862/Disease-killed-90-Danish-ash-trees-spread-British-countryside.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/9652599/Trees-that-thrive-amid-killer-fungus-hold-secret-to-saving-threatened-ash.html>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Deadly disease threatens 80 million ash trees: Today, let's talk about **trees**, in particular, **ash** trees. This popular type of tree is found in many forests in Britain, especially in the east of England. The ash tree in Britain is under attack from a killer fungus **disease** that threatens to **wipe out** 80 million ash trees across the country. The presence of the new disease begs the question of how much longer the ash tree will be found in significant numbers in Britain. Britain will therefore never be the same again, as the only solution so far, it appears, is to cut them down and burn the diseased trees. It definitely puts a whole new meaning into the **phrase** 'ashes to ashes'! Only in the last month have British newspapers brought this **terrible** story to the public's attention. In the south and east of England the National Trust has begun checking **ancient** ash trees on its grounds for signs of the **fungus**.

It is thought the ash disease first emerged in Poland in 1992 when large numbers of trees began **dying** of a **mysterious** illness. The fungal infection *chalara fraxinea*, which has ravaged other European countries including Denmark, has now spread to Britain. It kills 90% of the trees it infects. The National Trust in Britain is concerned about its ash trees, some of which are more than 300 years-old. It warned that Britain now faces an environmental **catastrophe** on the **scale** of the Dutch elm disease outbreak, which killed 25 million trees in the late 1960s and early 70s. Britain's Horticultural Trades Association is "alarmed" by the damage caused by the new ash disease. It said that "Britain faces a repeat of the Dutch elm disease". The new ash disease was first detected back in February in a nursery in Buckinghamshire, England, in a **consignment** of trees sent from a **nursery** in Holland. So far, it has spread to 20 **sites**. More than 100,000 trees have been destroyed in an attempt to stop the disease spreading. The disease is thought to have been carried in the **wind** over the Channel. **(V3)**

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