



► Drainage

Unfortunately, many parts of the UK have heavy clay subsoil, but this does not mean that you can't grow trees in it. In fact, if you look around at the adjacent landscape to where you wish to plant you should see many healthy trees and in the general landscape that are not only surviving, but thriving. Naturally, there are some trees far happier in heavy clay and potentially higher moisture levels than others, but when the soil is very heavy it can become waterlogged during heavy rainfall, especially if a larger area drains into a lower grade where the tree is planted.

It is always wise to plant the tree slightly high, especially in heavy clay, but you must monitor the area where your new tree is planted for any signs of waterlogging in the first winter. If the grass is squishy or the soil has water sitting on it for any length of time after heavy rain, you likely have a problem, especially if in a lower part of the garden. It is extremely common for heavy soil to exist on a new build property or where an extension has taken place, as months heavy machinery use will have severely compacted the topsoil and subsoil. Far too many sites are finished off without adequate decompaction, where just a thin layer of topsoil can conceal the truth of what is lying below the surface. All compacted soil, which has become structureless should have been removed, though this is rarely done, or at the very least drainage implemented with a positive fall to carry any excess water to a suitable location.

Without wishing to alarm you, we aim to simply create awareness of what to watch out for. Any good builder should have installed drainage where necessary, though it is possible they didn't think there may be a problem if the project was completed in the spring or summer. However, if you feel you have a problem, please email us pictures and ask for our advice,

though it may be that we will recommend you get a groundworker in to rectify the situation.

When we occasionally run into this problem, some customers question as to why we did not recommend putting in drains before we planted?

To be clear, the vast majority of trees that we have planted have never had any issues when planted in heavy clay. If we were to simply recommend drainage on every garden with heavy clay most customers would be paying for remedial work that is unnecessary, and typically far more expensive than the tree and planting cost. We will let you know of any concerns we have when planting, and if in any doubt we will install a monitoring pipe for you to put a bamboo cane dipstick into after heavy rain to make sure the ground is draining freely.

However, if there were no concerns at the point of planting, especially when carried out in the spring, summer, or during a dry autumn, it does not mean that possible future problems might be apparent such as waterlogging in the middle of winter. It is advisable that you are as observant as possible, with regards to your soil drainage conditions because prolonged waterlogging can invalidate your establishment warranty. It is **CRITICAL** not to wait until the tree is defoliating and the soil has turned anaerobic as irreparable root damaged may have been caused by this point.



Sadly a customer hired another company to plant the trees they had bought. Not only were they planted too deep, but in this case they were waterlogged. The trees were already dead, evidenced by the sunken bark and collar rot.



A large *Parrotia persica* that became waterlogged after very heavy rain, now needs drainage installed as soon as possible. Whilst this lawn had always stayed wet through the winter, the shallowness of the grass roots did not accentuate the issue until a tree was planted in the lawn.