

## **Midlands' residents looking forward to getting outdoors and 'leaf peeping' this autumn according to new National Trust research, as experts predict a 'good' season for autumn colour**

Research commissioned by the National Trust indicates that people who live in the Midlands are preparing to get out into the great outdoors this autumn and embrace nature. And, with signs looking positive for a good year for autumn colour, the conservation charity is urging people to do just that and get outside and enjoy the season.

90 per cent of those questioned in the region stated that they liked spending time outdoors during autumn. This is slightly up on the national average, which was recorded at 89 per cent.

With autumn starting to show itself across the region, more than a quarter (28 per cent) stated that seeing autumnal colours was their favourite thing about the season. This was by far the most popular element of autumn for Midlanders, with spending time in nature – running, walking or cycling – selected as the second most popular, recording 11 per cent of the votes.

This was supported by 71 per cent stating that the changing colour of autumn leaves on trees was a natural event that they would stop and notice, during their normal daily life during autumn. An activity often known as leaf peeping[1].

Almost one in four (22 per cent) of Midlands-based respondents said that autumn was their favourite season. These autumn fans could be in luck in 2021, as despite some signs of early autumn colour and leaf fall in early September – with much of the country experiencing an Indian summer, this could be a great year for autumn colour, according to National Trust experts.

**National Trust predictions for this year's autumn colour**

Pamela Smith, National Gardens and Parks Specialist at the conservation charity says: “Autumn colour is not only determined by what the actual weather is doing now, the weather patterns throughout the year are also key – particularly levels of sunshine, but also levels of rainfall, a lack of which can cause stress for trees which is why there have been early shows of yellow or brown autumn colour and leaf fall in parts of the country.

“However, the warm, sunny days that many of us experienced in September, and rainfall in some areas of the country has helped many tree species build up additional sugars in their leaves which will soon be trapped in the leaf as it becomes cut off from the rest of the tree branch, a process known as abscission. High sugar levels produce red colours known as anthocyanins.

“Over the next two weeks we do need some more sunny days, some more rain and colder temperatures – but staying above freezing – with no storms, to help boost what could be a really good year for autumn colour.”

Currently the butter yellows of lime trees are the most noticeable in terms of autumn colour, but there is potential for strong, vibrant red autumn colours to still come through.

Pam continues: “Autumn colour is also determined by day length and temperature. The shortening of the days and lower light levels as we move through October stops the production of chlorophyll, the green energy creating pigment in leaves. As the green pigment fades the underlying colours of reds, oranges, browns and yellows become apparent.”

Strong displays of autumnal colour are expected across the Midlands including Croft Castle in Herefordshire. Situated on the English-Welsh border, Croft comes alive in autumn, with burnt oranges, bright yellows and deep reds emerging on the trees around the estate. Croft is famous for its ancient trees and the autumn colour here is not to be missed; including the rows of Sweet Chestnuts and 1,000 year old Quarry Oak.

Dudmaston Hall in Shropshire is also expecting a colourful autumn in the American Garden where the trees will soon turn beautiful shades of orange and gold.

In the East Midlands, Calke Abbey in Derbyshire will present wonderful colours. Here you'll find sweeps of autumn reds, oranges and yellows, and some of the oldest trees in Europe – including the 1,200-year-old oak, The Old Man of Calke.

Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire provides the perfect place to experience autumn, this vast expanse of parkland, heath and woods covers more than 3,800 acres. Here you can take a wander down the longest avenue of Lime Trees in Europe, with a golden carpet of leaves crunching beneath your feet.

For more information on autumnal days out, walks and where to see autumn colour at National Trust places throughout the midlands please

visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/autumn-walks-in-the-midlands](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/autumn-walks-in-the-midlands)

### **Move for trees**

To make the most of Britons' love of spending time outdoors and the love of trees and autumn colour, the National Trust is asking people to get outside this autumn to not only enjoy autumn colour, but to also help raise vital funds to meet its tree planting ambitions, to plant and establish 20 million trees by 2030 to help tackle the climate crisis.

Celia Richardson, Director of Communications and Audience at the conservation charity said: "We can see that people are still saying they are closer to nature than they were before the pandemic began and we hope it's here to stay. Connecting with nature is good for our health and wellbeing and makes people more likely to act to protect the natural world.

"So we have launched our autumn challenge – asking people to get outside and to get active this autumn – to raise money to plant more trees, with the aim of helping not just the health of the nation, but also the health of our planet."

The conservation charity's autumn virtual challenge – Move for trees – invites people to get active and cover 50km (31 miles) throughout the month of October. Every £5 raised will plant and establish one new sapling which could remove one tonne of CO2 from the air over its lifetime, to help people and nature thrive for generations to come.

For more information on the National Trust's autumn virtual challenge and to find out how to get involved, see: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/move-for-trees](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/move-for-trees)

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#### **Picture editor's notes**

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#### **YouGov survey**

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,271 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 10-13th September 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

[1] Leaf peeping is a trend which first started in the United States and parts of Canada – and is the informal term for the activity in which people travel to view and photograph the fall foliage in areas where leaves change colours in autumn, particularly in northern New England, Appalachia, and the upper Midwest, as well as the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

#### **About the National Trust**

The National Trust is a conservation charity founded in 1895 by three people: Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley, who saw the importance of the nation's heritage and open spaces and wanted to preserve them for everyone to enjoy. Today, across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, we continue to look after places so people and nature can thrive.

The challenges of the coronavirus pandemic have shown this is more important than ever. From finding fresh air and open skies to tracking a bee's flight to a flower; from finding beauty in an exquisite painting or discovering the hidden history of a country house nearby – the places we care for enrich people's lives.

Entirely independent of Government, the National Trust looks after more than 250,000 hectares of countryside, 780 miles of coastline and 500 historic properties, gardens and nature reserves.

The National Trust is for everyone – we were founded for the benefit of the whole nation. We receive on average more than 26.9 million visits each year to the places we care for that have an entry fee, and an estimated 100m visits to the outdoor places that are free of charge. Paying visitors, together with our 5.6 million members and more than 53,000 volunteers, support our work to care for nature, beauty, history. For everyone, for ever.

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