

FraxNet meeting report by V. Anthony Gabourel Landaverde

From November 27th to 29th, 2023, the University of Nottingham in the UK hosted "Creating Canopy: The Biology and Practice of Establishing Trees and Woodlands for People and Nature¹." This event, which also incorporated the FraxNet meeting, brought together researchers, practitioners, and scholars from across the UK and other countries to address the challenges and opportunities of woodland creation.

The event culminated with a dedicated day for the FraxNet meeting. This network, comprised of researchers and plant health specialists, focuses on reviving European ash populations. Their efforts include identifying future threats from pests and gathering crucial data on biodiversity and ecology. The meeting itself was structured into three sessions, each exploring different aspects of ash dieback (ADB) disease. Presentations covered the latest research findings on ADB, alongside valuable insights from forest management experiences related to the disease.

The first session focused on the disease itself (pathobiology), including promising screening trials to identify tolerant ash trees, and genes that might confer lower susceptibility. It also addressed the resilience of UK landscapes against the emerald ash borer². The second session examined the broader ecological impact of ADB, potential mitigation strategies, the heritability of resistance within ash populations, and how to preserve these trees. Finally, the third session broadened the scope, looking at research on ADB propagation and resistance across North America and Europe.

Between the sessions, brief poster presentations offered further insights. Among them a poster titled "Genetic Pathway to Tolerant Ash Trees and Their Adaptation for Forestry, Agroforestry, and Hedgerow Systems in the Island of Ireland" was presented. This collaborative effort, involving researchers from the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, the Forest Genetic Resources Trust, and myself (University of Extremadura, Spain), explored the genetic potential for cultivating tolerant ash trees across diverse Irish landscapes.

The "Creating Canopy" event served as a valuable platform to explore the latest research, technical advancements, challenges, and opportunities in establishing healthy woodlands. The dedicated FraxNet workshop provided a deeper insight into

¹ <https://www.aab.org.uk/event/creating-canopy-the-biology-and-practice-of-establishing-trees-and-woodlands-for-people-and-nature/>

² The emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) is a beetle native to north-eastern Asia that feeds on [ash species](#) (*Fraxinus* spp.). In its native range, it is typically found at low densities and does not cause significant damage to trees native to the area. Outside its native range, it is an [invasive species](#) and is highly destructive to [ash trees](#) native to Europe and North America. In eastern Europe, a population was found in Moscow in 2003. From 2003 to 2016, the population has spread west towards the European Union at up to 40 km /yr and is expected to reach central Europe between 2031 and 2036. Although not as yet recorded in the European Union, it has spread to far eastern Ukraine.

the specific threats to ash tree health, particularly Ash Dieback Disease (ADB), fostering collaboration in the fight against this issue.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to FGRT for their generous sponsorship. Their support made it possible for me to participate in this event during my academic visit to the UK. This conference provided a valuable opportunity to deepen my knowledge in this field.