

# Thirty trees grown as trial, now there are 2,000 and plans for 10-12,000

## Nursery finds Australian idea puts new vigour into tree planting

BY MIKE BRIDGEN

A LONG-ESTABLISHED family-run wholesale nursery business is causing excitement with a revolutionary growing system.

A Hill and Sons of Stokesley are believed to be the only nurserymen in the North of England to use the Australian-designed Air-Pots system for growing trees and shrubs.

The specially-designed pots help to promote vigorous and healthy root systems which produce sturdy young trees and shrubs faster than usual.

The company, founded in 1920, includes landscapers, landscape architects, house builders and local authorities among its customers and has also attracted Air-Pot orders from overseas.

The key to the new system is the pot itself, which is made from recycled plastic.

The roots are guided to open-ended cones in the sidewall of the pot, allowing the tip of the root to be pruned when it dehydrates. Many more new roots then grow behind the pruning, dramatically increasing the amount of root in the root ball.

Continuous pruning prevents root circling and allows a very fibrous root system, with an exceptional number of active, white tipped roots, to develop.

A built-in device that allows water to be delivered directly

into the root ball further encourages vigorous growth. This minimises evaporation and makes watering more efficient, cost-effective and simpler than conventional methods.

Environmentally-friendly peat compost is used, which makes the Air-Pot system exceptionally light so that trees are easy to plant and handle in transit.

Simon Hill, who, with his brother, Julian, is a fourth generation nurseryman, first read about the system five years ago.

"We grew 30 trees as a trial and now we have about 2,000 trees from the Air-Pot system and have plans to grow between 10,000 and 12,000 trees in these pots," he said. "It has enabled us to provide the best product possible. Technically it is really up-to-date, advanced technology."

Mr Hill, whose parents David and Marianne, are also directors of the business, said the system was reported to have halved the growing time in Italy and America, where the climate may have led to even faster growing times.

David Hill, managing director, said feedback from professionals using the Air-Pots confirmed they allowed out of season planting, encouraged the tree or shrub to fill the pot with root systems at astonishing speeds, and allowed even notoriously difficult species such as *Juglans* and *Ginkgo* to thrive.

**IMPRESSIVE GROWTH:** David Hill, managing director of A Hill and Sons, stands next to a pot-grown *carpinus betula*

