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Structure Maintenance

We are confident that the traditional way we construct our structures makes them safe for decades. So confident in fact, that we look forward to visiting and maintaining our buildings and play structures. The wood will move most in the first year, during this time the structure tightens and settles as the wood dries out. Our traditional carpentry techniques welcome this movement, it is designed into our structures and is part of what makes traditional builds so long lived. It is always a joy to see our structures ageing gracefully and blending into their surroundings.

We strongly recommend that you join our maintenance plan to keep your structures in good condition so you can enjoy them for years and years to come. We have created this document to help all of our clients understand what will happen to their structures over the years and give guidance on how we would like to help you get the best from them.

18 month visits

A maintenance check up at 18 month intervals is highly recommended for the first six years. We check all joints and sand down any rough areas or splinters. We check handrails, guard rails and spindles for movement. We can also apply a coat of non-slip oil to ramps and floors if the natural roughness has been worn smooth by regular use.

Six years

After six years, we discuss with you whether to carry on at 18 month intervals or move to another schedule that suits the site and structure. Each landscape is different. Playgrounds require regular maintenance check ups and it may be that annual inspections are more appropriate at this point.

Tailored plan

We can tailor our maintenance plan to suit your specific needs if the standard option is not adequate. A maintenance package is a very cost effective way of ensuring that your structure stays at its best for years to come.

Looking after your 'green wood' Artisan Structure

We specifically work with wood in the green, which means that we fell and select living trees from a managed coppice specifically for each bespoke build rather than ordering seasoned wood that has already aged.

Working in the green does not mean that your structure looks green! It does mean that some splits will occur in the timber work over time, this is normal and a sign of the wood adjusting to the varied



weather conditions in our climate. Working in the green is a specialised craft. We know that our buildings and play structures will last for decades and we warranty them against rot, excessive splitting and structural defects (excluding natural causes and wilful damage).

Here is a little practical information about what to expect from green wood and also about how to approach maintenance. Many people have not lived with unseasoned wood before.

Untreated wood (un-oiled)

In the first year you will see that the round, sweet chestnut wood darkens where it is open to the elements. This is the natural ageing process of the wood and should not alarm you. Within a year, the wood will have started darkening and silvering in places. This colour change can help it blend into its surroundings.

If you don't want the colour of the wood to change, we strongly recommend that a water based wood treatment should be applied, preferably every couple of years. This will help the wood stand the test of time. Water based products, like Cuprinol 5 Star, soak straight into the wood and give great protection, but do not make the water bobble off the wood in the same way that adding oil does.

Treated wood (oiled)

Many people choose to have their structures and furniture to be oiled as soon as the structure is built. It is important to keep any treated wood well maintained with future applications of oil or proprietary wood stain. Oiled wood will also weather and is subject to movement, surface cracks and splits, but it will weather more evenly than untreated wood. Some people prefer the look of oiled wood, as it can bring colour out in the grain, giving a rich, golden finish.

You can extend the 25 year life expectancy of the cedar, chestnut or larch roofs by coating them with UV resistant oil on a 5 year basis.

De-barking

We debark all our main structural timbers for technical reasons. Debarking removes the cambium layer and bark which protect the heart wood when the tree is growing. Once the tree is felled, it needs to be removed to prevent rot and insect boring.

On smaller spindles where the bark is very thin because the hazel or willow is cut early in its life, the bark can be left in place for decorative effect. It will eventually peel away naturally (usually with a little help from children) and will then weather accordingly.

Cracks or splits in the wood.

Our frames and structures are made using unseasoned, 'green wood' which gives the structures their charm and their longevity. As the wood dries, splits will occur in the surface of the timber as the wood shrinks. This natural process is unpredictable and sometimes there may be fine cracks all over the surface and other times larger, deeper cracks. These should not affect the structural integrity or function of the buildings or play structures. Let us know if you are concerned about any cracks and we will check them. Should we have any doubts about a crack adversely affecting a joint, we will use traditional cuffing methods or add bolts to reinforce the timber, carried out under warranty.



Thatched Roofs

We recommend these are checked every couple of years, or after any strong wind. We can tighten the thatch and add some hazel / willow rods where needed.

Repairs and additional elements

We can make repairs promptly where there has been wilful or accidental damage. We will assess the damage and give you a quote for the work. Should you wish to add to your structures over the years as children grow or needs change, we would be delighted to help you.

We are very fond of all our structures and know that our clients are happy, 'green wood' lovers. The structures have a unique way of blending into their landscapes and finding a special place in people's hearts.

All maintenance work will be charged at **£30 per hour +VAT**. Any materials, oil, stain and dowel needed for the maintenance work will be sourced and supplied by us and will show as a separate cost on our quotation.

If you would like to book an appointment for us to inspect your structure and create a quotation, please contact Duncan Dodds on: duncan@artisanstructures.co.uk / 07764993976