

# Selection of sites suitable for tree planting



Warwickshire

www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 209200

**What type of site are you thinking of planting with trees?**

**Is it essential to plant trees?**

**Consider Natural Regeneration**  
 This is a low carbon way of establishing new woodland through natural seedling establishment. It results in more natural wildlife-rich woods with scrub, such as bramble, protecting growing trees from rabbits and deer without the need for the plastic tree guards or peat based composts that are damaging to the environment. On large sites, grazing animals can be introduced later (at low densities) to maintain areas of valuable grassland and scrub mosaic

**Grassland rich in wildflowers and/or fungi?**

**Wet, marshy or adjacent to a stream?**

**Does the site already have trees?**  
 e.g. parkland, orchards, established woodland or scrub

**Other habitat?**  
 e.g. mine sites, bare ground, hedges or bracken slopes

**Farmland?**  
 e.g. arable or grassland with few wildflowers plants or fungi

**Is establishing trees the best natural solution to storing carbon?**

**Don't plant trees**  
 The site is likely to be a semi-natural habitat of wildlife value. Old, unimproved grasslands and permanent pastures are habitats of wildlife importance for plants, fungi and insects. These habitats already store carbon and planting trees on them may shade out existing species, resulting in a net loss of biodiversity. These sites may also have designations for wildlife (e.g. Local Wildlife Site, County Geology Site, Site of Special Scientific Interest) or historic features (e.g. scheduled ancient monument).

**Don't plant trees**  
 Wetlands are very valuable habitats for wildlife but are under threat and in decline. Important wetlands are not always easy to identify, especially in winter. Wetlands already store carbon and planting trees on them can dry them out and cast shade, resulting in a net loss of biodiversity. As well as being species rich, these sites may have a wildlife or historic designation; Streamside planting can be beneficial only if you are not planting on existing wetland. Seek advice on site and species choice.

**Seek advice before planting trees**  
 Existing woodlands and scrub are very often valuable for wildlife and tree planting may not be appropriate for the following reasons:  

- Clearings in woodland are often the most wildlife-rich parts of a wood. It is not necessary to have continuous tree cover.
- Ancient woodlands are very special and need careful management. The choice of tree species and planting location is vital to ensure a wildlife benefit, but natural regeneration is likely to be more appropriate; check for Ancient Woodland locations by selecting 'habitats and species', then 'woodland' on <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>
- Parkland (widely spaced trees in grassland) and orchards are valuable habitats in which it is important to maintain large clearings between trees. Both may also be landscapes or features of historical importance;

**Seek expert advice before planting trees**  
 Habitats such as mine sites, bare ground, and south facing hedges or bracken slopes can be incredibly valuable for invertebrates. Planting trees on them may lead to a loss of these rare and valuable habitats through shading, making them unsuitable for invertebrates and resulting in a net loss of biodiversity.

**Suitable for tree planting:**

- Use trees of certified UK provenance (i.e. grown in this country from locally-sourced seed) to avoid importing tree diseases, or collect and grow your own seeds.
- Plant suitable species and think about the proximity of the planting site to existing wildlife habitat. Avoid planting immediately next to important habitats to avoid spread of unsuitable species (e.g. birch scrub on heathland).
- Choosing a high proportion of native species – ideally over 75% – is best for wildlife, as they will be used by a wider range of species than non-native trees. Avoid species that can be invasive, e.g. laurel, rhododendron, tamarisk and sea buckthorn. Ash is no longer suitable for planting due to ash die back; substitute with alder.
- Maximise wildlife benefit of newly planted woodland through encouraging structural diversity by creating wavy edges and retaining open areas in larger woodland blocks; ensuring continuing care and maintenance of planted trees is also important.
- Plant trees at a suitable time of year when the seedling is dormant – Mid-November to early March.

**Adapt management practices to reduce carbon emissions**  
 Introduce better soil management, or implement alternative land use, e.g. establishing permanent pasture.

You may need an Environmental Impact Assessment before planting in some locations [www.gov.uk/guidance/assess-environmental-impact-before-you-create-new-woodland](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/assess-environmental-impact-before-you-create-new-woodland)

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# Right tree, right place.

Tree planting is increasingly popular. It helps capture carbon and can benefit wildlife but it is not the only natural solution to climate change. Natural regeneration and adapting current management practices can also reduce carbon emissions. If tree planting is chosen, site choice is crucial; existing habitats are vital for wildlife and already store carbon. Planting trees on important habitats like species-rich grassland, heathland or wetland is detrimental to wildlife, resulting in a net loss of plant, insect and other wildlife species.

Planting Key:

- DON'T PLANT**
- SEEK ADVICE**
- GO AHEAD!**

## Existing woodland

As established woodland is already highly valuable for wildlife, natural regeneration may be more appropriate than further tree planting. Retention of woodland clearings and choice of suitable species is key to maximising wildlife interest.

## Heath & moorland

Heathland and moorland are hugely important habitats that already store carbon; planting trees on them would shade out existing species and reduce wildlife interest.

## Historic landscapes

Historic or landscape features, such as elevated areas or mounds and disused mine sites should not be planted with trees.

## Arable field

Arable field corners, particularly if inaccessible or hard to cultivate, can be suitable for tree planting; farmers may be able to access grants to take these areas out of production.

## Urban areas

Trees can be planted in public open spaces in towns or villages to benefit wildlife.

## Parkland

(widely spaced trees in grassland) is important for wildlife and has a landscape and often historic value. Parkland planting requires advice and retention of large grassland areas.

## Natural regeneration

Natural regeneration is a low carbon alternative to tree planting supplementary planting where this is already happening is not necessary.

## Old grassland

Unimproved or species-rich grasslands are important for wildflowers, fungi and insects. They also already store carbon. Additional trees can shade out existing species and be detrimental to wildlife, resulting in a net loss of biodiversity.

## Hedges

Some hedges may provide suitable spots for planting additional trees, though it is important to avoid hedges already rich in wildflowers or heathers, as these can provide important links between existing habitats.

## Near streams

Streamside tree planting creates wildlife corridors and spaces that hold water and reduce flooding, but it is important not to encroach upon already important wetland habitats. Seek advice on suitable sites and species

## Near Adjoining habitats

If planting close to existing habitats, consider using buffers and use only tree and shrub species that won't spread into other valuable habitats, such as heathland or wetland.

## Agroforestry

can play a role in productive farmland, e.g. clusters or lines of trees, or allowing natural regeneration along a hedge in productive grassland can increase wildlife benefit whilst providing shelter for livestock.

## Maximise wildlife interest

of new woodland (once you have selected a suitable location) by choosing native, broadleaved trees and shrubs; planting in wavy edged blocks, retaining some clearings and ensuring new trees are protected and maintained.

## Productive Farmland

where tree planting is not an option, management changes can help reduce carbon emissions, e.g. through good soil management, deep rooted seed mixes or change to permanent pasture.

## Wetlands

Wetlands, such as marshy grassland, flushes, fen and bog are important for wildlife. They already store carbon and can be dried and shaded out by tree planting, resulting in a net loss of biodiversity.

## Orchards

As well as providing a food crop, fruit trees can be very valuable for wildlife. Seek advice if planning to restore an established orchard to ensure any existing wildlife, landscape or historic interest is considered.



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