

Information Sheet 1

Planting for Biodiversity



What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the WoW factor – the Wealth of Wildlife around us. It is all the animals and plants that live on our planet.

Is tree and shrub planting always a good thing for wildlife?

Adding new trees and shrubs to an area can have some immediate benefits for birds and other species, but with a little thought it can achieve so much more for both people and other wildlife. There are a few basic guidelines to follow:

1. **Choose your planting site carefully.** Look at creating or strengthening links with old hedgerows, grasslands and woods. Don't plant up areas that may hold important habitats or populations of rare species without getting advice first. For example, too many planting schemes have led to the loss of important areas of grassland through shading as well as planting up. If in doubt, seek advice first.
2. **Use locally native species.** These fit into the landscape better, have an increased chance of survival and usually support more species of wildlife. Peterborough City Council tries to supply schemes with species known to occur in your local area. We do recognise that in some areas, such as burial grounds, certain non-native species may be appropriate. However, we are increasingly seeking to get more wildlife and landscape benefits from assisted planting schemes.
3. **Choose trees of the right size.** This has two elements:
 - (a) Think carefully about the space you have for planting, and select your species of tree(s) or shrub(s) according to the final size they might reach.
 - (b) Smaller stock (often referred to as transplants or whips) is often preferable to larger specimens (referred to as standards) for planting out. Compared to standards, whips and transplants have a larger root size relative to their tops, and will normally outgrow a standard of the same species within a few years. Although a standard may appear more robust, whips and transplants are around 10% of the cost of a standard and so cheaper to replace if they do fail.
4. **Involve local landowners before putting a scheme forward.** You should always talk to local landowners at the earliest opportunity, as they may be able to suggest other ideas for good planting schemes and locations. Their agreement must be secured before finalising a scheme. Do remember that when considering planting within 15m of a highway, you will need the consent of both the City Council's Highways Section and the adjacent landowner (most verges are owned by the owner of the adjacent land).
5. **Don't just forget about your trees and shrubs after planting.** Maintenance (such as keeping new plantings clear of grass and weeds, adjusting tree ties, replacing rabbit guards) is your responsibility, not the City Council's responsibility. The City Council does carry out spot checks from time to time and reserves the right to reclaim grant monies if maintenance is unsatisfactory.
6. **Look at opportunities for changing management near any tree planting.** Long grass strips near to plantings can provide cover and feeding habitat for many species that like woodland edge habitats.
7. **Think about the people element.** Good planting schemes that can be seen by local people or visitors, and are seen to benefit wildlife, will get more support and help from them now and in the future.
8. **What sort of trees are suitable in towns and villages but also good for wildlife.** A list of trees that are both good for wildlife and suitable for urban spaces are outlined in information sheet 6 of this pack.

What types of schemes deliver greater benefits for wildlife?

The list below gives a few broad examples of opportunities common to many places. The Wildlife Officer at Peterborough City Council will be very happy to discuss your scheme to try to maximise wildlife benefits before you submit your application.

- **Replanting/gapping up/linking old hedgerows.** This is perhaps the single best application of the scheme for increasing local biodiversity. Repairing hedgerows can protect other habitats from agricultural spray drift and link woodland blocks as well as provide a habitat in their own right.
- **Creating scrub/woodland pockets in the corners of recreation grounds or other public open space.** This is particularly valuable where such corners already adjoin a hedgerow or other good quality habitat. Corner planting can quickly create dense blocks of scrub for birds, mammals and many insects.
- **Replacement planting for veteran trees.** Many very old (some several hundred of years old) and large trees in the Peterborough area support a rich variety of insects and other species reliant on different living and decaying parts of the tree. Such trees (particularly oak, sweet chestnut, lime and willow in the Peterborough area) provide a strong cultural link to past landscapes, particularly parklands. A great number of these veterans have become increasingly isolated from other trees and habitats, with very little natural regeneration around them that might in time support some of these features. Planting of a few similar trees around them is necessary now if we are to have some continuity, perhaps several decades or more in the future, of both the landscape character they provide and the unique habitats they support.
- **Create dense scrub near (but not on) wetlands.** This habitat can be very valuable for otters, great crested newts and many other species that might use it as a sanctuary at different times of the year.
- **Extend existing woodland areas.** Perhaps the best use in these circumstances is for the creation of woodland edge habitat, particularly 'scrubby' edges or even a woodland edge hedgerow. These habitats can, in time, support more species than the centre of the woodlands they adjoin.

Where can I go for further advice?

A list of trees that are suitable to the urban environment and which are also beneficial for wildlife is included in this pack. The Wildlife Officer and Landscape Officer at Peterborough City Council are also happy to provide help on getting better biodiversity benefits from the environmental improvement grants as well as suggesting other funding and advice sources for larger schemes. The City Council also services a network of voluntary Tree and Pond Wardens who might also help with your ideas. The local Wildlife Trust (01733 294543) may also be willing to offer some assistance.

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