

9.2 Ungrazed Grass Margins Planted with Native Trees

Definition: an ungrazed grass margin planted with native trees is a strip of land, a minimum width of 2 metres, which is ungrazed and planted with native broadleaf trees and shrubs. There are *two* options for creating ungrazed grass margins planted with native broadleaf trees. Firstly, they can extend from the edge of a hedge, stonewall, woodland, designated Area of Special Scientific Interest or they can be planted in a field corner, on a steep slope, or to provide a corridor between two existing wildlife areas. Secondly, they can extend from the edge of a watercourse. The watercourse beside the margin can be either a lake, river or stream, but must be at least 1 metre in width and have running water at all times.

Aims: to increase the area of new native broadleaf woodland, provide wildlife corridors and areas free from disturbance for a range of wildlife and contribute to the landscape character of the countryside.

Biodiversity objectives: to contribute to the NI Biodiversity Action Plan targets for the Irish hare. The NI Priority species - tree sparrow, the Barn owl, bats and invertebrates - will also benefit.

Management requirements:

- Margins must be created on improved or unimproved grassland only.
- The minimum width of the planted area must be 2m and each area planted must be less than 0.2 hectare. The maximum area that can be planted on each farm is 1 hectare, or 5% of the eligible area, whichever is the least.
- The margin must not be grazed.
- Sites planted with trees are permanent and must be retained in the same field(s) for the duration of the scheme agreement.
- 90% of the trees/shrubs planted must be native broadleaved/conifer species (see table below for suitable species).
- The planted area must include 30% shrub species.
- Plant at least **five** different species of native broadleaved/conifer trees or shrubs in any one place.
- Plant larger trees, such as oak, at 3 metres apart. Smaller trees such as birch, willow and alder must be spaced 2 metres apart and low growing shrubs 1 metre apart.
- Trees must be staked and guards erected (except on beech and holly). Guards should be removed when the trees are well established.

- Ornamental species such as Castlewella Gold and Leylandii must not be planted.
- Dead trees must be replaced. Care must be taken to ensure successful establishment of the trees. This will require control of weeds/grass around the newly planted trees for 2-3 years (see below for further details).
- No cultivation, reclamation, infilling, dumping, fertilisation, drainage or application of lime, herbicide, pesticide, sheep dip or other material is permitted.
- The area must not be used for regular access, supplementary feeding sites, or for the storage of big bale hay or silage.

Further advice

Trees should not be planted on any semi-natural habitat, above the natural tree line, near roadsides, at lane and road junctions where the line of vision could be obstructed, within 10m from overhead power lines, close to buildings or where they will interfere with future farm development.

The area to be planted should contain 70% tree species such as ash, oak, birch, alder, Scots Pine, wild cherry and crab apple and 30% shrubs such as hazel, holly, guelder rose, blackthorn, hawthorn, gorse (whin), dog rose and willow.

Prior to planting grass sites, spot spray patches, one metre in diameter, with glyphosate at 3-4 weeks before planting. Plant individual trees in the centre of these areas, taking care to firm the soil around the tree. Treeshelters should be used for all broadleaved species with the exception of beech and low growing shrubs. Plant trees between early November and mid-March, but not when the soil is frozen or waterlogged. To avoid the risk of fireblight, only buy planting material known to be from either a fireblight free zone or an officially designated buffer zone. Native stock will be better adapted to our climatic conditions.

Bare-rooted feathered ‘whips’ or cell grown plants should be planted and have advantages over larger ‘standards’. When planting care should be taken so that the bare roots do not dry out. Keep the whips in a bag or in loose soil until you are ready to plant.

The table below gives a guide to selecting tree species for a range of sites. Take into account soil type, drainage, exposure and look at the trees growing in the surrounding location.

SITE	SUITABLE SPECIES	COMMENTS
Wet Sites	Alder Birch Willow Guelder rose	Stabilises stream banks Intolerant of shade Grows from cuttings
Dry Sites	Crab apple Oak Scots Pine	Unsuitable for shade Excellent for wildlife Native conifer

Exposed Sites	Birch Rowan	Suitable for poorly drained peat Tolerates thin, acid soils
Lowland Sites	Scots Pine Birch Rowan Blackthorn Hawthorn Wild Cherry Crab Apple	Low growing shrubs provide shelter
Coastal Sites	Hazel Whin Blackthorn	Good for steep banks
Winter shelter for wildlife	Scots Pine Holly Gorse (whin)	Retain leaves/needles over winter
Red Squirrel areas	Scot's Pine Hawthorn Birch Rowan Ash Willow Alder Guelder rose Dog rose	Small seeded trees and shrubs
Upland Sites	Rowan Birch Blackthorn	Hardy species
Screening Buildings	Birch Rowan Scots Pine Hazel Hawthorn	Include shrub species

For successful planting follow these guidelines:

- Keep the tree roots moist at all times.
- Make the planting holes big enough for the roots. Excessively long roots may be trimmed prior to planting.
- Plant trees at the same depth at which they were growing in the nursery, shown by a lighter soil mark on the stem close to the roots
- Plant trees with the stems upright.
- Firm the soil around the plants by treading it well with your heel.
- On normal soils dig holes/pits for planting or cut an L- or T- shaped notch in the ground where the tree is to be planted.
- On wet sites planting on mounds or ridges will give the tree extra height above the wet soil and is useful on poorly drained soils, however there is the danger of the mound drying out thereby putting the tree at risk. Mounds have the added advantage that they may reduce weed competition in the first year.

- The soil in compacted areas should be loosened prior to planting. Ripping or deep subsoiling may be necessary.
- Do not plant in straight rows.
- Plant trees/shrubs at a spacing of 1m-3m. This will provide quick canopy closure. See the table below for the approximate number of trees to plant in an area:

Spacing (metres)	Approximate trees/shrubs per hectare	Approximate trees/shrubs per 0.2ha
3	1,111	220
2.5	1,600	320
2	2,500	500
1.5	4,400	880
1	10,000	2000

Weeds and grass should be controlled, in an area of about 1m diameter, around the trees for 2-3 years after planting by hand weeding, polythene, squares cut from old silo covers or old carpet, or using a 10-15cm mulch such as bark or lawn clippings or with herbicides approved for use on young trees. Mowing or scything grass around the trees is not recommended as it will stimulate grass growth.

If using herbicides such as glyphosate or paraquat extreme care must be taken not to allow the spray on to leaves. Propyzamide, in a liquid or granular form known as 'Kerb' is effective if applied before winter/spring frosts but it cannot be used more than once in a 9-month period. Dichlobenil, in the granular form, known as 'Casoron G', may be applied from November to March to control weeds such as grass, docks, nettle, bracken and thistle. Casoron G should not be applied to trees which have not been established for two years or more. Always read the product label carefully and follow the manufacturers instructions and use the appropriate protective clothing. Further advice on how to plant trees and on weed control can be obtained from the Countryside Management publication 'Trees'.

Noxious weeds such as thistles and ragwort may be controlled with herbicides, applied using a weed wiper or spot sprayer.

Management plans are provided for participants in the Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Management Schemes

