Creating Woodlands in School Grounds.

Woodland is an important habitat for wildlife. It is also useful as a sound barrier screen and a windbreak. Strips of woodland can be used to divide the school estate into smaller activity areas.

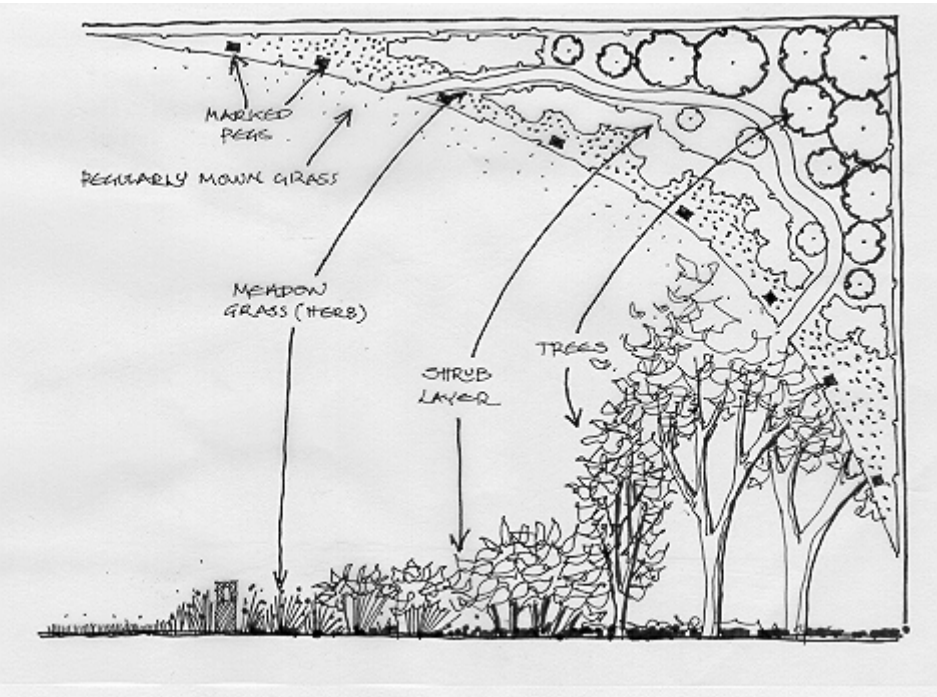
Types of Woodland

Mixed Broadleaf Woodland

This is very rich habitat and well worth creating if you have sufficient space. It should consist of a mixture of native trees and shrubs. Pupils can be involved in choosing appropriate species (see guidelines below). If you can plant 0.25 hectare or more, you might qualify for the Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Scheme. For smaller areas consider applying for a Tree Council Grant. The School Grounds Coordinator at Bishops Wood can help you do this.

Woodland Edge

This can be planted around the edge of a mixed woodland which you have created. On a small site you could plant woodland edge species to make a narrow belt of woodland or a hedge.



Scrub

This can be planted in blocks where you wish to create cover for wildlife and to divide up a site without occupying too much space or growing too high. Scrub is a natural stage in succession to woodland and, if left, woodland trees will establish themselves. It also acts as a wind and noise barrier and to hide ugly landscape features.

Plantations

These usually consist of a single species of tree. They would normally be used for timber production. Some management, including thinning, is required. A school with extensive grounds could look forward to some income from a plantation. A plantation can provide physical screening, but is not particularly valuable for wildlife. Even a conifer plantation could be considered for amenity planting if a quick growing screen is required. Such a plantation after 10 years could become a Forest School site or a playable woodland. Children should certainly have the opportunity to play in, hide in and explore woodland. A mixed woodland created for its wildlife value would be damaged by this level of use and a plantation where children could be allowed to play would relieve pressure on other woodland. For safety, low branches should be removed and care taken to cut stumps low when thinning in a payable plantation. Early thinning could provide Christmas trees whilst later thinning will provide useful poles.

Coppice

Single or mixed species can be planted and coppiced (cut down) on a 5, 10 or 15 year cycle. Ideally a new area should be planted each year for 5 to 10 years, then the first area coppiced. Measurements of the rate of re-growth will give rich data for science and maths. The coppice will provide cover for wildlife. Counting, harvesting, weighing and eating hazelnuts can become an annual activity. The harvest of wood can be used for a range of traditional and other crafts. Willow can also be used for weaving. Techniques are being developed for harvesting and burning coppice material to provide heating for large establishments so your coppice could prove very economical.

Table 1 – Some Uses of Coppice Material

Hazel	pea sticks, thatching spars, hurdles, bean poles, besom handles, walking sticks.
Willow (Osier)	baskets, bean poles.
Sweet Chestnut	cleft palings, hop poles.
Birch	besoms, horse-jumps, turnery, bean poles.

Table 2 – Some Typical Mixtures for Creating Woodland

It is worth involving pupils in researching and selecting the trees and shrubs most suitable for your site.

Mixed Woodland		**Woodland Edge/Hedgerow**	
*Oak	)	Common Hawthorn	40%
Beech	) 35%	Hazel	15%
Ash	)	Blackthorn	15%
Birch	) 20%	Alder	)
Alder	)	Field Maple	)
		Elder	) 30%
Hazel	25%	Goat Willow	)
		Honeysuckle	)
Holly	)		
Gean Cherry	)		
Elder	) 20%		
Wych Elm	)		
Horn Bean	)		
Scots Pine	)		

* It is advisable to plant as acorns 2 years after main planting.

Scrub Mixture

Common Hawthorn	)
Blackthorn	) 75%
Dog Rose	)
Gorse	)
Hazel	)
Holly	) 15%
Elder	)
Guelder Rose	)
Birch	10%

Table 3 **The number of insect and mite species known to be associated with various trees in Britain.**

Trees	
Quercus robur and Q. petraea (oak)	423
Salix 5 spp. (willows)	450
Betula 2 spp. (birches)	334
Crataegus monogyna (hawthorn)	209
Prunus spinosa (sloe)	153
Populus 4 spp. (poplars)	189
Pinus sylvestris (Scots pine) E	172
Alnus glutinosa (alder)	141
Ulmus 2 spp. (elms)	124
Malus sylvestris (crab apple)	118
Corylus avellana (hazel)	106
Fagus sylvatica (beech)	98
Fraxinus excelsior (ash)	68
Picea abies (spruce)*E	70
Tilia 2 spp. (lime)	57
Sorbus aucuparia (mountain ash)	58
Carpinus betulus (hornbeam)	51
Acer campestre (field maple)	51
Larix decidua (larch)*	38
Abies spp (fir)* E	-
Acer pseudoplatanus (sycamore)*	43
Juniperus communis (juniper) E	32
Ilex aquifolium (holly) E	10
Castanea sativa (sweet chestnut)*	11
Aesculus hippocastanum (horse chestnut)*	9
Juglans regia (walnut)*	7
Quercus ilex (holm oak)* E	5
Taxus baccata (yew) E	6
Robinia pseudoacacia (false acacia)*	2
Platanus X hybrida (plane)*	-

Ref: Kennedy and Southwood (1984)

E = Evergreen