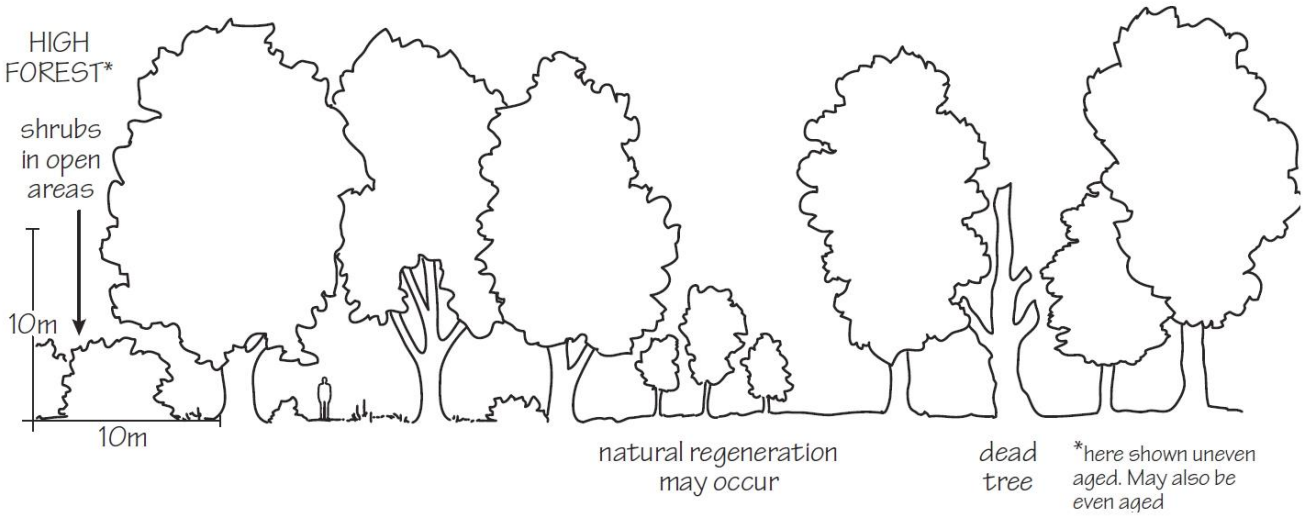
Managing new woodlands for wildlife

Importance of new woodlands for wildlife

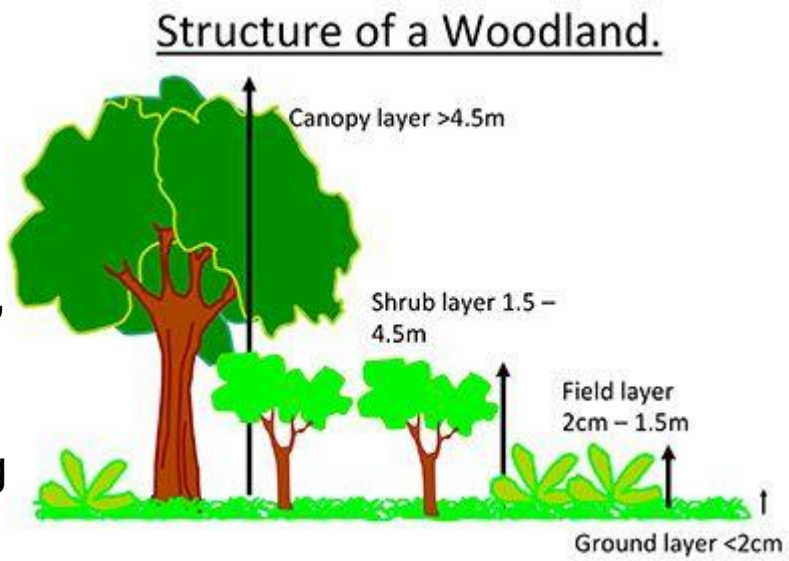
- Early successional habitat
- Birds such as nightingale, bullfinch, willow warbler, turtle dove use scrubby, dense woodland
- Use for foraging/shelter by mammals and amphibians
- Contribute to connectivity across the landscape

Structure is key



Woodland layers

- Open, mixed species canopy e.g. ash, oak, hornbeam, alder.
- Sub-canopy of younger-aged trees.
- Well-developed shrub layer of mixed species e.g. hawthorn, hazel, spindle, bird cherry, holly, bramble.
- Field layer supporting spring flowering plants such as bluebell, bugle, Wood anemone etc. (unlikely in new woods)
- Ground layer of mosses and liverworts, plus seedlings of plants of taller layers.
- Open rides, glades and ponds
- Standing and fallen dead wood



Problems with planted woodlands

- Trees planted close together so no light reaches the floor
- Even-aged trees
- No scrub layer
- No herb layer
- No open areas
- Plastic guards still on trees
- No transitional edges
- Continued mowing whilst young
- No natural regeneration of new trees

Solutions!

- Depends on the landowners/ communities expectations of the wood
- Use for amenity
- Use for wood fuel/other products
- Deer management
- Volunteers/work parties
- Finance

Management techniques for enriching new woodlands

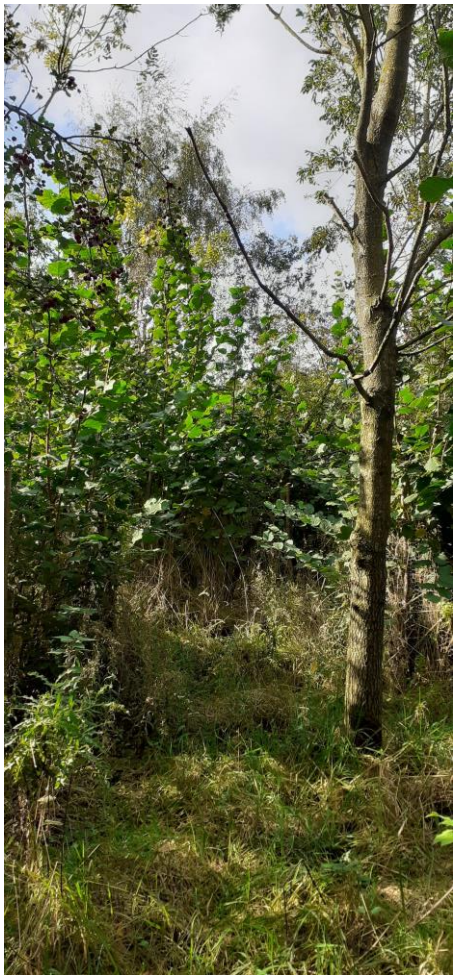
- Thinning
- Coppicing
- Creating/maintaining rides & glades
- Scrub edge transition zones
- Ponds
- Non-intervention
- Grazing

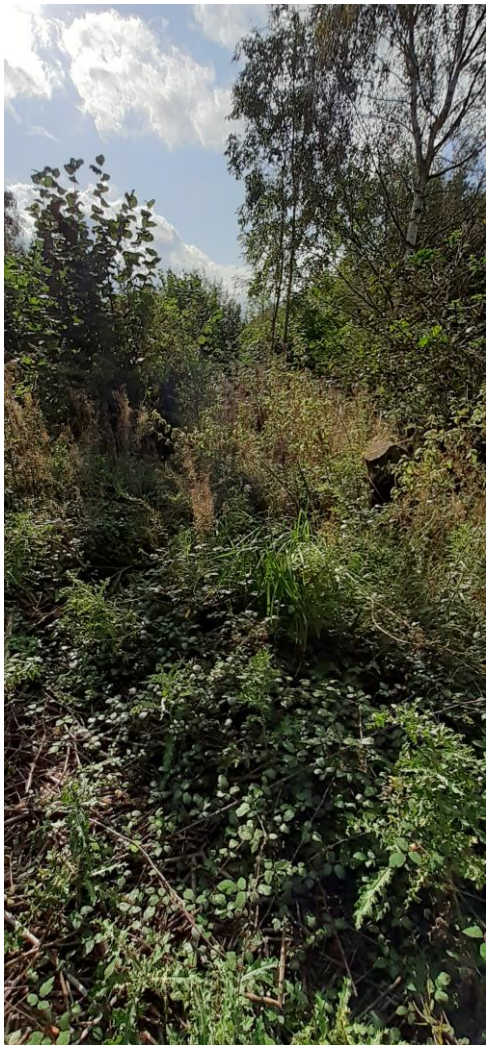
Thinning

- Open the canopy to rejuvenate the ground flora, shrub layer and allow regeneration of new trees. Ideally before canopy has closed.
- Thin to 4m apart. Often need to thin 50% of trees but not all at once. 25 % in 1st fell then 25% in second a few years later.
- Thin discrete areas 1st & leave others then rotate over time
- Some stacked timber should be left as habitat

Coppicing with standards

- A traditional method of managing woods
- Often ash/oak/hornbeam over hazel
- Standard trees left for timber whilst remainder are cut to ground for fuel or other products
- Coppice in blocks on 15-20 year rotation if oak/ash or 7-10 if hazel
- Ground flora flourishes in first years following coppice, followed by scrub which is replaced by woodland as coppice trees re-grow and mature.
- One standard to
- Coppice stools need protection from deer and rabbit browsing





Norfolk Wildlife Trust

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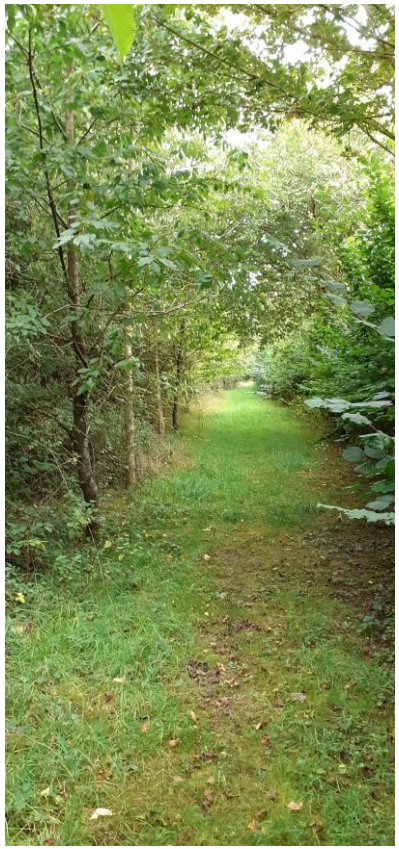
Creating rides & glades

- Adds value to woodland habitat
- Linear sunny rides brilliant for flora and butterflies
- Cut rides once a year if possible in late summer/autumn to knock back scrub & tough grasses/nettles. Or maintain through grazing.
- Fell area of trees to create glade and maintain by cutting in late summer/ by grazing

Scrub edge transition zones

- Key habitat for some birds of conservation concern, various invertebrates such as butterflies, flowering plants etc.
- Plant scrub on the edges of woods
- Create scalloped edges to woodlands rather than hard lines



Ponds

Grazing

Non-intervention

Leaving some areas unmanaged adds to the structural diversity of a woodland.

Particularly suitable for wet woodland such as willow and alder carr.

Ditch maintenance and keeping fen areas open can be useful in wet woods.

If woodland has structure & open canopy non-intervention is appropriate