

# **LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR AREAS MANAGED BY BARNSTON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **AIMS**

To try to manage wildflower meadows and greens in a way which goes as far as possible towards reconciling the interests of amenity, nature conservation and economy, and which will bring maximum support and active participation from local house-holders in a framework agreed by the Parish Council.

To try as far as possible to restrict plant and animal introductions to those species found in the area, but to increase the diversity and natural history interest of the site by using it as a 'sanctuary' for species which are becoming rarer as land management practices change.

## **MANAGEMENT**

### **Ponds**

1. Try to keep the water level as high as possible throughout the year by raising the outflow level by a foot.
2. Contain the spread of the red mace within a limited area, preferably by cutting underwater, near the base, in early summer. Otherwise red mace will eliminate open water.
3. Don't introduce wildfowl of any sort.
4. Don't plant any more trees where they will cast shade over the pond surface.

### **Greens**

5. Trim the roadside verge regularly in a strip about five feet wide, and keep the roadside bank of the pond scythed close, possibly trying to establish honeysuckle or periwinkle to suppress weeds such as nettle in this area.

**Spring cut** - this is useful for the meadows where grass growth is very lush. Cut back to height of 7.5cm (3in) only and complete this cut no later than the end of April. It can also be used in conjunction with sowing yellow rattle in August to help manage grass-dominant meadows.

**Main summer cut** - this is also referred to as the 'hay cut' and removes the bulk of the material, allowing it to either be baled or composted. This cut will be done between late June and the end of August; the earlier cutting favours spring flowers such as cowslips, fritillary, lady's smock, selfheal and bugle; the later cutting favours summer flowers such as knapweed, devil's bit scabious and lady's bedstraw.

**Autumn cut** - particularly useful for fertile sites, one or two cuts between the end of August and late November removes surplus growth and helps keep grasses at bay to allow the wildflowers to persist.

Where grasses become dominant there will be sowing of annual wildflower, yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) which is semi-parasitic on grasses. Sowing will take place in August and grass mown until March.

Cut the eastern side of Onslow green, possibly for hay, in the last week of June or early July and then again, in autumn, if necessary. This will encourage spring flowers to

spread by seeding and give later flowers a chance, while keeping the green reasonably tidy and discouraging scrub.

The initial mowings will be left in situ for a few days to allow seed to drop to the ground but then it is important to collect mowings to reduce soil fertility.

6. Keep the pond banks accessible, but allow 'wet ground' plants like meadow sweet and pendulous sedge to become established at the water's edge.
7. Allow bramble and honeysuckle to establish themselves within the present clump of maple and hawthorn, but keep this thicket restricted to its present area. *Possibly* plant hazel, dogwood, spindle and guelder rose.
8. Restrict bramble growth around the smaller pond to allow maximum light to reach the water surface.
9. Leave a large nettle bed to the west of this smaller pond in and around the ditch.
10. Plant additional trees as suggested, keeping them clear of the edge of the main pond and also of overhead cables, allowing for growth without later lopping:

Standard Oak:	Quercus robur
Small-leaved Lime:	Tilia cordata
Wild cherry:	Prunus avium (or Bullace: Prunus insititia)
Wild crab:	Malus sylvestris
Birch:	Betula pendula

11. Cut back shrub growth, and allow this to re-grow from base (or lay it as hedge). Plant replacement standard trees: small-leaved lime will attract bees; perhaps interspersing with oak and hornbeam.

## Introductions

Please don't introduce additional plant or animal species without consultation with a body such as Essex Naturalists' Trust. The Parish Council has a list of introduction species. They have included, to date: common and great crested newt, stickleback, and rudd, and, among the plants, common rush, pendulous and false fox sedge, yellow flag iris, creeping jenny. They should encourage visits by heron and kingfisher. Frogs and toads should be brought in as the opportunity occurs. So far the pond improvements have been very successful, but the green itself still lacks much in the way of flowering plants. We should like to be able to introduce such plants as sulphur clover, rockrose, salad burnet, hoary plantain and others from the conservation verges nearby, but should need permission to transplant.

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