

Biodiversity enhancements advice notes

Type of enhancement:

Deadwood piles for beetles, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals and fungi.

Where to use this enhancement:

At locations where

- Tree felling or coppicing/ pollarding is being carried out and woody material is available
- Where there is adequate material in the form of timber and brash, and can include aquatic plants if stored away from the river bank.
- The ground is above the level of most floods.
- To avoid potentially polluting practices such as burning or time (and fuel) intensive chores such as chipping.

When:

Best done in the winter when tree felling works will not disturb nesting birds, but anytime if trees have to be removed in an emergency

What to do:

General

- Construct piles using woody debris and plant material.
- Place in a variety of situations – in shade and in sunny clearings or banks – this will provide homes for a range of species.
- These features are temporary and will rot down with time.
- Brush piles can be large, up to 5m in length and 2m or more high. If less material is available smaller piles are still of value. The base should contain the largest material with gaps left between parallel logs. The foundation of the pile should be designed with 6-10 inch diameter logs placed parallel to each other one foot apart (old pallets make excellent foundations for a brush pile). Secondly, place branches and logs perpendicularly on top of the foundation. Lastly, smaller debris is added on top to form a mound. Brush piles may be placed randomly on land or partially submerged at the waters edge. Avoid piling on footpaths or anglers access paths.
- Consult biodiversity staff if trees to be managed contain hollows or are ivy-covered or have hollow root plates or roots – such structures can be used by otters and/ or bats and survey or licence may be required.

Invertebrates and fungi

- Many species are dependant on rotting wood
- Piles can be constructed adjacent to rivers, best kept above normal flood level to avoid loss and possible downstream blockages.
- Large-sized stems will last longer, are time consuming to log and remove.

Reptiles and amphibians

Decomposing piles of wood, mud and vegetation provide heat required by basking reptiles and potential nesting sites for grass snakes, particularly useful if in or immediately adjacent to wetland or pond habitat. Grass snakes will use compost heaps but such natural sites are rare in the wild. Frogs and toads are also likely to use such habitat as hiding places and for feeding. Inclusion of turf and numerous hollows will benefit amphibians. Specific designs have been made for great crested newts using wood, turf and rubble or stone.