

GUIDELINES ON THE MANAGEMENT OF DEAD/DECAYING WOOD

Introduction

Dead and decaying wood is an important component of woodland, wood pastures and parkland. Even in urban environments it is useful to retain as much decaying wood as possible; we know very little about the abundance and distribution of saproxylic species in these types of habitats but many are not sensitive to urban environments. Decaying wood is used by a wide range of saproxylic organisms, including fungi, invertebrates and lower plants. Wood decay is also a natural process which releases nutrients, making them available to higher plants, including the tree itself.

All types of dead wood are valuable.

Dead/decaying wood on the ground

Here are some general principles:

- **Size and shape.**

Bigger is better, both in diameter and length. The larger the piece of wood the more valuable it is. Large diameter branches and tree trunks should be cut up as little as possible, preferably not at all.

- **Species of tree.**

The wood from native species of tree especially those naturally occurring on the site are best.

- **Wood with decay.**

Dead wood showing any sign of decay should always be left, and as intact as possible.

- **Root plates and stumps**

The root plates of fallen trees should be left as they fell unless they constitute a safety hazard. Tree stumps should be left in the ground except where this conflicts with other management practices (such as heathland work). Stumps should not be treated (unless they are invasive species and the local regulations allow). If they are jagged or uneven they should be left like this and not be tidied up after felling/falling.

- **Position.**

Ideally all dead/decaying wood should be retained and left where it falls, in practice this may often not be possible. :

- Some organisms prefer wood in open conditions
- Some organisms prefer wood in dappled shade or shady conditions.
- Dead wood fallen into water should ideally be left.
- Dead wood in a range of different conditions is ideal.

If it is necessary to move it or remove it, follow the guidelines below:

Removal/moving dead/decaying wood

- **Removal**

If it must be removed, chipped or burnt it must **not** be left on site to mature first. Any freshly cut timber must be removed before the end of April or left permanently. If for any reason it has to be left and stored on site it must be covered with a polythene sheet. (Ideally this is true of timber stacked by the saw mill too).

- **Moving**

The ideal place to move the wood is to somewhere similar to where it would have lain naturally

- Move as short a distance as possible.
- Keep wood as intact as possible.
- Move as soon after cutting/falling as possible.
- Leave on the ground, not on top of other wood.
- Move near nectar sources (beneficial for many dead wood insects).
- Move adjacent to dead wood in a more advanced state of decay (to provide continuity of habitat).