



Allington Hill

Management Plan 2016-2021

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
- 10 Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Allington Hill
Location:	Bridport
Grid reference:	SY457935, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 193
Area:	17.71 hectares (43.76 acres)
Designations:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Allington Hill is a mixture of woodland, grassland and open space in the dramatically undulating landscape of West Dorset, with stunning walks and views across Bridport at the top of the hill. Large wide paths. Lots of different route options which lead back to where you started, able to vary length of the walk to suit. Popular with dog walkers, great for kids too.

2.2 Extended Description

Allington Hill comprises of a community woodland, rough grassland and open space in the dramatically undulating landscape of West Dorset on the edge of the town of Bridport, West Dorset. The site is part of a wider woodland and open space network including both Allington Hill and Cooper's Wood, with Cooper's Wood and field leased to Allington Parish Council in 2013.

The wood lies within the Dorset AONB and Heritage Coast areas and sits within the Marshwood and Powerstock Vales Joint Character Area. Allington Hill forms one of a series of prominent hills along the coast formed from the Greensand ridge. The surrounding land is predominantly pasture or housing and the nearby hospital.

Prior to Woodland Trust ownership, the hill was grazed or cut, although older areas of woodland exist noticeably on the southern boundary. Beech and Scots pine plantation on the southern boundary was planted in the 1880s as a shelter belt and naturally regenerating ash woodland occurs on the lower slopes. There is an area of oak, ash and hazel on the north side of the hill, and numerous remnant ancient hedgerows. Further planting using native broadleaved species along the lower slopes of the main hill was carried out by the Trust between 1987 and 1993; Cooper's Wood in 2004 and Jubilee Wood in 2012. The remaining land is partially covered with elder scrub, bramble, nettle and bracken, with the top of the hill open rough grassland maintained by rabbit grazing and tractor cutting. Some of the open areas are remains of mining pits and the disturbed ground is rich in nettles, bramble and bracken. Several well used circular routes run around the site, which are well used.

It was agreed at the time of acquisition that the top of the hill would be left unplanted to remain in keeping with other hills in the surrounding landscape. Visible here are many small pits, particularly at the eastern end, thought to be where stone was quarried. It is believed that these quarries are of longstanding - possibly dating to 13th Century. Other old features of note on the hill include a dividing boundary bank running north south across the top of the hill, and some evidence of strip lynchets in the surrounding area - with the prominent bank that runs round much of the bottom of the hill possibly an exaggerated form of this.

Allington Hill is close to a large population with a number of public footpaths leading onto the hill from surrounding roads. Consequently use of the hill is high. Although some of the slopes are steep walkers making it to the top are rewarded by stunning 360 degree views over the surrounding countryside.

Cooper's Wood was leased to Allington Parish Council in 2013, and is managed by the volunteer community group The Allington Hillbillies. Cooper's Wood is a mixed broadleaf plantation planted in 2004, with surrounding amenity grassland, including a meadow, play structures and small sports field. A separate management plan has been produced for this area by Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (Southwest) and can be obtained from The Allington Hillbillies.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

General Location:

Allington Hill & Cooper's Wood is on the north west edge of Bridport. It borders Hospital Lane to the north, but otherwise visitors need to cross fields/unsurfaced footpaths to reach the wood. From Park Road to the south it is approximately 120m across a field on a public footpath.

General overview of paths and entrances:

Access direct from the road, via simple self-closing gates with easy access latches, is direct from Hospital Lane. From there visitors can access the newer planting at Cooper's Wood and the older woodland on the main hill where a barrier free route is available to the top. Other entrances are a mixture of open gaps, squeeze stiles, step-over stiles and 'Rambler' gates. The gentlest slopes are at Cooper's Wood. There are steep slopes somewhere on most routes, including the barrier free one. Paths are unsurfaced and a mix of grass and bare earth and can get slippery in wet weather. Although there is an ongoing programme of path maintenance the surfaces can be locally uneven and can narrow due to erosion/presence of large trees etc. There are steps to negotiate when entering from the Park Road side.

Parking:

There is no car park at the site however on road parking is possible in Park Road (120m at closest point) and Hospital Lane (adjacent). Sensitivity to the residents is requested when parking at these locations.

Public Transport - information taken from Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk 0871 200 22 33 as at Dec 2012:

Nearest bus stop: Hospital Lane, opposite Fields Mead - a few metres from the main entrance.
Nearest railway station: Maiden Newton - approximately 9 miles away - although as a rural station services may be infrequent

Public Toilet - information taken from www.dorsetforyou.com Dec 2012

Nearest public toilet: West Street, approximately 2/3rds mile. Not open 24 hours but facilities for disabled people and parents & babies.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term vision for Allington Hill to be an attractive mixture of wildlife friendly habitats including mature native broadleaf woodland and open grassland. A healthy canopy of trees with an understory of woodland shrubs and developing ground flora, integrating with surrounding scrub, rough grassland and open grassland habitat.

The top of the hill will remain largely open grassland because of the wood's position in the landscape, with up to 15% scrub habitat. The importance of the hill as a local recreational resource will be maintained and improved. Visitor levels will remain relatively high with many walkers and families visiting, and the site will be well known and used by local people. A well maintained path network will provide access through the woodland rides, paths and open areas of the hill, and will continue to work towards the Trust's objectives of inspiring everyone to value woods and trees.

5.0 KEY FEATURES

The Key Features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the Key Feature.

5.1 Informal Public Access

Description

Allington Hill is located on the edge of Allington and Bridport, with housing close by on 3 sides of the wood. There are open areas within the site predominantly on the top of the hill which are kept open for public access purposes. The wood and open space is well used in all seasons by local people.

A good network of paths exists with a selection of gradients that pass through the variety of habitats. As well as providing general opportunities for recreation, the wood provides lovely 360 degree views from the top of the hill.

A small area in the neighbouring Cooper's Wood also provides an informal play area for local children with play structures and a small sports field. The Allington Hillbillies now manage Cooper's Wood and field on behalf of Allington Parish Council, and continue to volunteer on the Woodland Trust's Allington Hill carrying out small scale practical work to improve the access and biodiversity.

Significance

Increasing people's enjoyment of woodland is a key aim of the Woodland Trust and this is furthered by the Trust ownership of Allington Hill. The wood's position close to housing and roads make it readily accessible to visitors wishing to use the site. It is also important as it provides open green space in an area with high development pressure, and the site links into a network of well used footpaths. It also adds interest to the village of Allington and the town of Bridport, and provides an excellent place for locals to walk and enjoy quiet recreation.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities: Opportunity to provide an interesting and pleasant open green space for the local population which is capable of sustaining high levels of usage by pedestrians.

Constraints: steep slopes on the main hill and the slippery nature of the soil after rain will limit some visitors.

Factors Causing Change

Flytipping and litter. Anti-social behaviour. Loss of the woodland and increased safety issues through pests/diseases e.g. Chalara - dieback of ash. Damage to paths by inappropriate use and natural erosion, scrub developing and blocking paths.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The wood and hill will be well-used and valued by the surrounding community. It will be known for the variety of walks and habitat, and links with the wider footpath network. It will be welcoming and easily accessible with more challenging 'wilder' paths available where people can encounter a little bit of wilderness just outside their front door.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Public access at Allington Hill will be managed to provide safe and enjoyable access facilities for the local communities and visitors at a level appropriate to its Access category A rating. Paths and tracks throughout the wood will be managed in line with WT access and welcome standards providing access to woodland and open grassland habitats and vistas and viewpoints over the surrounding landscape as well as links to the external public rights of way network.

Throughout the plan period this will be done by:

This will be done by:

- Mowing all paths, tracks and open areas annually to provide clear and safe access throughout the year to woodland and open ground.
- Maintaining entrance and estate furniture as required annually to keep them welcoming and in good condition.
- Regular litter clearance as is necessary to maintain an attractive site.
- Monitoring condition of the paths and steps and carrying out improvements as necessary to provide safe access and to address any deterioration.
- Liaison with local groups (Allington Hillbillies, Allington Parish council, Dorset AONB, Forest Schools, Walking for Health group, etc.) to encourage increasing levels of responsible use of the wood.
- Manage ride edges to open out and improve access, appearance, and people's enjoyment of the wood,
- Working with the volunteer group to maintain access.
- Tree safety checks in Zone A every two years and Zone B every 4 years.

5.2 Mixed Habitat Mosaic

Description

Mixed habitat mosaic including; natural regenerated secondary woodland with ash, oak, field maple and hazel, more recently planted broadleaf woodland, late 19th Century beech and Scots pine planting, mixed scrub with elder, hazel and hawthorn, remnant hedgerows, and open grassland of rough grassland, bramble and bracken comprising 30% cover.

The beech and Scots pine plantation on the southern boundary was planted in the 1880s as a shelter belt. Naturally regenerating secondary ash woodland occurs on the lower slopes. There is an area of oak, ash and hazel on the north side of the hill, and numerous remnant ancient hedgerows with veteran ash and oak standards. These blocks are linked by naturally developing scrub woodland (mainly elder) and patches of oak, ash and hazel developing from old hedge banks. Canopy cover varies on the slopes with some more open areas.

Remnant ground flora in the old hedge lines are a reservoir of potential species which could spread over the rest of the wood in the long term. These include typical woodland species such as bluebell, dog's mercury & yellow archangel, Hart's Tongue fern, & Soft Shield-fern.

Between 1987 and 1993 The Woodland Trust planted 3.7ha of native broadleaved woodland on the slopes of the hill. 1.8ha at the neighbouring Cooper's Wood on the northern side of the hill (now managed by community group), with planting on Allington Hill in 2004 and in 2012 to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee.

There are open areas of rough grassland within the site predominantly on the top of the hill and at the eastern end of Cooper's Wood, which are kept open for public access purposes and for the spectacular views. These comprise around 30% of the site. The grassland would have been grazed in the past, and there are many small pits visible, particularly at the eastern end, thought to be where stone was quarried. Some rabbit grazing still occurs,

Allington Hill is one of a number of hills prominent in the landscape around Bridport. A commitment was made at the time of acquisition to leave the top of the hill open for landscape purposes, and the views are widely valued and enjoyed by local people.

Bracken that was starting to spread and colonise the open grassland areas, has been kept in check by rolling with heavy horses in 2013, 2015, and 2016 to reduce its spread and vigour.

Significance

One of the Trust's aims is to see an increase in the area of new native woodland - this objective is furthered by the establishment of woodland at Allington Hill.

Allington Hill is in the Dorset AONB & Heritage Coast areas - and forms part of the characteristic landscape of hills in the area formed from the Greensand ridge. The site falls within the 'Marshwood and Powerstock Vales' NCA (139) - Natural England's landscape based National Character Areas (NCAs).

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

Public engagement and environmental education with community group

Constraints:

Poor accessibility of some paths.

The management access is via Cooper's Field, and access is only currently with permission from neighbours in good weather. The WT management access is narrow and steep on unsurfaced paths.

Factors Causing Change

Scrub forming in the designated open areas, Squirrel Damage, Deer Damage, Invasive bracken, Pests and diseases - Chalara - dieback of ash. Bracken encroachment in open areas. Unauthorised planting of non-native trees and shrubs.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Healthy, mature and attractive predominantly native broadleaf woodland of varying structure and habitats forming a mosaic of mature and regenerating trees & shrubs, open space and developing ground flora. This should become a stable landscape feature heavily wooded on the slopes, whilst predominantly open on the top with avg. 30% open ground of which 15% scrub acceptable.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

The short term objective is to ensure continued existence of the mixed habitat mosaic including maintaining the open grassland, controlling the bracken and managing scrub encroachment. Maintain mature and secondary wood in its current condition with mature trees, a rich shrub layer and small amounts of regeneration and expanding ASNW ground flora. The wood will be managed through natural processes with limited intervention undertaken only where necessary, with steeper slopes allowed to naturally succeed to woodland. There are no interventions planned for the mature and secondary broadleaf woodland, other than small scale ride-side coppicing, and work for tree safety in the plan period.

- 1) Manage the open grassland areas by cutting. Cut all areas on top of hill using machinery to control the bracken, prevent tree regeneration and to retain the views. Open area preserve cover to 30% of site, within this individual trees to 5%, and successional scrub up to 15% of this area.
- 2) Continue programme of bracken rolling with heavy horses on the steep slopes and open areas. Roll in 2017, and then review coverage in 2018. Roll in late June using bracken roller, when stems are tall but bracken has not yet spored.
- 3) Monitor and control any invasive non-native threats, signs of pests and diseases, and take action to control as appropriate.
- 4) Manage scrub levels across the open areas using community group, cutting encroaching scrub within grassland in winter using hand tools so that it covers no more than 15% of flat open area by 2021.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	1.30	Beech	1880	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access, Mixed Habitat Mosaic	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast, Tree Preservation Order
<p>A block of Scots Pine and Beech established as a shelter belt in the 1880s as a long thin strip along the southern boundary. Other regenerating broadleaf species are also now present, mainly ash with some oak, hazel and elder scrub.</p>							
1b	7.50	Mixed broadleaves	1980	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access, Mixed Habitat Mosaic	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast
<p>Blocks planted between 1987 and 1993 by the Woodland Trust on the lower slopes of the main hill which was previously rough grazing. Species include pedunculate oak, ash, small leaved lime and hornbeam. Also includes areas of scrub woodland connecting the planted blocks along the northern slope which are predominantly elder with occasional hazel and elm. Finally small areas of oak, ash and hazel woodland on the northern and western slopes, thought to have developed from old hedge banks. Ground flora in the latter include bluebell, ransoms, dog mercury and primrose which it is hoped will gradually colonise more recently wooded areas. Along the line of the public footpath on the eastern side of the hill there are also some fine mature broadleaf trees.</p>							
1c	4.40	Mixed broadleaves	2004	High forest		Informal Public Access, Mixed Habitat Mosaic	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast
<p>Cooper's Wood leased to Allington Parish Council in 2013, and is managed by the volunteer community group The Allington Hillbillies. Cooper's Wood planted early in 2004 on land that was formerly managed for grazing and partially for allotments. Site planted with approximately 1800 broadleaf trees and shrubs including oak, ash, field maple, hazel, crab apple, willow and Guelder rose. Eastern end includes a high percentage of open space, meadow, and recreational grassland with play structures.</p>							

2a	4.20	NULL		Non-wood habitat	Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground	Informal Public Access, Mixed Habitat Mosaic	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast
<p>Open rough grassland with occasional pockets of naturally regenerated trees of mostly Ash or Oak and hawthorn scrub particularly in the dug out pits.</p> <p>Survey recorded site as dry mesotrophic grassland dominated by Red Fescue, with cocksfoot, nettle & field speedwell locally dominant. Also present - common bent, creeping thistle, field woodrush & yorkshire fog. Common ragwort has been a problem in recent years. Bracken is on the northern, eastern and western section, and the disturbed areas of pits and spoil are rich in nettles, bramble and hogweed.</p>							

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established. Either by hand cutting or with carefully selected weed killers such as glyphosate.

Windblow/Windthrow

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.