

Scrub

Photo: Bluebells



Photo: Hawthorn



‘Scrub’ may vary in its meaning in different contexts and in literature. Scrub often produces a vision of areas that are between rough grassland and woodland. Areas that are not cut or grazed frequently thus leaving coarser species of grass to dominate, often with patches of Brambles, tree seedlings and some bushy trees. Some of the trees may become established and if left for many years, trees fill all the spaces, with their canopies joining overhead to form woodland. An example of this succession occurred on Barn Hill, formerly of grazed grassland, but once that ceased allowing the establishment of oak seedlings, oak scrub and secondary woodland. (Reversing that, where the scrub has grown on the outer margins of the Humphry Repton landscaped woodland, is the focus of the Acid Grassland restoration).

In ecological terms that central phase of grassland and scrub can be defined as particular ecological communities, often where the scrub tree species that initially colonise are characteristic. A typical community is that of *Crateagus-Hedera* scrub, meaning that Hawthorn is usually present as is Ivy at ground level, though there are many variants.

Though some of the woodland, hedgerow edge, acid grassland and rough grassland areas at Fryent Country Park have small patches of scrub, there are only limited large areas of typical scrub habitat within the Country Park. Each of those will require management, as otherwise succession will lead to the dominance of woodland trees and to woodland.

Scrub is an important habitat for many species that require a mix of shelter, sunlight, undisturbed grassland and dense vegetation. For example, many bird species, butterflies and invertebrates. Ant-hills are common. Amphibians use the shade, while Slow Worms and the Common Lizard benefit also from opportunities for shelter and for warming. At Preston Eastfield there are conditions suitable for the Narrow-leaved Bitter-cress which can make use of spaces in rough grassland while benefitting from any occasional ground disturbance once every few years.

Task	Notes
Preston Eastfield: Periodically re-open areas where shade covers more than half of the ground. Retain wide paths with rough grassland edges.	
Robert Southwell ponds scrub: both that surrounding the moat and on the island.	
Lower Hydes Mid scrub: a mix of species including Willows, Silver Birch, Hawthorn and Oak.	
Barn Hill: In the north-east of Saltcroft and Barn Hill, largely between Saltcroft glade and extending in an arc south alongside the edges of the woodland belts is an area of <i>Crataegus</i> (Hawthorn) and other species (including Wild Service Tree suckers). Management of the habitat should be considered as a wider extension of that of Saltcroft glade. The aim is to conserve the scrub by controlling the succession to woodland, and to manage and restore a high proportion of grassland.	
Saltcroft glade: Saltcroft glade itself is grassland rather than scrub but considered here as it is a remnant of old neutral grassland within a larger area that is now scrub or woodland. The grassland plant community is different from other grassland communities at Fryent Country Park, and is perhaps nearest to MG5 of the National Vegetation Classification. Maintain the grassland and flora by cutting, at least once annually in the early autumn, and by cutting Bramble and tree growth from the edges. The grassland should connect with the areas of grassland restored as part of the scrub management (see box above).	
Barn Hill: see the sections on Woodland, Acid Grassland.	

More information

See also the Management Plan sections on ‘Woodland’, ‘Hedgerows’ and ‘Acid Grassland’.

Barn Hill Conservation Group. www.bhcg.btck.co.uk

The Conservation Volunteers. Woodlands.