



Cornwall's Living Churchyards



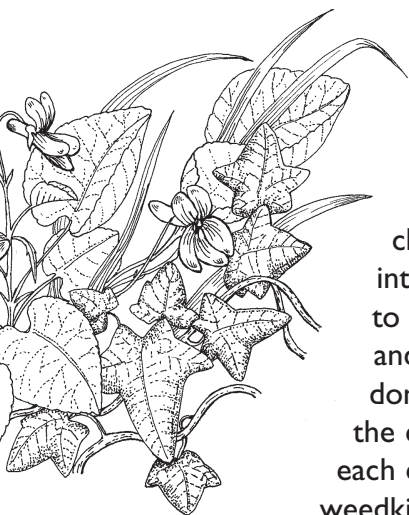
Cornwall

Summary of management principles for an environmentally friendly churchyard

Begin by making a ground plan of your churchyard. Mark the main trees and shrubs and list as many flowering plants and ferns as you can. You can add to this list throughout the year. You may also wish to keep a record of birds, butterflies and any other animals seen.

Take photographs and publicise what you are doing. Try to involve the whole community by contacting your local schools and youth groups. Work sheets are available for use in schools. The Cornwall Wildlife Trust can help you make a management plan for the churchyard.

The value of a churchyard lies partly in the fact that it has a number of different elements that combine in a small area to form a variety of wildlife habitats



Grass

The main objective is to diversify the grassy areas to increase the range of wild flowers that they support. The churchyard may be divided into different compartments to provide short, medium and long grass. Once this is done, it is important to keep the cutting consistent within each compartment. Do not use weedkillers.

There are four main types of grass management suitable for churchyards:

1. **Flowery lawn.** All areas near to the church and to recent graves need to be mown in a way that provides neat approaches to the church and easy access to more recent graves. These areas should be mown as necessary during the growing season with the mower set at about three inches to allow a few species to flower amongst the short grass.

2. **Spring meadow.**

Where there is a predominance of spring flowers, the grass should not be cut between January and late June or early July so that bulbs can die down naturally and flowers set seed. If at all possible, rake off the grass, especially after the first cut. If cuttings are left on the ground, they rot down and increase the nutrients in the soil. More delicate wild flowers cannot compete with the stronger species in such conditions. This spring meadow area can then be cut as necessary throughout the growing season. The longer grass can be made more acceptable if a metre-wide strip at the side of all paths is mown more frequently, creating a tidy framework for these areas.

3. **Summer meadow.** In an open, sunny area, the tall seeding grasses are especially valuable for butterflies and seed-eating birds. The grass should not be cut between March and late September. Rake thoroughly after the September cut.

4. **Rough grassland.** If acceptable, a metre-wide strip of grass around all boundaries should be cut once a year only, in October. This provides a useful feeding and shelter corridor for birds, small mammals and invertebrates.

Hedges

Hedges support a great number of flowering plants and provide protected feeding corridors for animals. Plan to trim between November and February as birds begin nesting early in Cornwall. Try to cut only part of it in any one year. Keep it thick at the base and



preserve a few feet of uncut grass next to the hedge to be mown once each October. Cornish hedges need to be kept in a good state of repair.

Trees

Native trees offer the best food and shelter to insects and birds. They should be kept in good heart. Regular inspection and maintenance by forestry experts ensures safety and extends the life of the tree.

Consult the secretary of the Diocesan Advisory Committee before undertaking any new planting.

Stones

The church walls and the gravestones are important for mosses and lichens. The latter take scores of years to grow and should be disturbed as little as possible. They can be shaded out by too much tree cover or tall weeds. Changing the alignment of headstones, or carelessly spraying herbicides near them, can also kill lichens

Paths

A path system should be developed to allow easy and safe access to graves through longer grass. Where it is possible, main paths should be wide enough to allow access for wheelchairs. Long grass should not overhang them. Gravel paths should be hand-weeded where possible.

Planting

If your churchyard has been mown closely for years and harmful chemicals used, you may wish to introduce some wild flowers. Obtain advice from the Cornwall Wildlife Trust about which native species to plant. Drifts of snowdrops, wild daffodils or bluebells can be planted to great effect. Do not dig from the wild or you will incur a heavy fine.



Bats

These endangered creatures inhabit many of our churches. Churchyards are their feeding grounds and changes can affect them. More importantly, building work within the church can directly harm their roosts. It is illegal to disturb a bat roost. If in doubt, please contact English Nature on (01872) 262550.



Advice

An excellent handbook, written by a clergyman and recommended by the Council for the Care of Churches, is "Wildlife in Church and Churchyard" by Nigel Cooper. It is available from SPCK or Church House Publishing, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ.

If changes are to be made in the churchyard, it is important to consult the secretary of the **Diocesan Advisory Committee** in case a faculty application is required. Tel: (01872) 274351.

If ground is to be disturbed, the **Historic Environment Service of Cornwall County Council** should be informed. Tel: (01872) 323603.

Expert advice on all conservation management is available from:

Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Five Acres

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Truro TR4 9DJ

Tel: (01872) 273939

www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk

