

# Basic Guidelines for Churchyard Management

## GRASS CUTTING

All grass cuttings should be removed. Delicate flowering plants can be smothered by grass cuttings and they also encourage stronger growing plants at the expense of wildflowers.



**Paths** and other well-used areas probably need to be mown as often as a lawn. Grass around infrequently visited gravestones can be cut less often, to a height of about 3 inches (7cm). If possible, do not mow these areas from May to mid-July, to allow a good variety of plants to flower and set seed.

**Mown paths** through longer areas of grass will guide visitors through the "wildlife areas" and show them that it is part of a properly managed churchyard.

Rarely visited areas could be mown once a year, in late September to allow a good variety of plants to grow. Longer areas of grass will be used by breeding 'Brown' butterflies, numerous moths and other creatures and the flowering plants within the grass by many more, making these areas the most productive part of a wildlife churchyard.

**Chemicals** - try not to use artificial fertilisers, insecticides, herbicides and other chemicals.

**IVY** should be left untrimmed where possible. It is one of the main foodplants of the Holly Blue (along with holly). It provides bird nesting sites during March to July and is a late nectar source for butterflies in late summer and autumn.



**Stinging nettles** in a sunny position (yes, really!) could act as the foodplant for Comma, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady or Red Admiral and many moth species.

**Planting new trees** - ideally these should be native trees and planted where they will not shade out wildflower areas in years to come.

With the churchwardens' approval, the churchyard management plan can be displayed, maybe with a few photos, to show that the churchyard is a beautiful place to visit as well as being beneficial to wildlife.

Helen Hyre - January 2010

Butterfly Conservation - Upper Thames Branch

<http://www.upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/>