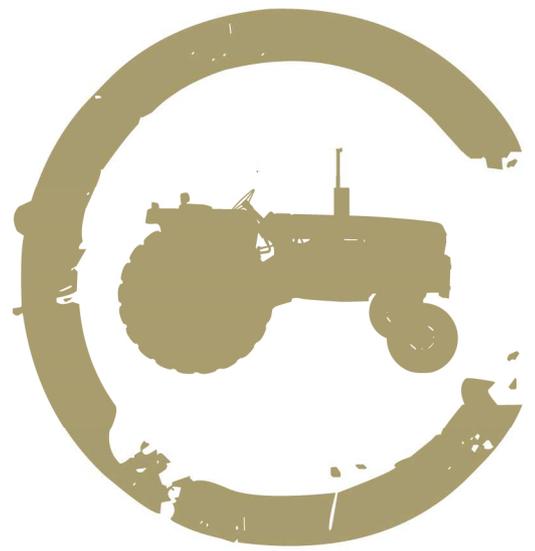


SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE



Community Supported Woodlands and Hedges

Wood fuel and other benefits from small woodlands and hedges
A Tool-kit for Communities - v1.0 July 2013

Chapter 8: Hand and power tools and their management

Prepared by Kate Royston and Dave Readman (Cotna)
Robbee Smole Sustainable Business Solutions
For Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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Robbee Smole
Sustainable Business Solutions

TamarValley
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Chapter 8 Hand and power tools and their management

Working in woodlands and with hedges will require access to sufficient numbers of suitable well-maintained and useable tools and equipment. These should include personal protection equipment (PPE), other hand and power tools and could be considered in three categories:

- Simple tools best owned and brought to work days by individual group members
- Community group tools owned by or available to the group
- High value tools which may be owned by the group or available through, for example, an arrangement such as a tool or machinery ring.

8.1 Potential tools for hedge and woodland work

Personal tools (including personal protection equipment)

PPE

- Thorn resistant gardening work gloves
- Steel toe cap safety boots or wellies
- Waterproof, preferably waxed cotton / thornproof jacket
- Safety glasses

Hand tools

- Pruning saw or 21" triangular bowsaw
- Billhook or small handaxe
- Loppers
- Secateurs
- Garden shears

The Community Group's tools and PPE

PPE

- First Aid kit sufficient for the group and relevant to the risk assessment
- Hard hats, ear defenders, safety glasses
- Hedging gauntlets

Power tools

- Strimmer

Hand tools

- Billhooks, handaxes
- Felling axe, splitting axe
- Felling lever
- Timber tongs and other hand lifting tools
- Hand winch, strops & ropes
- Long pruning saw
- Loppers, larger bowsaws
- Wheelbarrow to move equipment on site
- Tea making kit: Kelly storm kettle or burner
- Slashers, reap hook and grass hook
- Tree planting spades
- Pitchfork
- Fencing pliers, hammers
- Lump hammer and sledgehammer

Higher value equipment pool

Hand tools

- Larger hand winch, strops, hawser and ropes
- Fencing tools, bars, spare wire, staples
- Spades, forks, mattocks

Power tools

- Chainsaws and associated toolkits, safety gear, fuel and oil cans in a fuel safe, first aid kit
- Brushcutter
- Quad bike and trailer
- Long pole power multi tool for high branches

There may be times when more advanced equipment will make a job faster or safer, but still may be affordable. Consider hiring in a contractor with a tractor mounted or self-powered chipper for example, but always check training and competence requirements before use.

8.2 Tool management

Investing in the proper care and maintenance of hand and power tools is essential to ensure that they are safe and efficient (e.g. properly sharpened) and to extend their life for as long as possible.

It is also important to understand how tools should be stored and carried for safety and longevity, and how they should be used. Importantly, the most appropriate tool should be used for the job. 'Woodlands: A practical handbook' includes useful information on this topic, and a number of key points are included below:

Personal Protection Equipment

- **Safety glasses** are essential in hedging work, when coppicing or when chips of wood are flying e.g. using hammers, axes.
- **Ear defenders** should be used when working near power tools.
- **Hard hats** should be used when any felling or coppicing is taking place nearby.
- **Gloves** should not be worn when using a swinging tool (e.g. slasher, hammer, billhook, axe) in case they slip off and the tool flies. Likewise wet conditions may make such tools dangerous to use. Gloves must be worn when using handsaws; make sure the gloves fit and are comfortable.

Carrying and storing tools

- **Sharp edged tools** need to be guarded when not in use; folding pruning saws are ideal but need to be good quality and sharp. Other saws should have guards or be bundled together and wrapped in protective material for carrying.
- **Pointed ends** of tools should be carried on site facing forward and down so the carrier can see them.

Safety in use tips

- **Safe lifting** training will be needed for anyone moving heavy items.
- Use the **appropriate tool for the job**, e.g. only use loppers to cut wood thinner than a thumb's width.
- Care needs to be taken using **long, high pruning saws** to understand the tension and compression in wood being cut, and to avoid jamming the saw in the cut. Wear hard hats.
- Using a **grass hook** requires a stick in the spare hand to hold vegetation to one side when being cut (do not use the spare hand itself).
- **Specialised fencing tools and all power tools** require a level of competence that will usually need to be obtained from a recognised training course.
- **Chainsaws, brushcutters, quad bikes and winches** all require training which gives the trainee a real understanding of safe techniques, associated work aids and equipment, how to safely operate with other workers in the vicinity, and how to maintain the tools.

8.3 Tool / machinery ring

The idea of a tool / machinery ring was introduced in Chapter 3 and is repeated here for convenience.

Models from agricultural practice could be used to establish a local tool/machinery ring, incorporating one or more of the elements below:

- each member pays an annual subscription. This could be on top of group subscription;
- a levy is charged on every activity by the supplier;
- a levy is charged on every activity of the demander;
- the machinery ring is run as a cooperative and each member has share capital;
- the operating area is restricted e.g. to within a 25 mile radius.

A Social Forestry Stakeholder Workshop in the Tamar Valley, held in January 2012, concluded that using central hubs for equipment, training, processing and storage may be the most economical and efficient way to proceed. This is discussed more in Chapter 10.