



Coppicing in Dorset – Glossary of Terms

What is Coppicing?

Coppicing is an efficient, reliable method of harvesting wood. Some trees such as pines die when cut down, but ash, elder, oak hazel, lime and many others “coppice”, the stump sends up shoots and becomes a stool from which successive crops of poles can be cut for ever. Aspen, cherry and most elms sucker; the stump dies but the root system remains alive and sends up successive crops of poles, forming a patch of identical trees called a clone.

The effect on the habitat:

Wild plants on the whole, do not thrive in continuous shade. Primroses and other spring flowers flourish in the years of light; they also require years of shade to suppress the tall grasses and other non-woodland plants, which would overwhelm them outside the woods.

Spring-flowering perennials

Are present all the time, but flower profusely only in the second or third year after felling.

Summer-flowering perennials

Also present all the time, but are induced by the extra light to grow tall and bloom.

Buried-seed plants

Die out in the years of shade, leaving long-lived seeds to wait for the next felling when they can germinate.

Woodland Management.

The trees of a wood are divided into “timber trees” and “Underwood”. The Underwood is felled and allowed to grow again by coppicing or suckering. The timber trees are allowed to stand for several cycles of regrowth and are felled when full grown. Seedlings usually replace timber trees.

The wood yields two products, timber from the trunks of the timber trees, and wood from coppice stools or suckers (plus the branches of felled timber trees). Timber and wood have different uses.

Wood is rods, poles and logs, used for fencing, wattle work and many specialized purposes and in large quantities for fuel. Woodland was traditionally regarded as a source of energy. Timber the stuff of beams and planks is too valuable and too big to burn.

Woods do not cease to exist through being felled. A wood is self-renewing, and is no more destroyed being cut down than a meadow is destroyed by cutting a crop of hay.

The Future:

Coppicing has declined over the years, the reason for this decline can be attributed to a loss in the market for coppice products: due to changes in tastes, the plastic revolution and cheap poor quality imports.





The woodsmen of Dorset are seeking to reverse this process through promotion of their skills and the products they supply. The Dorset Coppice Group seeks to raise the awareness of the valuable tradition of coppicing in the county by highlighting the link between the use of locally produced coppice products and the resulting conservation of the woodlands from which they come.

Woodland Terms

Ancient Woodland	A woodland that has existed continuously since 1700, and possibly pre-history.
Barking	Removing bark from a tree, for use in tanning
Black heart	Discoloration in the centre of a tree, does not always signify rot.
Brash, brish or brushwood	The small twiggy branches from coppice poles.
Butt	The lowest portion of a stem or pole
Cant	An area of coppice cut or sold in a season.
Cleft	A segment of wood split from a round pole.
Coppice	Underwood trees, which are cut, close to ground level every few years to allow multiple stems to grow again from the stool.
Coppice-with-standards	Coppice overstood by scattered, single-stemmed trees.
Coppicing cycle	The number of years between cutting of the coppice.
Copse	Another name for an area of coppiced woodland.
Coup	Another name for a cant.
Crown	Living branches of a tree above the main stem.
Crown reduction	Pruning back the crown to its main branches whilst maintaining its overall shape.
Cutting	A short length of young shoot or root used to propagate a new plant.
Drifts	Cut coppice material or brash laid in rows for sorting or disposal
Emergent tree	Shoots sprouting from dormant or adventitious buds on a tree's main stem.
Encoppice	To enclose an area of young coppice, to prevent damage to the young shoots.
Epicormic shoots	Shoots sprouting from dormant or adventitious buds on a tree's main stem.
Epiphyte	A plant growing on another without being parasitic.
Extraction	The removal of felled timber from a woodland.
Feathered tree	A young tree well furnished with branches to near ground level.
Felling cut	The cut made from the back of the stem which fells the tree. Also known as the back cut.





Field layer	The part of the woodland structure containing low-growing shrubs, herbaceous plants, grasses bulbs and ferns.
Flush	An area of ground receiving nutrient-rich runoff. The first spurt of growth after the winter.
Forest	Was originally a tract of heath, moor or woodland controlled by the Crown for the purpose of conserving deer and other woodland animals. Now used to describe a densely wooded area.
Formative pruning	The pruning of branches, usually between 3 10 years of planting, in order to improve timber quality.
Greenwood	Freshly felled living wood, still retaining its sap.
Ground layer	The part of the woodland structure which comprises mosses, liverworts, lichens and fungi.
Hanger	A wood growing on the side of a hill.
Hardwood	Any broadleaved tree, irrespective of the actual hardness of the wood.
Heartwood	The inner wood of a large branches and trunks, which no longer carry sap.
Hewing	Shaping a log with an axe or adze
High forest	Woodlands dominated by full-grown trees.
Leader	The main top shoot of a tree.
Lopping	Cutting branches from a tree.
Maiden tree	A single stemmed tree, never coppiced or pollarded. Any tree not grown from a coppice stump
Mother tree	A mature tree left to produce seed to encourage natural regeneration.
Natural regeneration	Trees and shrubs which arise from naturally-shed seeds, with no help from man.
Park	Originally, land enclosed for the keeping of deer and other animals. An area enclosed for amenity.
Plantation	Woodland where the majority of trees have been planted.
Pole	A coppice stool shoot of more than 50mm (2in) diameter.
Pollard	Tree which is cut at 2-4m (6-12ft) above ground level, and left to produce a crop of poles or branches.
Primary Woodland	Woodland that has had a continuous cover of native trees throughout its history.
Prog	A stout forked pole used for the pushing and levering trees during felling.
Provenance	The place of origin of a tree stock, which remains the same no matter where later generations of the tree are raised.
Pruning	Cutting branches from a standing tree, to alter its shape, remove diseased branches.



Recent Woodland	Woodland which has grown up since 1600, on land which had previously been cleared, or was previously not wooded area.
Ride	Wide woodland road
Rod	Small flexible underwood stem of less than 50mm (2in) diameter.
Rotation	Length of time between cuttings of a coppice coupe.
Roundwood	Wood of small diameter used for fencing stakes.
Sapwood	Wood which carries sap. This may be all the wood in a young stem, or the outermost layer in an older, larger trunk or branch.
.Secondary woodland	Woodland growing on a site that was formerly not woodland. It could be ancient, if it grew up before 1600.
Semi-natural woodland	In ancient sites, wood made up of native species, where their presence is natural rather than planted. More recently woods which have originated mainly by regeneration.
Set	A large unrooted cutting, usually willow or poplar.
Short rotation coppice	Coppice grown on a short rotation, of up to about ten years, and is used for hurdle making and other crafts.
Shrub layer	The part of the woodland structure which includes shrubs and young growth of canopy trees.
Singling	Retaining one stem on a coppice stool and allowing it to grow into a standard tree.
Softwood	The timber of a coniferous tree, irrespective of the hardness of the timber.
Stag-head	A tree with a clear stem or trunk. In woodland structure, a tree forming the dominant layer of the canopy.
Stem	The living trunk of a shrub or tree, from which new shoots grow.
Stool	The base of a coppiced tree from which new shoots emerge.
Sucker	Shoots growing from the roots of an older tree.
Timber	Tree trunk suitable for making beams or sawing into planks.
Underwood	Coppiced wood growing under standard or timber trees.
Wildwood	Ancient forest, untouched by man.
Wood	The part of the stem, inside the cambium, which supports the tree, carries water to the crown and stores reserves of food over the winter period. Also poles and branches of smaller diameter than timber.