



Why are we cutting the Holly? – I have met several people in the woods who have asked why the Friends are cutting back the Holly. Holly is a successful tree, expanding by seedlings and by layering when branches touch the soil. At the junction of West Gorse and Farleigh Border this success has produced a dense thicket of Holly bushes which Croydon's Forestry Advisor suggested we thin out, leaving several large bushes in the area. As the stumps have not been treated they will send up new shoots and produce some younger bushes. One of the cut stumps has this amazing heart shape in the grain. Look out for it next time you pass that corner.

This work, like much of the woodland maintenance done by the Council and the Friends, is designed to foster healthy growth and increase biodiversity. Forestry work such as that which opened up the rides of West Gorse, Leafy Grove and The Wend last year, created open glades, allowing more light and warmth to reach the soil, encouraging the ground flora and creating a woodland containing trees with a range of ages. In turn this has allowed insects including moths to increase and encouraged these areas to be used by bats and by woodland butterflies such as Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral and Speckled Wood. Dead trees are left standing if considered safe or left lying on the ground to allow invertebrates and fungi to increase and help to support other wildlife including woodpeckers and small mammals.



Last winter the Friends worked in the Gorses area, cutting back the Gorse which had grown sparse and leggy and removing much of the invasive Bramble, Bracken, Ash and Sycamore to create open channels and eventually open glades within the Gorse. The Gorse is now coming back strongly. In order to preserve the habitat for nesting birds and insects only about half of the Gorses area was cut back last year. The remainder will be tackled in another couple of years when the new Gorse is fully established.

Coppicing is a traditional management technique in which trees, particularly Hazel, are cut down to ground level and allowed to regrow for several years before being cut down again. The coppiced strip along The Wend is managed by independent contractors to Croydon Council who do their work during the winter months. The Council allow the coppicer to sell the product (bean poles, pea sticks etc.) in lieu of direct payment for the work. In the early years after coppicing there is a flush of ground flora such as Bluebells and Brambles which will encourage insects. A little later ground nesting birds like Chiffchaff move in and in very favoured places there may even be Nightingales. After seven or so years coppicing can be repeated and the cut material can be used for fencing, tree stakes, etc. Repeated coppicing keeps the woodland relatively open and prevents the trees from becoming so large that they shade out the ground flora and reduce the biodiversity.

Deer however, have a disproportionate negative effect on biodiversity. Their habit of eating young re-growing trees affects the number of small mammals, and where they graze they seem to select the most interesting plants rather than the coarse grasses. This is why the coppiced areas are fenced for at least the first few years until the new tree growth is established. Newly planted trees are also surrounded by plastic sheaths to protect them from browsing deer.

Your Membership Subscription is now due for renewal - Our Membership year runs from January 1st to December 31st and it would be very helpful to us if you could pay your 2018 subs as soon as possible. Of course, this does not apply to those of you who have standing orders and we thank you for past and future payments as these certainly make our life much easier.

FSW Programme 2018 - Also attached to this email is a copy of the FSW Programme for 2018 showing all guided walks & events, workdays and members' meetings (now every alternate month) including our AGM, which will be held on Monday March 26th. Please take a look and keep the dates in your diary.

The FSW Calendar 2018 is still available for a donation of £5 - Phone 020-8657 0423 or e-mail selsdonwood@gmail.com

This month's gallery (overleaf) is a guide to the evergreen trees and bushes to be found in our wood. Spot them now when the deciduous trees are bare.

<h2 style="color: purple; text-align: center;">Evergreens to find in Selsdon Wood in Winter</h2> <p>We have 7 varieties of evergreen trees and bushes in the wood and winter is the time to spot them when the deciduous trees are bare.</p> <p>All photographs taken in Selsdon Wood.</p>	<h3>Holly</h3>  <p>Throughout the wood. Large one in Farleigh Border at the junction with west Gorse</p>	<h3>Facts about Holly</h3> <p>Holly is our most common native evergreen tree. It is dioecious which means that there are separate male and female plants with only the females producing berries. This photograph of the berries is of the female Holly in Linden Glade. The berries are toxic to humans but are eaten by birds in late winter after frost has made them more palatable.</p>	<h3>Yew</h3>  <p>Widely distributed throughout the wood. Two large ones are in Beech Grove & Courtwood Grove</p>	<h3>Facts about Yew</h3> <p>The Yew has evergreen leaves in the form of short flattened needles and red, characteristic berries with a hole in the centre. Both leaves and fruit are toxic to humans but the berries are eaten by birds. Like Holly, Yew is dioecious which means that there are separate male and female plants with only the females producing berries.</p>
<h3>Pine</h3>  <p>Most in Steven's Larch. Those shown above are in the northern corner of David's Crook.</p>	<h3>Facts about Pine</h3> <p>Pine has distinctive, scaly bark and long thin needles, borne in pairs. The Scots Pine has the rounded top shown in the photograph and orange coloured bark. In Linden Glade there are some Corsican Pines with grey bark and a profile more like the classic Christmas Tree. The cones are traditional weather indicators, opening when dry and closing when wet.</p>	<h3>Norway Spruce</h3>  <p>Most in Greenhill Shaw. The one shown above is at the south end of Avis Grove.</p>	<h3>Facts about Spruce</h3> <p>Spruce is an evergreen with distinctive scaly bark and short thick needles. The cones are more elongated than those of the Pine and much beloved of squirrels. The Norway Spruce is the classic Christmas Tree, a tradition brought to Britain in 1841 when Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, introduced a German custom of decorating a spruce tree with lights.</p>	<h3>Laurel</h3>  <p>Throughout the wood. FSW are working to control or eradicate this non-native species.</p>
<h3>Facts about Laurel</h3> <p>Laurel is an evergreen shrub or small tree with large, dark green, leathery leaves with a finely toothed edge. It was introduced into Court Wood 200 years ago to give cover for game birds. It is invasive, spreading steadily by suckering, layering and seeding and it is inhibiting the growth of other plants, poisoning the ground beneath it. The bark, leaves and the stones in the fruit are poisonous.</p>	<h3>Gorse</h3>  <p>Found in just one part of Selsdon Wood, known as The Gorses. The trees behind in this photo are Larch.</p>	<h3>Facts about Gorse</h3> <p>Gorse is a thorny evergreen shrub with yellow flowers. The plant has a long flowering season from late autumn, all through winter and on into late spring or early summer. Gorse is related to the Pea family and the fruit are pods that burst explosively to spread the seed. The Gorse in Selsdon Wood recovered in 2009 after the felling of Larch trees which had dominated the area.</p>	<h3>Privet</h3>  <p>In the south facing boundaries of F1 and F2 where it forms the bottom part of the hedgerow.</p>	<h3>Facts about Privet</h3> <p>Privet is a thornless, low-growing shrub with erect smooth stems and small, oval leaves. Some of these may remain on the plant over winter and it is thus described as a semi-evergreen. Although cultivated oriental privet is used in gardens, the wild Privet is native to the UK. The berries are mildly poisonous to humans but eaten safely by birds that spread the seeds in their droppings.</p>