



# Friends of Selsdon Wood

Working to improve our wood



## HARVESTING COPPICE

6.6.12

As applied to the FSW, with its limited tools & skills.

### **A. Remember:**

1. **Safety comes first - be aware of your own and your partner's safety at all times.**
2. **Timber must be of good quality – Straight, Smooth poles & stakes**  
- Run your bare hand along them.
3. **Pen timber to prevent rot.**
4. The general public will be buying your products, so put yourself in its shoes.  
**Say to yourself every time - would I buy this?** If not; then on the fire it goes!
5. **Burn your rubbish** - we want the sun to reach and warm up the ground to encourage new growth  
– branches and twigs left lying about prevent this.

### **B. Preparation for storage:**

Construct 7 raised holding pens. These allow rain to drip through and avoids the timber rotting. Make each of them of horizontal logs every metre and 4 uprights. Pens for:

1. Binders (for weaving into fences),
2. Pea sticks,
3. Bean poles,
4. Hedging stakes,
5. Deer fence stakes.
6. Tree guard stakes,
- 7/8. Logs for sale or charcoal.

### **C. Before starting work:**

1. Clear up trip hazards and brash from the site and around each stool before harvesting starts.  
Use some for a brash pile for insects – see below.
2. Always work with a tidy up fire, this keeps the site safe.

### **D. Initial work sequence for all products:**

1. Cut off all side branches up to head height flush to the stem with loppers,
2. Remove all entwined climbing plants like ivy, clematis & bramble.

### **E. Harvesting sequence:**

#### **1. Binders (for weaving into fences):**

- 1a. Select flexible stems as thick as your thumb **2cm** (3/4") at the base/butt end and **3m** (10ft) or **longer**. Note that Binders may be branching out at your head height in old stands.
- 1b. Use loppers to cut and trim\* them.
- 1c. Place Binders in their pen.

#### **Pea sticks, Bean poles & various stakes:**

Use your Bow-saw to cut out all **2½ to 8cm** (1" - 3") **thick straight** timber, about **5cm (2") from the ground**. Angling the cut also helps when the customer pushes the timber into the ground.

Now or later make another lower cut at a slight upward angle towards the centre of the stool - try to create a domed, even, trip free finish that rain will run off.

If there is a lot of timber then cut about 25% of the stand at a time.

- Is there a pea stick at the end? If there is, Pen it immediately.
- Trim\* & Pen all poles, posts & stakes together - grade them later.
- Trim\* & Pen all logs together – sort them later.

\* If you have a billhook for trimming, use the curved section of the billhook to **cut** off each small branch up **from (below)**. Cutting from above causes splitting.

#### **2. Pea Sticks:**

Cut pea sticks from the top of suitable timber using loppers – stems between **1.2m to 1.8m** (4 - 6 ft) long overall with flat fan shape branches - like your hand.

Place in holding pen directly they are cut to prevent damage.

**3. Bean Poles** – 2½cm (1") thick x 2½m (8') long.

**4. Hedging stakes** – 2½ to 4cm (1" -1½") thick x 1¾m (5ft 8") long.

**5. Deer fence stakes** – 5 to 8cm (2" - 3") thick x 2m (7ft) long.

**6. Tree guard stakes** – Material too short for poles or stakes. They are used to support the guards placed around newly planted tree whips, etc.

**7. Logs for Sale:** Pen timber **8 to 10cm (3 - 4") thick**, to dry. Later it can be cut to approx. **25cm (10") long**. Thicker timber can be split. Logs for sale need at least 6 months drying.

**8. Logs for Charcoal Making:** Pen timber **10cm (4") or more thick** to dry, ready for Charcoal making. Later it can be cut to size or split, ready for the kiln.

**F.** You may now have to retrim parts of the crown for the domed, even and trip free effect, before it can be left alone for another 7 to 14 years, depending on site rotation. Use a chainsaw if available.

**G.** Move onto the next stool and repeat the process.

- Any really thick material can either be chopped up for firewood or left to rot for the woodland life. Otherwise, burn it.
- Leave some **brash piles** for the insects - about **2m (6ft) long** by **60cm (2ft) wide** by **60cm (2ft) high** - only 3 per acre.
- With old thick trees use a very sharp chainsaw - blunt blades fray the edges and encourages rot.
- **Keeping that small fire fed with the unwanted brash keeps your work site safe at all times.**

#### **H. Binding:**

If the material is to be bound up for sale:

Binders (Ethering Rods) in 15s,

Pea Sticks in 20s,

Bean Poles, Hedging and Tree guard stakes in 10s.

Cut string/ binder twine to arms-length in advance and knot a loop in the end for tying off the bundles.

Do not use green gardener's string, it rots too soon.



#### **I. Planting:**

Plant hazel whips to fill gaps between crowns – this encourages vertical straight growth.

#### **H. Tools:**

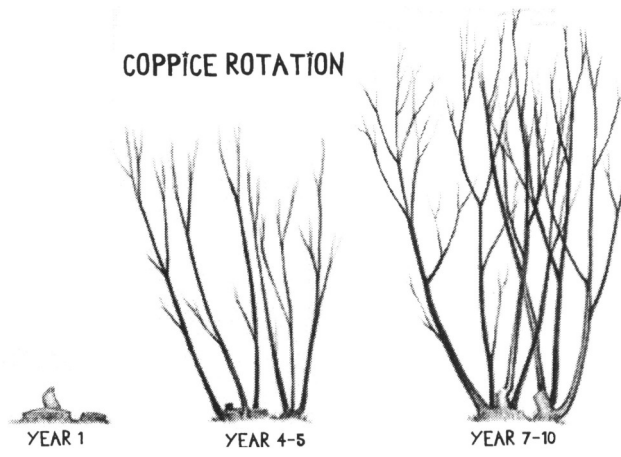
Loppers, 21" Bowsaw, Gloves, Sharpening Stone and a Pitch Fork or Rake.

Also First Aid Kit, Hi-Viz Jacket, Hard Hat (when working on tall old stands), a Fire starting kit,

Mobile phone with good reception, food & drink and a minimum of 2 people per session.

Southern Billhooks & Pruning saws are useful tools but are not always available.

## COPPICE ROTATION



The above is based on Rob Sowter's notes Nov 09.

DM/ TF