

Green Space Management Strategy

Grass Cutting Season

The grass cutting season ordinarily takes place between March and October. Occasionally out of season cuts take place as a result of weather conditions or usage requirements.

Where is the grass cut?

Chippenham Town Council cuts grass on land owned by the Town Council and land owned by Wiltshire Council under the service delegation agreement.

The strategy divides the grass into categories dependent upon its use and location

This includes:

- Roads and Verges: areas of grass adjacent to roads and pavements
- Parks and open spaces: areas of grass in and around Play parks and pockets of larger grassland.
- Cemeteries
- All other Amenity Areas. Some areas fall in between Roads and Verges and Parks and open spaces and are difficult to Categorize.

The grass is cut in accordance with the character of the area and to ensure the safe use of the town's roads, pavements, parks and open spaces.

When is the grass cut?

It is not possible to stipulate a prescribed cutting regime or a prescribed number of cuts due to the influence of environmental conditions, and available resources. The final cutting regime is determined by the professional judgement of officers, and is dynamic and flexible according to environmental conditions and resourcing factors.

However as general guide;

Roadside verges are cut on average every four weeks during the period March - October, however this may increase at times of excessive growth. Equally should there be long dry spells this may decrease.

Parks and Open Spaces, London Road Cemetery and all other amenity land are cut on average between 10 and 15 times between March and October. However, this is flexible depending upon frequent use, highly sensitive areas and growing conditions.

There are also several areas where there is a more relaxed cutting regime where this has been deemed appropriate. The frequency of cut here is usually biannual. These areas are referred to as either rough-cut areas or conservation areas. They are generally not heavily walked areas or areas used for recreation.

Areas of grass where bulbs have been naturalised are not cut for a minimum of six weeks after flowering.

Arisings

Chippenham Town Council does not collect grass (known as arising) it is left on the ground, on verges, communal areas or open spaces. When long grass is cut the arisings can be more visible for a short time, this quickly breaks down and does not damage the grass growing underneath. Chippenham Town Council's ride-on mowers are fitted with mulching decks that cut the grass into small pieces. This enables the grass to break down into the soil quickly.

The collection of arisings does take place where the Council is seeking to develop wildflower areas as detailed below.

Areas being managed differently to support wildlife.

The grass cutting regime is dynamic and both adapts and evolves each year. In partnership with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, the Town Council is working towards a sustainable future for people and wildlife. Whilst we continue to maintain areas for amenity, sports and leisure, this new approach is changing the way we manage some sites.

Areas of open spaces have been identified to incorporate both regular cutting and a more relaxed cutting regime. This will be achieved by either having strips around the perimeter that are cut twice annually or areas that only have footpaths cut through them regularly and the rest cut twice annually.

These areas will also have signs to help the public understand why these areas are being managed in a different way.

These wildlife areas are mapped with a small description and can be found by following this link [HERE](#).

Wildflower meadows and biodiversity

In grassland management it is widely understood that achieving low soil fertility is key to enhancing the wildlife value of a particular area. Wild flowers are generally associated with lower fertility soils, whereas high fertility soils encourage growth of vigorous grasses and competitive species such as nettles and cow parsley.

Therefore, leaving the arisings at the cutting site allows biomass and the nutrients they contain to re-enter the soil. This increases the layer of dead grass or thatch which then hinders seed germination.

The removal of arisings from a cut area requires either labour intensive manual raking, or the use of specialised cut and collection machinery.

Areas will be selected to carry out 'mini wildflower meadow' trials. Once these trials have proven to be successful the areas will be mapped and communicated effectively.

Missed Areas

The Environmental Services Team grass cutting round is extensive and can be complex within the various schedules and mapped areas. If you believe that an area of grass has not been cut when nearby areas have been cut, please get in touch by using our reporting system at: www.chippenham.gov.uk/report-it

Hedge and Shrub Maintenance

Hedge and shrub maintenance ordinarily takes place between 1st August and 28th February in line with the bird nesting season.

Where are hedges and shrubs cut?

Chippenham Town Council cuts hedges and shrubs on land owned by the Town Council and land owned by Wiltshire Council under the service delegation agreement.

Cut Frequency

Hedges and shrubs are generally cut once annually during the Autumn/Winter maintenance programme carried out by the Environmental Services team.

During the annual cut the hedges and shrubs are cut in accordance with the character of the area and to ensure the safe use of the town's roads, pavements, parks, open spaces and residential properties.

There are exceptions as seasonal growth between March and August means footpaths can be encroached.

These encroachments can be reported on the Town Council's reporting system: www.chippenham.gov.uk/report-it

These reports will then be investigated to see if immediate safety cuts are required, or the work can be scheduled in for the Autumn/Winter maintenance programme.

High Hedges

What is classed as a 'high hedge'?

1. A high hedge is defined in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 as a barrier to light or access and is formed wholly or predominantly by a line of two or more evergreen or semi-evergreen trees growing to a height of more than 2 metres above ground level.
2. Individual trees and shrubs are not covered by this legislation.

3. A complaint can be brought under the Act by the owner or occupier of the property affected by the hedge. The property must be residential and the hedge must detract from the reasonable enjoyment of your home and garden.

4. If negotiations with neighbours fail, high hedge disputes can be taken to the local authority council (Wiltshire Council). There is a £350 fee for Wiltshire Council to undertake the investigation. For more information visit Wiltshire Council's Trees and Hedges web page [HERE](#).

5. Additional information on high hedge disputes is available on the Government website: [HERE](#).