

Amenity Grassland Management Policy

Introduction:

The University manages areas of amenity grassland to facilitate recreational activities, enhance the aesthetics of its buildings and to blend its campuses into their surrounding landscapes and local environments. In addition, these areas of amenity grassland provide habitats for a range of flora and fauna in the urban and semi-urban landscape and support biodiversity, sequester carbon and sustain soil structure and health. Therefore, the management of amenity grasslands must balance the ecosystem services they can provide with the expectations and desires of all other users. This policy outlines the principles and guidelines for managing amenity grasslands to maximise both their ecological and aesthetic value and highlights the opportunities for transforming certain areas of amenity grassland into richer habitats that can increase species richness and abundance.

Policy Statement:

The management of amenity grasslands must ensure that they are maintained in a way that balances the needs of the University, biodiversity, recreational use, and environmental sustainability.

Policy Objectives for Managing and Improving Existing Amenity Grassland:

1. Promote biodiversity: The management of amenity grasslands must promote biodiversity by creating and maintaining habitats for a range of plant and animal species.
2. Promote environmental sustainability: The management of amenity grasslands must promote environmental sustainability by reducing the carbon footprint of annual maintenance, especially emissions attributed to fuel, electricity and chemicals and minimise any other negative impacts on the environment. The management regime must also protect the soil and water resources by promoting sustainable land use practices.
3. Maintain safety: The management of amenity grasslands must ensure that they are safe for public use by managing potential hazards such as uneven terrain, dangerous plant species, and other potential risks.
4. Enhance aesthetics: The management of amenity grasslands must enhance the aesthetic appeal of the landscape, making it an attractive place for people to visit and enjoy. It must also enhance cultural heritage and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation.
5. Increase public awareness: Promote the importance of amenity grasslands and communicate changes to habitat management for the benefit of wildlife.

Key Principles of Amenity Grassland Management:

1. Habitat management: The management of amenity grasslands will consider the creation and maintenance of habitats for a range of plant and animal species. This can be achieved

through various measures, such as the planting of native wildflowers, shrubs and trees and the installing shelters and homes for wildlife.

2. Maintenance and mowing: The management of amenity grasslands must ensure that maintenance and mowing regimes are carefully planned and implemented to balance the needs of biodiversity and recreational use. This may involve managing the frequency and timing of mowing and other maintenance to sustain a range of vegetation heights in which different communities of plants, insects and wildlife can establish and flourish. This may also include leaving some areas uncut through spring and summer to provide habitats for additional species.
3. Herbicide and chemical use: The management of amenity grasslands must minimize the use of herbicides and other chemicals that may cause negative impacts on the environment. Where chemicals are necessary, they should be used in a way that minimizes harm to non-target species and the wider environment.
4. Hazard management: The management of amenity grasslands must identify and manage potential hazards to public safety, such as uneven terrain and falls, dangerous plant species, and other potential risks.
5. Access management: The management of amenity grasslands must ensure that access to the site is managed in a way that minimizes damage to the environment and maximizes safety for visitors.

Amenity Grassland Management Plan

Overview -

Amenity grasslands can provide habitats for some plant, insect and animal species, especially those that are adapted to open, grassy environments. The University manages several types of amenity grassland across its estate, each of which contain their own unique species mix.

Mowing remains the primary tool for managing grassland vegetation across the University's estate. However, reducing the frequency of mowing in certain areas to once or twice annually allows certain plant species to flower and set seed, providing a food source for insects and other wildlife. By also controlling the timing of mowing, the University's Grounds and Landscaping team and staff at Treborth Botanic Garden can deliver a variety of vegetation heights and micro-habitats, which support different species of plants and animals throughout the year.

Collecting cut grass, or raking-off, can also be considered in suitable areas of amenity grassland, as this management practice prevents the build-up of dead vegetation, which can smother delicate plants.

The Plan -

The Amenity Grassland Management Plan aims to improve the quality of amenity grassland and increase biodiversity across the University estate, as well as maintaining the amenity value of certain areas, including formal lawns, for the enjoyment of students, staff and the public.

The Plan consists of the following components and actions:

1. Identify existing grassland types

- a. Identify the different types of grasslands on the University estate, including meadows, lawns, and recreational areas.

Amenity grassland areas will be surveyed and classified using the Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) or other comparable methodology.

NVC - Phase 2 Habitat Survey can be used in targeted areas to provide more detailed information concerning species mixture and abundance.

Ensure adequate budget to fund external ecologist contractors for the above surveying.

Surveying will also be carried out by qualified staff and students

- b. Create a map of amenity grassland on campus

habitats can increase plant diversity and provide important habitats for pollinators and other insects.

Sowing annual wildflower seed can increase the diversity of plant species within amenity grasslands. Wildflowers can provide food and habitat for pollinators, and they can also enhance the visual appeal of these ecosystems. Wildflowers can be sown in designated areas or in a mix with the grasses.

Improved grassland can also be managed to increase species diversity by scarifying and stripping turf to reduce fertility (essential for creating meadows). This land can then be seeded using green hay.

Indicate on map which areas are targeted for meadow creation

- Utilise species-rich green hay from Treborth Botanic Garden perennial meadows where appropriate

- b. Provide nesting and shelter opportunities: Many grassland species, such as birds and small mammals, require nesting and shelter opportunities. Providing nest boxes, log piles, dry stone walls and other habitat features can help to increase biodiversity within amenity grasslands.

Indicate on map where shelters and homes can be installed

- c. Promote connectivity: Fragmentation of grassland habitats can limit the movement of plant and animal species and reduce biodiversity. Promoting connectivity through the creation of corridors or pockets of suitable habitats can help to maintain or restore biodiversity within amenity grasslands.

Indicate on map where and how connectivity can be improved

Liase with relevant student societies and clubs for priority corridor creation sites

5. Communicate the function and importance of amenity grassland management and involving the wider community

- a. Engage with local stakeholders to identify their needs and desires for amenity grasslands

Identify and contact stakeholders

- b. Encourage participation in the management of the grasslands, such as community events or volunteer planting schemes

Plan events and advertise events

- c. Volunteers can help with habitat creation, invasive species control, and monitoring of plant and animal species.

Recruit and organise volunteers

- d. Educate the University community about the importance of grasslands for biodiversity and recreation

