

Small-scale Tree and Shrub Planting

This is an old version of the page

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For recent changes to this guidance, please see the [bottom of the page](#).

Note: from 2026, although the system will still call this item Small-scale Tree and Shrub Planting (on a site not exceeding 0.25 hectares), the 0.25ha upper limit for plot size has been removed.

Aim

The aim of this item is to benefit biodiversity, climate change and / or water quality by planting new or expanding existing areas of native trees or shrubs of conservation value.

The integration of trees on farms and crofts can provide multiple benefits, such as enhancing habitat networks, improving water quality by providing a buffer area, maintaining water temperatures, providing a diversity of habitats, and contributing to carbon sequestration. It can also provide numerous benefits to the farm business and support climate adaptation.

Eurasian Beaver

Beaver have been reintroduced to parts of Scotland and are a European Protected Species protected by law. The enhancement of riparian woodland is beneficial where beaver are or may be present in the future, for the reasons set out above, and by increasing the winter forage available to beaver, thereby making the woodland network more resilient to localised/temporary impacts.

While AECS can fund traditional tree protection, this may not be effective where beaver are active. Advice on alternative approaches is available from [NatureScot: Beaver](#).

There are several different approaches that may be taken to protect young trees and shrubs from beaver impacts including modified stock fencing, individual tree protection using weld mesh and by altering the species mix and micro-siting of trees.

Where beaver activity impacts on work being undertaken under your AECS contract, no penalties will be accrued.

Eligibility

All land is eligible, with the exception of land classed as 'sensitive' by [The Forestry \(Environmental Impact Assessment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2017](#), unless you have prior approval.

You must combine this item with at least one of the following items*:

- [Stock Fence](#)
- [Vole, Rabbit or Hare Guards](#)
- [Scare and Temporary Electric Fencing](#)

Application requirements

You must mark the proposed location(s) of areas where small-scale tree or shrub planting is proposed on a map and provide a summary of the work proposed, including a list of the species to be planted, how trees will be planted (i.e. fenced plots or groups of individual trees) and the protection to be used.

Management requirements

- you must plant using native species only, (see list in the [supporting guidance](#)), unless you have been given prior approval during the application process. The plants must be of UK provenance
- plots of up to 0.25ha must be planted with no more than 1,100 trees per hectare (275 trees per 0.25 hectares) although lower planting densities are permitted. Plots greater than 0.25ha must be planted at lower densities of no more than 500 trees per hectare

- you must protect the new plants from damage by wild and domestic herbivores. There are associated capital items to support this as outlined in the '[Eligibility](#)' section. If there is existing protection in place, for example an existing stock proof fence, this will be considered meeting the eligibility criteria
- each planted area must be at least 15 metres apart

Payment

You can claim £3.00 per tree or shrub planted.

Each area to be planted must be no more than 0.25 hectares and you can claim for up to six separate areas of up to 0.25 hectares each, per contract.

To support small-scale tree or shrub planting you can select this item with one of the following management options or as a stand-alone capital item under the Environmental Capital Work - No Associated Management option (see [supporting guidance](#) for information on appropriate areas to plant):

- [Managing Scrub of Conservation Value](#)
- [Water Margins in Grassland Fields](#)
- [Grass Strips in Arable Fields](#)
- [Water Margins in Arable Fields](#)

Inspections

The inspectors will check:

- the location and extent of the work
- you have established no more than a maximum of 1,100 trees per hectare on any single area up to 0.25ha (275 trees per 0.25 hectares)
- You have established no more than 500 trees/ha on any single area greater than 0.25ha
- you have protected the new plants from damage by hare, rabbits, voles and domestic herbivores.
- each planted area must be at least 15 metres apart

Additional guidance

[Supporting guidance](#) is available for this item.

Recent changes

Section	Change
Whole page	Option name change from Small-scale Tree and Shrub Planting to Small-scale Tree and Shrub Planting. Whole page reference to the 0.25ha upper limit for plot size has been removed and minor text edits throughout.
Note added	Note: From 2026, although the system will still call this item Small-scale Tree and Shrub Planting (on a site not exceeding 0.25 hectares), the 0.25ha upper limit for plot size has been removed.
Aim	Removal of reference of up to 0.25 hectares as the upper limit.
Application requirements	Text added, provide a summary of the work proposed, including a list of the species to be planted, how trees will be planted (i.e. fenced plots or groups of individual trees) and the protection to be used.
Payment	Revised text, You can claim for separate areas up to a maximum of 1.5 hectares across the holding, per contract.

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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