



Clearing vegetation from monuments and memorials

Great care must be taken in the removal of vegetation from any monument. There is a balance to be struck between the vegetation posing a risk or causing damage to monuments and the wildlife habitats created by the vegetation cover.

The most likely vegetation problems you will encounter are:

- woody herbaceous perennials such as bramble
- invasive non-native species like Japanese Knotweed
- trees and shrubs such as sycamore, buddleia, and elder
- self clinging climbers such as ivy

Any vegetation clearance work must not be carried out in the bird nesting season from March to August.

Cutting back adjacent vegetation

- If woody plants and climbers are growing adjacent to the monument, they can be cut back to ground level. Any cutting back should be done gradually by removing smaller growth and then larger branches.
- Care must be taken to ensure that branches do not fall onto monuments or fellow workers.
- Pull up any seedling trees and shrubs so that they do not grow big and cause damage.

Overhanging branches

- Do not attempt to clear large overhanging branches. Instead report problems to the cemetery manager who can arrange for the matter to be dealt with by tree professionals.



Clearing vegetation growing over the monument

- Start at the top and work slowly downwards.
- Do not attempt to remove all the vegetation right away but, using secateurs and/or pruning saw, remove smaller branches so that the main stems can be revealed.
- Do not under any circumstances pull at the vegetation in the hope that it may become loose. There is a significant risk that the vegetation will have encapsulated some part of the monument (for example finials, carving, lead lettering) which would be vulnerable to any tugging. If monument parts fall off, they could be damaged, or they could hurt someone.
- Do not try to lever off larger clinging branches. Such action cannot easily be controlled and may cause damage to the monument.
- Do not cut ivy at the base in the hope that it will then die. It will tend to put out roots above the cut which can lead to further damage to the monument.
- Do not over-stretch to try and reach inaccessible areas. Always work within an easily and safely accessible zone.
- If absolutely necessary use a ladder or step-ladder to access vegetation above head height. The ladder must be set on secure ground and footed by another person. Finding a sound point to lean the top of the ladder against can be difficult as the stability of upper sections of the monument may not be clear. If that is the case, leave the higher areas of vegetation for professional removal.
- Clear all debris as it accumulates; arrange for disposal to an appropriate location. Leaving debris allows new seeds to take root.
- Once the 'trimming' process has been completed, further assessment should be carried out to understand the extent of the main stems and how and where they are rooted. Normally removal to this stage is sufficient to allow for the **Monument and memorial condition survey form** (available as a downloadable pdf on our website) to be completed.

Further advice

See our downloadable pdfs:

- **Carrying out a memorial and monument condition survey**
- **Monument and memorial condition survey form**

These and more information available at:

historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/cemeteries-and-burial-grounds/