

SHAPING PROTOCOLS FOR IRISH OAK, ASH, SYCAMORE AND BEECH

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Ireland has the least forest cover of EU countries: currently 10.3% land cover. The government has an expansionist policy, aiming to increase this area to 17% by year 2030. The majority of afforestation is being carried out by farmers. Approximately 20,000 hectares of broadleaved forestry has been planted since 1998. The predominant broadleaf species planted are ash, oak, sycamore and beech. Plantations prior to 1997 were mostly of pure or mixed broadleaves at spacings of 1.5 x 2 or 2 x 2 metres. More recent plantations have been at closer spacing and both oak and beech are now planted in mixture with conifers. Planting broadleaves in former agricultural fields, with no shelter, creates a very stressful environment for the young tree resulting in reduced stem form quality. Research has been ongoing at Teagasc, Kinsealy since 1992 on the management of these - mostly farmer owned - plantations. Initial research concentrated on the formative shaping of very young stems in order to maintain or improve stem quality. Much of the research on formative shaping has been completed and protocols for early shaping management have been developed. This poster concentrates on showing how this research on formative shaping has answered certain vital questions on early broadleaf management and outlines the shaping protocols for oak, ash, sycamore and beech.