



Nidderdale
National
Landscape



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A GUIDE TO grassland management for fungi

Before using this resource, you may want to use our '**types of grassland found in Nidderdale National Landscape**' guide to better understand what type of grassland you currently own/manage. With this knowledge you will be better equipped to create a species-rich grassland suited to your field.

WHAT ARE GRASSLAND FUNGI?

There are lots of species of fungi that live within grasslands such as waxcaps, corals and clubs. They come in a variety of bright colours and unusual shapes and are indicators of healthy unimproved grassland. They grow out of the soil and don't usually get very tall.

To help protect them, you will first need to be able to identify grassland fungi such as waxcaps. There are 3 examples of fungi you may find below.

There are lots of resources out there to help you identify grassland fungi such as Plantlife's waxcap [Plantlife waxcap and fungi ID guide](#).

WHAT TYPES OF GRASSLAND CONTAIN GRASSLAND FUNGI?

The UK's grasslands are internationally important for grassland fungi. These fungi prefer to live within ancient, unimproved pastures and other grasslands that have not been agriculturally modified by means such as ploughing or adding fertiliser. Grasslands grazed by sheep, such as lowland dry acidic grassland, are preferred as sheep keep the vegetation short which helps warm up the soil (grassland fungi like warm soils to fruit) and can help fungi spread their spores easier. Hay meadows can also support grassland fungi, but not when they are mown later in the year around late-August/September as this is when grassland fungi such as waxcaps start to appear. Mowing during the fungi growing season will destroy them and prevent them from fruiting.

Improved pasture and silage/haylage fields do not support grassland fungi due to high nutrient levels, use of pesticides and ground disturbance creating an unsuitable place to colonise.



Three species of grassland fungi: Earthtongue (top left) meadow waxcap (top right) and scarlet waxcap (bottom).



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Variable coloured parrot waxcap prefers unimproved acidic and neutral grasslands.

HOW TO PROTECT GRASSLAND FUNGI?

The below management techniques will not only protect existing grassland fungi but will also help create a favourable habitat for them to colonise if not already present.

Manage grasslands through grazing with livestock and/or mowing and ensure a short sward in late summer/early autumn where possible. Grazing with sheep is preferred as they munch grass shorter than other animals, but if sheep are not available, other livestock such as cows are suitable. Mown vegetation needs to be removed to prevent dead vegetation smothering the ground and stopping a build-up of nutrients in the soil.

Avoid the use of fertilisers, manures, and herbicides as these are detrimental to grassland fungi. In addition, try and not plough, roll or aggressively harrow grasslands as this can destroy underground networks of fungi, which can take decades to recover.

Many species of grassland fungi require free draining soils, so ensure existing drainage is free from blockages and intact.

Prevent trees and scrub from encroaching on your grassland as this will negatively impact grassland fungi populations. Manage this through grazing, mowing or physical removal with hand tools.

FUNDING

To help fund grassland management, try and take advantage of agri-environment schemes. These can help fund restoration works and ongoing management. Below are two funding schemes which you may be eligible for.

Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI): [Sustainable Farming Incentive: guidance for applicants and agreement holders](#) - this is currently unavailable and will become available in April 2026.

Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT): [Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier](#)

Contact us

If you have any questions about managing your grasslands, please get in touch with our team:

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