

RCS Restorative Garden Cathedral Grove Mini Woodland

20 year Plan

Core Design Principle

A tall, open grove woodland designed to be walkable for students. The woodland will develop a cathedral-like structure with tall trunks, high canopy, minimal lower branches, and no shrub understory.

The aim is to create a calm outdoor learning environment with filtered light beneath the canopy.

Tree Species

Primary canopy trees:

- Oak (*Quercus robur*)
- Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)
- Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)
- Birch (*Betula pendula*)

Accent / structural trees:

- Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) – lower branches pruned to create a high crown
- Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) – 1 specimen
- Small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) – 2 specimens

Understory Policy

No shrub understory will be planted. The grove will be kept open to maintain clear sightlines and allow safe movement for students. Self-seeded shrubs may be removed if necessary. Leaf litter and ground flora will be allowed to develop naturally.

Rowan Management

Rowan trees will be trained with clear trunks by pruning lower branches while young. This will maintain the walkable grove structure while still allowing the tree to provide flowers for pollinators and berries for birds.

Development Timeline

Years 1–5: Birch and alder establish quickly; Scots pine begins vertical growth; oak slowly establishes.

Years 5–10: Pine and birch develop height; oak begins forming canopy; early grove structure visible.

Years 10–20: Oak becomes dominant canopy; pine forms tall evergreen pillars; lime and hornbeam strengthen structure.

Long-Term Management

- Annual inspection of tree health
- Rowan crown maintenance
- Removal of damaged branches
- Selective thinning of birch or alder after 10–15 years if required to maintain open grove spacing.

Educational Value

The grove will serve as an outdoor learning environment where students can study woodland ecology, biodiversity, soil processes, and seasonal change through direct observation.

Project Identity

The woodland is intentionally designed as a cathedral grove: an open, tall woodland space for learning, reflection and biodiversity.