

Green question marks on Troopers Hill

During May green question marks started unfurling on Troopers Hill. In June these have grown to cover parts of the Hill in a 2 metre high blanket of waving green fronds. This is bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). It is a really successful plant, overshadowing and killing other plants.

The conservation management for Troopers Hill says, "Eradicate Bracken or at least reduce it to a minimum apart from in scrub at boundaries".

This month you will see Bristol Parks' staff on the Hill with strimmers cutting the larger areas of bracken. At this stage the bracken has used a lot of energy to grow and is still growing. By cutting now the rhizomes will be weakened as the plant tries to grow again. There will be another cut in August.

The cutting will stop short where the bracken has started growing into the heather and broom, to avoid cutting those plants, which are valued on this site. This is where much help is needed from volunteers. The task is one that children enjoy as well as adults. The bracken is hand-pulled or cut from around the heather and broom. Sacks are filled with bracken which are dragged to a nearby entrance for Parks staff to collect.

Bracken is a member of the fern family. There are other kinds of fern growing on Troopers Hill which do not damage the bio-diversity of the site. They include harts tongue ferns and male-ferns which provide a reminder of the Carboniferous Period, 300 million years ago, when ferns evolved and grew to huge tree-like sizes. There is more to read about the geology of Troopers Hill and the Carboniferous Period on the interpretation board by Troopers Hill's upper chimney. If you have internet access visit <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/geology.htm>

Join the Friends of Troopers Hill on their 1st Saturday of the month conservation work parties to find out more and carry out work to preserve and improve the very special habitats on Troopers Hill.



www.troopers-hill.org.uk



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