

RIPARIAN PLANTING

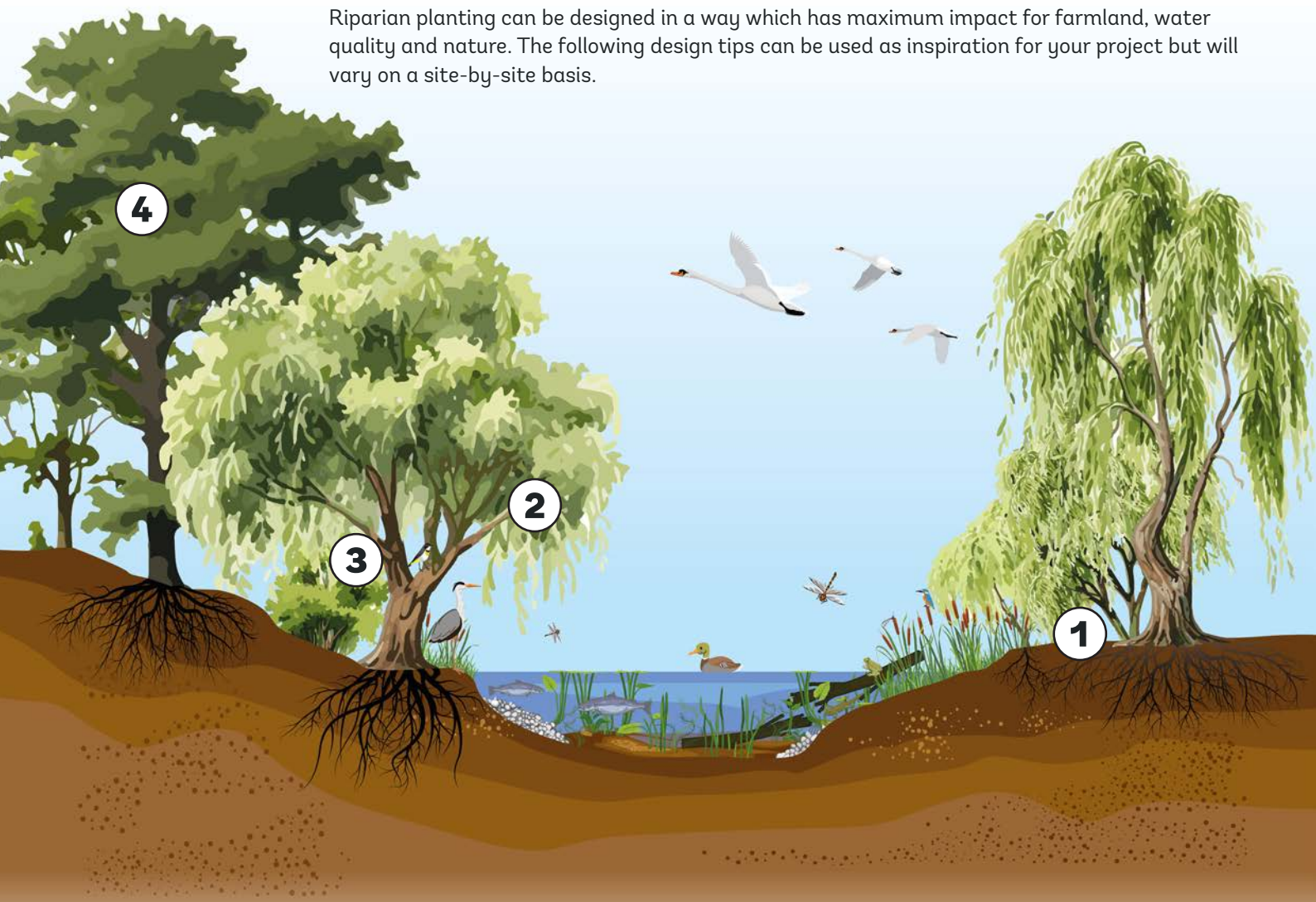
Our watercourses are the ecological veins of the British countryside, connecting our landscapes and providing a wealth of vital farming and biodiversity services. Rivers and streams face many threats, but planting trees along their edges can relieve some of these, while offering a whole host of benefits for farms and the environment.



Riparian planting helps reduce soil erosion and stabilises riverbanks with tree roots, preventing rivers from encroaching on farmland. The trees also trap soil that might otherwise wash away, reducing sediment and nutrient buildup in the water. In heavy rain, trees slow down surface runoff, easing the pressure on rivers and helping to prevent downstream flooding. This can be the best use of the land, as riverbanks can be steep and inaccessible, thus benefiting wildlife and the environment without affecting productivity. On hot days, tree shade helps keep water temperatures down, providing vital protection for aquatic ecosystems.



Riparian planting can be designed in a way which has maximum impact for farmland, water quality and nature. The following design tips can be used as inspiration for your project but will vary on a site-by-site basis.



1. On areas of floodplain that flood often, planting dense willow stands will stabilise the riverbanks, reduce erosion and create a source of wood debris. This is important for river health, but should not occur above a bridge or built asset.
2. Trees on riverbanks provide shade and structure for habitats in the river and riverbanks, however, canopy cover should be no more than half of the river channel. Leaf litter is also important for nutrient cycles in the river as algae break down the leaves, which in turn feeds the fish.
3. Natural regeneration is a great way to create riparian woodland that often requires less labour and fewer resources. It also encourages trees that are well adapted to the site conditions. This is suitable for areas with low browsing pressure, or in a fenced-off area with a nearby seed source.
4. Riparian planting can connect and extend existing woodland habitats on the farm, creating diverse wildlife corridors. Retaining mature trees on riverbanks and fallen trees and branches provides additional habitat.

Depending on site constraints and opportunities, these are the recommended minimum widths for riparian planting.

10m along channels less than 2m wide

20m along watercourses more than 2m wide, or along lakes and wetlands.

50m around boreholes, springs or other water abstraction points.

Please note: Specific consent may be needed from NRW for certain tree planting along 'main rivers', or abstraction points.

If you are interested in planting trees on farms and other opportunities to find out more visit [woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant) or contact plant@woodlandtrust.org.uk

Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL
0330 333 3300 [woodlandtrust.org.uk](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)
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