

# Creating the ultimate... *shrubby cover*



Austin Weldon is our new advisor and has in-depth knowledge of gamekeeping, deerstalking and wildlife habitat management.

Our research has proven that shrubby cover is highly desirable for pheasants and also has many benefits for a whole host of other species such as dormice, warblers and pollinators. Favoured native shrub species include the thorns, native privet, hazel, dogwood, spindle, box, holly and bramble, but what are the benefits? Shrubby cover increases the holding capacity of pheasants in woodland and provides:

- Safety from aerial predators – important both inside and around release pens.
- Low level roosting for released poults.
- Nesting habitat for wild stock.
- Protection from bad weather.
- Food from late summer to early winter.

The key to getting more shrubs and wildlife into our woods is to open up the canopy; control deer, hares and rabbits; and plant native shrubs. In time this may provide extra pheasant drives too.

Firstly, decide where you need to encourage shrubs for effective pheasant releasing, holding and driving cover. For wild pheasants, remember the woodland edge is important for breeding so encourage shrubs here too.



For ancient woodlands try to make use of the existing shrub species by thinning or sky-lighting the tall trees and then coppicing the understorey.



If few shrubs are present, consider planting using native species to help establishment. This often applies to new woodlands with lower biodiversity.



Make sure you have browsing herbivores under control or consider tree protection before planting expensive shrubs. Also, it's a good idea to keep release pens closed outside the shooting season to prevent deer eating valuable cover.



**Managing woodland** results in higher numbers of butterflies and songbirds

Remember that woodlands keep on growing, so once you've finished establishing your last shrubby area, the one you started working on first is probably due some attention.

