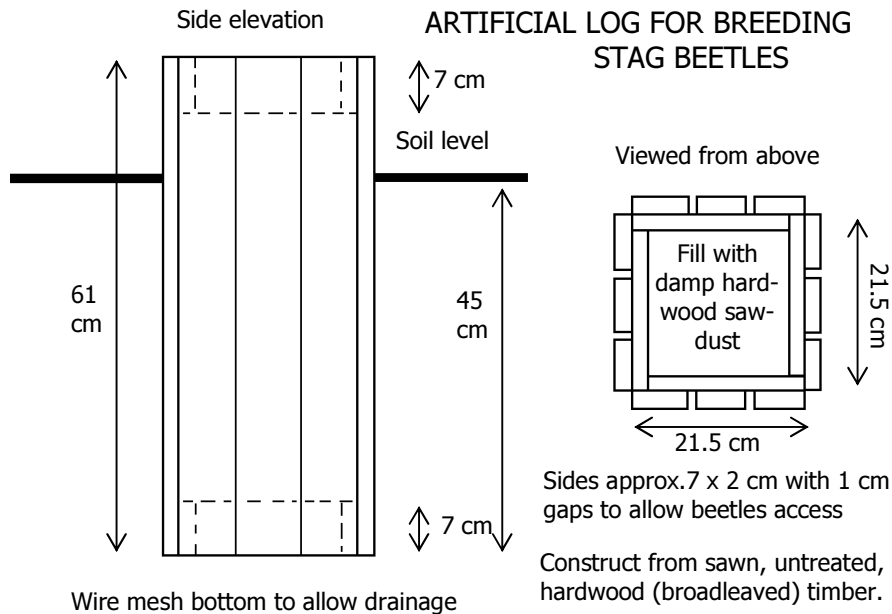


- * The sawdust should be tipped, a little at a time, onto plastic sheeting and examined for the presence of larvae (black plastic makes it easier to spot larvae). Note the number and depth at which any larvae are found and pass details to the Group.
- * If many larvae are present, remove one with some sawdust and place it in a perforated container and store in a cool place until it can be independently identified. (other beetles will use the log !)
- * Replace the empty 'log' in the soil and carefully replace the sawdust and any larvae as near to their original position as possible.



Wycombe Wildlife Group

Among its activities Wycombe Wildlife Group surveys and promotes the management of wild habitats for the benefit of wildlife and advises on and promotes wildlife gardening.

Information about the Group can be obtained from the Group's web site at: www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk

Gardens for Deadwood

Dead wood, standing or fallen, is a very important habitat as it supports a great variety of wildlife. In woodland nature reserves when trees are felled and it is not convenient to leave them lying where they fall, they are often cut up and the logs are stacked in piles. These wood piles are referred to as "habitat piles". By constructing a wood pile you can bring this habitat and its fascinating creatures to your garden or school wildlife area.

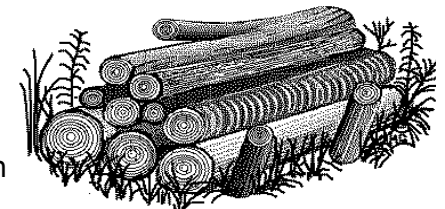
In addition to the fungi that rot the wood, the wood boring beetles and the variety of organisms that live on them, many other things will find shelter or make a home in a wood pile. Log piles are not only beetle friendly habitats but will encourage the dead wood fauna & wildlife generally in your garden.



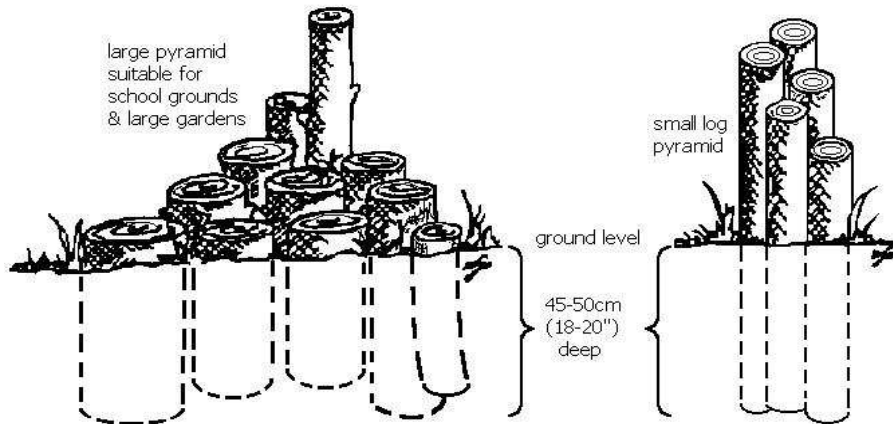
In a woodland, fallen wood and habitat piles are on the damp shady woodland floor, and this gives us a clue as to the conditions that organisms associated with rotting wood like - damp and shady. So make your log pile in a damp shady place - under trees if possible. You can stack the logs higgledy-

piggledy as above, or in the more orderly fashion shown here.

However you stack the logs, do stake them securely to make sure they don't fall, especially if children might climb on them.



VERTICAL LOG PYRAMIDS



The People's Trust for Endangered Species, (PTES) aims to ensure a future for many endangered species in their natural habitats.

In 2000 – 2001 they promoted a conservation strategy to improve the lot of the Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*). In the Chilterns it is close to its northern-most limits in this country but we know, from a survey in 1998, that it is likely to be found in the woods around High Wycombe and Marlow. The PTES produced guidance on how to provide for the larvae of the Stag Beetle, and gave permission for us to present that information so that you can help the UK's largest terrestrial beetle to thrive in Wycombe District.

What do the larvae of the Stag Beetle require? - dead wood - and you can provide that with log piles, preferably with the logs sunk vertically into the ground. An ordinary log pile is OK provided it is in partial shade and the lowest layer of logs is partly buried, as moisture is vital to the survival of the larvae.

- * Stag Beetles lay eggs in dead, decaying broad-leaved timber. Larvae have also been recorded feeding and developing in decaying broad - leaved wood-chippings and sawdust.
- * Eggs are usually deposited below the soil surface, the female digging down to reach the ovipositing (egg laying) site. Pupation occurs in the soil and may be up to 45cm below the surface.
- * Larvae use soil particles to build the cocoon. Emerging adult beetles dig an almost vertical tunnel to the soil surface.

- * Deep, well-drained loamy soils seem to be the favoured habitat, as hard-baked soil poses problems for beetles when emerging or searching for an egg-laying site.
- * Beetles that emerge late in the year over-winter in the soil.

Therefore to get Stag Beetles in your logs :

- * Choose a site which has deep well-drained loamy 'improved' soil.
- * Use logs from broad-leaved trees, especially oak and beech, which support the richest communities of invertebrates.
- * Make the log pile in a moist, warm place - preferably in partial (dappled) shade, to prevent it drying out, and allow plants to grow over it to create additional shade and humidity. Shrubs and trees in the vicinity may be of benefit in providing adult beetles a place to rest and shelter during the day.
- * Use fresh logs with bark attached, as these will generally provide habitats for longer and provide a wider range of habitats.
- * Use big logs - they should be at least 9cm diameter.
- * Don't pile the logs too high as the timber on the top will dry out.
- * Place logs on, or partly buried in, the soil where they will retain more moisture, or better still, place the logs vertically in the soil.
- * You can make an artificial breeding log for Stag Beetles, so you can see the larvae without destroying the logs.

Making & setting up an artificial 'log' (diagram overleaf)

- * Cover the bottom of the 'log' with a suitable mesh that will allow free drainage but prevent too great a loss of sawdust.
- * Dig a hole 45cm deep, and wide enough to take the log.
- * Lower the 'log' into the hole leaving ~16cm above the ground.
- * Replace the soil around the 'log'.
- * Fill the 'log' with coarse sawdust from broad-leaved timber, preferably oak or elm, or if not available, other hardwood sawdust can be substituted. Do **not** use pine sawdust.

Monitoring:

- * Do not disturb the 'log' and sawdust until any eggs that have been laid have had time to develop into identifiable larvae.
- * Lift the log in the first two weeks of May so that the sawdust can be examined for larvae. This allows a ten month development period and sufficient time for the disturbed sawdust and larvae to resettle before the next adult peak emergence in June.