

HOMEOWNER MAINTENANCE SERIES

AN ACTION OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL'S TRADITIONAL
BUILDING SKILLS INITIATIVE AND SPAB IRELAND

VEGETATION

WHY?

Although often attractive, the presence of vegetation on a building usually either causes problems or provides a warning to perhaps unseen damage. In particular, plants with woody roots such as ivy, buddleia and sycamore can open up wide cracks that lets water into the structure.



The Valerian is opening up masonry joints, allowing water ingress and creating a localised bulge.



Toadflax and small ferns do not damage walls. Toadflax in particular merely needs to be kept from growing to an extent where it clogs gutters or obscures possible problems.

HOW?

1. One way to remove vines and other large plants is to cut them off at the roots. However, you should take special care with ivy since its reaction is to attach to the wall to survive and this causes new growth and roots perpendicular to you wall. In this case, you should start peeling away gently from the top.
2. To kill the roots, use a "cut-and-paint" technique: where the plant is cut and the cut surface is then painted with a herbicide. Moss and lower order plants can be effectively removed with an appropriate biocide and a soft bristle brush.
3. Once the vegetation is removed, the wall surface should be checked for any repairs needed. Often masonry will require repointing, and wooden elements may need repair.

All plants that grow on historic structures attach themselves to the building in some way. In many cases, the chemical action softens the underlying wall material and provides a pathway for the plant to insert itself into the joints as an anchor and these may even provide a pathway for water to run into the building.

FRIENDLY PLANTS:

Roses, Clematis, Honeysuckle, Wisteria, Toadflax, Virginia creeper

NOT THAT FRIENDLY:

Ivy, Buddleia, Valerian, Elder, Japanese Knotweed, any tree but especially Ash and Sycamore



REMEMBER!

IF YOU SUSPECT YOU HAVE JAPANESE KNOTWEED, DO NOT CUT. YOU WILL ONLY MAKE THE PROBLEM WORSE. INSTEAD, CONTACT A SUITABLY QUALIFIED CONTRACTOR.

REMEMBER!

DUE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF NESTING BIRDS, ONLY CUT BACK BRANCHES FROM SEPTEMBER TO FEBRUARY.

For video on managing vegetation scan the QR code or visit:

[www.youtube.com/
watch?v=OkQKHGOe
S3k&list=PLIKz_D-M
JSUkEcOQp2zhltIS
885a1Tfy1&index=5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkQKHGOeS3k&list=PLIKz_D-MJSUkEcOQp2zhltIS885a1Tfy1&index=5)



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INTRODUCTION

The maintenance series is a collection of five sheets providing the owners of older homes (i.e. built before World War II) with basic guidance on essential maintenance.



1

Wood and ironwork



2

Render and mortar



3

Roofs



4

Vegetation



5

Rainwater goods

Each maintenance sheet is complemented by a short explanatory video. The videos are available to view on the YouTube channels of both the Heritage Council and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings Ireland (SPAB).

www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIKz_D-MJSUkEcOQp2zhlIS885a1Tfy1

WHY MAINTAIN YOUR OLD BUILDING?

Well-maintained buildings improve the quality of life of their occupants and the community in general. Beyond preserving the intrinsic heritage value of these buildings, carrying out regular maintenance to your building has strong economic benefits:

1. Conducting regular maintenance costs significantly less than waiting for problems to grow and resolving later. Over time, as building problems worsen, the cost of repair tends to grow not at a constant pace but at an ever-increasing rate.
2. Maintenance will extend the life of your building and thereby support the preservation of its resale value.
3. Communities that maintain their buildings, improve the property values of all.

FURTHER READING

An excellent document to read on building maintenance is *Maintenance: a guide to the care of older buildings* (Donnelly, 2007).

www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/Maintenance-A-Guide-to-the-Care-of-Older-Buildings-2007.pdf

A full resource webpage on the repair and maintenance of historic buildings has been created by the Heritage Council. Specific information on vegetation can be found in the working with wildlife section of the webpage. www.heritagecouncil.ie/news/news-features/how-historic-buildings-can-be-repaired-and-maintained

There is also advice on maintenance and building repair available on SPAB's website and by contacting their Technical Advice Line:

www.spab.org.uk/advice

USEFUL CONTACTS

Almost every local authority has either a Heritage Officer or Architectural Conservation Officer, many have both. They can provide you with very helpful advice on caring for your historic building.

To find your local Architectural Conservation Officer visit: www.buildingsofireland.ie/app/uploads/2020/07/Architectural-Conservation-Officers-01.07.2020.pdf

To find your local Heritage Officer visit:

www.heritagecouncil.ie/our-work-with-others/county-heritage-officers

