

## The Legal Stuff

To protect the birds that nest in our hedgerows there are some legal requirements you should be aware of:

- Under the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 and the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011 it is an offence to disturb any wild bird whilst it is building or at its nest. To make sure of this, it is advised to avoid cutting/managing during the recognised breeding period of 1st March - 31st August.
- If you are a farmer in receipt of direct agricultural support such as Single Farm Payment, under Cross Compliance you cannot cut, lay or coppice hedges between 1st March & 31st August inclusive.

There are some best practice guidelines, everyone should follow:

- Try & manage hedges in January & February. Cutting in autumn removes berries, seeds & nuts like haws, sloes, hazelnuts & alder bracts, a vital food source for birds & wildlife over winter.
- Don't cut every year (unless for health & safety reasons) or only cut one side. Hedgerows that are cut too often won't bear many flowers or fruit.
- Avoid using herbicides & fertilizers within 2metres of the hedgerow.

## Signposting

To guide you in your quest to become a Hedgerow Hero, there are many organisations & sources of information that can help.

**Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, Countryside Management Unit, Loughry Campus -** (028 8675 7507) or [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)  
**Hedgeline** - [www.hedgeline.org.uk](http://www.hedgeline.org.uk)  
**Hedge Laying Association of Ireland** - [www.hedgelaying.ie](http://www.hedgelaying.ie)  
**Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland** - [www.cvni.org](http://www.cvni.org)  
**Field Studies Council** - [www.field-studies-council.org](http://www.field-studies-council.org)  
**Northern Ireland Environment Agency** - [www.doeni.gov.uk/niea](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea)



Finishing off the laid hedgerow.

Plant illustrations by Carol Roberts from *Guide to Hedgerows* by Field Studies Council, [www.field-studies-council.org](http://www.field-studies-council.org)  
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**Hedgerows Grow West** is a partnership project across eleven councils in the west of Northern Ireland that aims to restore and enhance hedgerows for the benefit of biodiversity through working with people and passing on vital skills in conservation. This 'Be a Hedgerow Hero' guide was revised as part of this project, funded by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and from the original produced by Omagh District Council.



For further information on biodiversity & hedgerows in Northern Ireland, this project and to gain contacts for your local biodiversity officer, please visit

[www.biodiversityni.com](http://www.biodiversityni.com)

This document is available for download in various formats.

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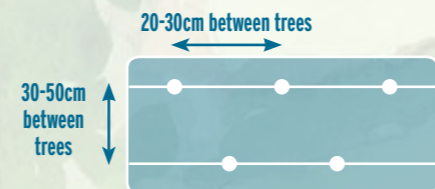
# Hedgerow Planting

## Choosing your hedging plants

Where you live will guide which type of hedge you should plant. If you live in a rural area, the best advice is to look at existing hedgerows & see what species are thriving. If you live in an urban area, pick a hedgerow that suits your garden size & soil condition. See our hedgerow selector for guidance.



1. Use bare root whips to plant your hedge as these will establish quicker, better & are cheaper.
2. Prepare the soil by digging it over, removing any large stones & if required incorporate some peat free compost to improve the soil condition.
3. To achieve a stock proof thick hedge, plant two parallel rows, placing each tree in a zigzag fashion as the diagram shows.
4. Add a mulch around the base of the hedgerow such as leaf mould or black plastic/cloth material, as this suppresses competitive grasses.
5. For a typical hawthorn based hedgerow, cut back hard the first few years as this will encourage the lower buds to develop, resulting in a thicker hedgerow.



Plant native trees if you can, as they support more biodiversity; they are home to more mini-beasts which in turn feeds more birds & mammals. It is also best to source your hedging plants locally, as 'local provenance' trees, that is, those that are grown from native trees growing in Northern Ireland, as they will thrive in our climate. Some 'native' trees bought in nurseries are often from the continent, so be a savvy shopper! Even better, collect local seed & grow your own trees from scratch!

SPECIES	SOIL	WILDLIFE INTEREST
Hawthorn	Wide tolerance.	Many birds feed & nest in it & hawthorn is considered one of the most important bird fruits in NI.
Blackthorn	Wide tolerance.	Early flowering is good for insects & provides cover & food for birds.
Hazel	Prefers fertile moist soils.	Good for insects & nuts eaten by birds & mammals.
Holly	Wide tolerance except poorly drained soils.	Attracts holly blue butterfly; female trees have berries eaten by birds.
Gorse	Prefers poor dry soils.	Good cover for birds such as linnets, yellowhammer.
Beech ( <i>Not Native</i> )	Well drained.	Supports only small insect population but provides all year cover for birds & nuts eaten by tits & chaffinches.
Escallonia ( <i>Not Native</i> )	Dislikes wet soils.	Attracts butterflies including holly blue.
SPECIES TO ADD WILDLIFE INTEREST TO YOUR HEDGE		
Honeysuckle	Needs well drained soil.	Attracts thrushes, bullfinches, butterflies & bees.
Dog Rose	Dislikes wet soils & exposed soils.	Attracts many insects & haws can attract greenfinches.
Ivy ( <i>Can be invasive</i> )	Wide tolerance.	Provides nesting & roosting for small birds & berries eaten by many birds. Attracts insects & butterflies.

# Tender Loving Care!

Hedgerows need to be managed, whether they are newly planted, ten or fifty years old. There are different ways to do this & depending on what stage a hedgerow is at, the way you manage will change. A good hedge for wildlife has a variety of native species, some tall mature trees, a thick & wide base with a host of wild grasses & wildflowers.

- Cut into an A-shape, well recognised as the best shape for a healthy hedge. Use a circular saw for older unmanaged hedgerows to regain a good shape.
- Tag individual trees that are to grow into mature trees so they are not cut.

## Laying

Hedge laying is the practice of cutting each stem in the hedgerow to a point where they can be bent over without breaking & weaved to form a thick, living barrier. Whilst not a traditional practice in Northern Ireland, hedge laying is an excellent management technique that will rejuvenate a hedgerow, making it dense & healthy with new growth from the base. Hedge laying should be carried out during tree dormancy & avoided in frosty conditions. Training is recommended as practice makes perfect.

## Coppicing

Coppicing is the practice of cutting hedgerow trees & stems to ground level to allow them to re-grow. From the base, many stems should grow, making a thick hedgerow quickly. This is ideal for very gappy hedgerows & once stems have been cut, the gaps can be replanted too. The wood cut from coppicing is a valuable firewood crop.

## Gappy, Over Trimmed or Over Mature Hedgerows

Do you know a hedgerow in your area that is tall & out of shape, or very short & gappy at the bottom? There are many that have been left unmanaged for years & have lost their farming value or have been over trimmed at the same height & shape each year leaving a trim line of hard knuckles. By applying the right management technique, they could be revitalised.

## Trimming & Re-Shaping

If the hedgerow is still young, thick & healthy, a three year cycle of cutting each side & the top will keep it healthy.

- Use a flail for stems of less than 1.5 cm in diameter, & a circular saw for stem thickness greater than this.
- Raise the height of the flail each time you cut (about 8 - 10 cm) so you don't leave a trim line. To be stock proof a hedge needs to be approximately 2 metres high.



Planting a tree in the hedgerow.

"Hedgerow; a rough or mixed hedge of wild shrubs & occasional trees, typically bordering a road or field"

(Open University Press, 2010)

# Be a Hedgerow Hero





# "Hedgerows... Lines of sportive wood run wild"

(William Wordsworth)

Hedgerows are a wonderful part of our landscape & our natural heritage. They are important both for people & biodiversity.

Hedgerows support over 170 species of trees, shrubs & flowers. They provide food & shelter for birds, mammals & invertebrates.

Be a Hedgerow Hero, your countryside needs you!

Bats



I fly at night along hedgerows looking for insects like midges & moths to feast on! I need big trees in bushy hedges to find my way about as I use echolocation to see!

'Ne'er cast a clout till May is out' is believed to refer to the hawthorn blossom & not to the month of May.

Over 30 species of birds regularly rely on hedges for breeding, shelter & feeding.

Whilst there is a lot of information available on selecting & planting your hedgerow along with landowner advice on management, this guide, outlines how important hedgerows are for biodiversity. It explains the basics in planting & managing them with wildlife in mind. Be a Hedgerow Hero, your countryside needs you!

Blue Tit

I lay my eggs to coincide with caterpillars emerging. My hungry family might eat up to 10,000 caterpillars before they fledge.



The 'wee Jenny wren' as the name suggests is a very small bird but has a loud song.

Plant native trees if you can, they are home to more mini-beasts which in turn is food for more birds & mammals

Bramble

Bramble or 'briars' are a common sight, but this 'weed' bears bountiful blackberries, juicy food for blackbirds & us! There are over 400 different micro-species of bramble.



Bumblebee

Help me help you!! Wildflowers in hedges like honeysuckle & foxgloves feed me nectar & as a thank you, I pollinate your flowers, fruit & vegetables!



Robins & blackbirds only live in thick & varied hedges

Dunnock

I am a quiet bird and I like to creep along the hedgerow bottom, looking for insects, worms and seeds for my supper.



A hedge with a wide bottom & good structure is important for nesting wrens.

Ivy provides great nesting & roosting opportunities & late nectar for bees.

Honeysuckle

The native honeysuckle also known as woodbine sends sweet scents into the summer evenings, attracting moths to its nectar.



Caterpillar



Peacock Butterfly

When I'm a caterpillar I need the nettles to munch on so I can grow into a big beautiful butterfly!



The foxglove, although a poisonous plant to us, yields the drug digitalis which is used to treat heart complaints.

Primroses

Primroses are so called because the Latin name *primula* means first rose, apt as they are one of the first wildflowers to appear in spring.



Robin

I sing nearly all year round & despite my cute appearance, I'm aggressively territorial & am quick to drive away intruders.



Hawthorn

Hawthorn, also known as whitethorn & quickthorn, is covered in a profusion of white blossom in the spring & wonderful red berries in the autumn.



Our local hawthorn has one seed per berry, whereas the English Midland thorn has two or more!

Blackthorn

Sloe berries grow on blackthorn.



Nettles, an enemy to gardeners & children's bare knees are a vital foodplant for the larvae of many butterflies. They are an intrinsic element of any hedgerow.

Hedgehog

I sleep all winter in cosy corners & love a thick hedge with lots of leaf piles & tall grass.



Hedgerows are important for farming, providing stock proofing & shelter belts for livestock. They help reduce soil erosion, protect crops & support beneficial insects such as pollinators.

Hedgerows are vital wildlife corridors between isolated woodlands & other habitats. All of this makes them one of the most important habitats in our countryside.

Nectar in hedgerow trees such as hawthorn & plants such as foxgloves are great for supporting butterflies & bees.

Holly & ivy are excellent for biodiversity. They are the caterpillar foodplant of the holly blue butterfly & their juicy red berries are eaten by the thrush, fieldfare, starling & robin.

Badgers & foxes like to forage for food through hedgerow margins.