

Hedgerow Planting

A new hedge, well sited and managed, can provide real benefit to the farm and greatly increase the wildlife potential. Carefully consider the siting of the hedge, taking into account the future plans for the farm and benefits to wildlife. If concerned about crop shading, remember, a north/south running hedge will cast less shade on an adjacent crop than east/west running.

Planting a second hedge alongside another can produce a green lane with many access, landscape and wildlife gains.

Good planning always pays off, it can minimise cost and maximise benefit.

Aim to link the hedge with an existing hedgerow network or with other wildlife habitats, to provide shelter for stock or complement arable fields.

Planting advice

- Prepare a raised surface for the new hedge line by ploughing two ridges together.
- Ensure the ground is free of grass before planting. If cultivation is not possible, spray a one-metre strip of herbicide such as glyphosate (read the label carefully before use).
- On poor ground incorporating well-rotted manure will help establishment.
- Plant between October and March, ideally before January while the soil is still warm and there is more moisture available.
- Plant 4-6 plants per metre in staggered double rows.
- Ideally use two-year-old plants.
- Ensure that the roots do not dry out during transfer. If necessary heel them into temporary trenches whilst awaiting planting.
- Try to use local provenance stock as these will be more suited to the conditions and thrive more than 'foreign' plants.
- Take advice on which species will best suit your locations and soil types.
- Use a similar species mix to those present in surrounding established hedges. This will help the hedge to 'fit in' better with the local landscape and wildlife.
- Consider planting a proportion of locally native trees (e.g. every 20-50 m).
- If replanting on the line of an old hedge, try to retain some of the old plants and incorporate trees.



A well - sited hedge can provide an important link between habitats

Management advice

- Use tubes, spirals or quills to protect young plants from damage and grazing.
- In stock fields erect double fences to prevent animals grazing the leafy shoots and to create a grassy verge. New fences should be a minimum of 1m from the hedge, ideally 2m where cattle are present.
- Weeds need to be controlled for the first two years. If using tubes or quills the bases can be sprayed with herbicides without harming the roots. The type and application of herbicide is critical and advice should be sought.
- Planting through a mulch such as black plastic or straw will help to reduce weed competition and retain moisture.
- Tag tree saplings to avoid cutting during trimming, or protect with tree shelters.
- To encourage bushy growth, cut back the tips of the new plants by one third. Trim lightly every second or third year, allowing the hedge to increase in size each time.
- If the hedge is to be laid, the plants need only to be trimmed up the sides until the leaders have reached a suitable height – 2.4 - 3.6m (8-12ft).
- Alternatively the hedge could be coppiced close to the ground after 2-3 growing seasons, allowing it to grow bushy from the base.



Newly planted hedge in double rows with protective guards

Environmental Stewardship Opportunities

Hedgerow planting is a capital works option in the HLS (Higher Level Stewardship). Hedgerow management options are available in both the ELS (Entry Level Stewardship) and HLS schemes. For further information see the ELS and HLS Handbooks and see www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/els/default.htm

Relevant legislation

Under the Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) requirements for Cross Compliance a 2-metre buffer strip (no cultivation, fertilisers, manures or pesticides) is needed alongside hedges in fields larger than 2 hectares. The 2 metre buffer strip is measured from the centre of the hedge.

This measure does not apply to hedgerows for the first 5 years after planting

You must also comply with the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and not cut any hedge between March 1st and July 31st unless for reasons of public safety. For further details refer to the Defra Cross Compliance Handbook for England 2005 or see www.crosscompliance.org.uk

Further information

For further information including possible grant aid contact your local FWAG Adviser or visit www.fwag.org.uk