



BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

Guidance for planting and establishing hedges

PLANNING SERVICES



These guidelines have been prepared to help anyone who wants to plant a hedge, whether to comply with a condition of planning consent, or perhaps a farmer interested in restoring field boundaries as part of a Countryside Stewardship Agreement.

Hedges are important for landscape, ecological, archaeological and cultural reasons. They are very influential in determining the character of a landscape, and a landscape can be particularly distinctive because of its hedge pattern.

New hedges should reinforce existing landscape character (local distinctiveness), and this can be achieved in the following ways:

- Using hedge species common to the area and in similar proportions
- Obtaining plants grown from seeds obtained from local plants (of local provenance)
- Including in the hedge individual large growing trees, using the same species at the same frequency as found in the area, where appropriate
- Managing the hedge in the same way as local hedges, where appropriate

Summary of steps to achieving a successful hedge

- Maintain local distinctiveness: select species appropriate for local conditions, common to the area and use in similar proportions
- Use young plants because they are more tolerant to the stress of transplanting than larger plants
- Buy healthy looking plants supplied by a well established nursery of repute
- Prepare the planting site with care and handle the plants with care
- Carry out on-going maintenance for at least 3 years

Species Selection

Two examples of hedges are given here. One is suitable for lowland sites; the other for exposed locations such as the Cotswolds plateaux. All the species listed are common to Bath and North East Somerset and are suitable for the soils of the district. The individual plant proportions reflect typical mixes. The species and percentages can be refined to more closely reflect hedges in the locality. A mixed species hedge encourages biodiversity more than a single species hedge.

Hedge for lower lying location

Large growing trees

Ash – *Fraxinus excelsior* and/or Oak – *Quercus robur*
– numbers to match local frequency

Small trees and shrubs

- 2.5% Dog Rose – *Rosa canina*
- 5% Dogwood – *Cornus sanguinea*
- 10% Hazel – *Corylus avellana*
- 60% Hawthorn – *Crataegus monogyna*
- 10% Field Maple – *Acer campestre*
- 2.5% Holly – *Ilex aquifolium*
- 10% Guelder Rose – *Viburnum opulus*

Hedge for exposed plateau location

Large growing trees

Ash – *Fraxinus excelsior* and/or Beech – *Fagus sylvatica* – numbers to match local frequency

Small trees and shrubs

- 15% Field Maple – *Acer campestre*
- 60% Hawthorn – *Crataegus monogyna*
- 10% Hazel – *Corylus avellana*
- 5% Holly – *Ilex aquifolium*
- 10% Wild Privet – *Ligustrum vulgare*
or Wayfaring tree – *Viburnum lantana*

Stock size

Large growing trees

90 – 120cm high bare root stock

Small trees and shrubs

45 – 60cm high bare root stock,
except Holly – 3 litre pot grown

Resist the temptation to plant larger stock because you want an instant impact. This is because smaller plants are more likely than larger plants to tolerate stress when transplanted and so more readily establish and take on a faster growth rate.

Quality and origin of stock

Make sure you obtain your plants from a good nursery. The plants must be healthy and have been carefully lifted, stored and transplanted as relatively fragile living organisms. On purchasing bare root stock, ensure that the roots have been kept moist since lifting, either wrapped in moist sacking or polythene, or 'heeled in' – the roots covered loosely with soil in a shallow trench.

Always order by the scientific name to ensure you get native plants and not a cultivated variety. Ask your local nursery for plants of local provenance. The genetic makeup of local provenance native trees and shrubs ensures that they are better adapted to local conditions. If local nurseries do not supply plants of local provenance, make sure that the stock is from a British source, as they are more likely to survive and flourish.

British Standard 3936:1992 – Nursery Stock – Part 1. Specification for trees and shrubs specifies requirements for plants suitable for transplanting.

Planting the hedge

- 1 Where appropriate link the new hedge with an existing hedge or other habitat, such as a woodland or dry stone wall.
- 2 Clear a metre wide strip of vegetation from the proposed hedge planting site, using a Glyphosate based systemic herbicide – strictly in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. Allow the ground to recover from any chemical treatment before planting. Carry out herbicide treatment strictly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Take great care to avoid drift and hence damage to nearby vegetation.
- 3 If mulch is required to reduce weed control operations, spread a geotextile membrane / black polythene over the planting site and peg at sufficiently regular intervals to keep in place. Straw can also be used as mulch.
- 4 Through the plastic, plant the hedging transplants and pit plant the container grown stock in pits larger than the root ball, having first gently teased out any roots from the root ball of any container grown stock. Firm in.
- 5 Plant the stock in two staggered rows, rows 300 mm apart and plants within rows 400 mm apart. Allow for 5 plants per linear metre. Plant in small single species groups to reduce competition between species. Holly and larger growing trees are to be planted individually.
- 6 Immediately after planting cut Hawthorn down to 150mm.
- 7 If rabbits are a problem use shrub guards to protect plants – these are larger in diameter than spiral guards and so allow low lateral growth to develop. Use 60cm high shrub shelters with stakes. Tel: Tubex on 01685 888000 for local suppliers.

- 8 Planting is to be carried out during the planting season – ideally in November, before the ground gets too cold, otherwise up to March except when there is a ground frost or soil is waterlogged. Plants planted later in the planting season are more at risk of failure, because dry weather is more likely to follow and the plants die from drought conditions.
- 9 Larger stock 90 – 120cm high, (*Acer campestre*, *Fraxinus excelsior* and *Quercus robur*) are to be supported with a single stake, 90cm long, 45cm above ground level with single rubber tie with spacer, nailed close to top of stake. Fix spiral rabbit guards, also available from Tubex.

Establishing the hedge

- 1 In the first spring after planting trim all lateral branches back by 50% (not Holly). Prune damaged, diseased or dead wood immediately after first leaf break. Follow with a light trim every second or third year, allowing the hedge to increase in size each time.
- 2 Replace dead, dying or damaged stock with the same species as soon as practicable in the first planting season following failure.
- 3 In the spring and after severe frosts and winds firm in around the base of each plant and ensure that tree stakes and ties and shelters are secure.
- 4 Ensure the tree ties are not so tight that they damage the stems. Check regularly and loosen to allow growth. Trees should be able to be self supporting by the third year when the stakes and ties should be removed to avoid damage to the tree and making it dependent on support.
- 5 Check regularly that the shrub guards are sound and secure, and replace as necessary.
- 6 Maintain a metre wide strip in a weed free condition for at least three years, to reduce competition from grass and weeds for moisture and nutrients.

Fencing

It is important to protect the newly planted hedge from grazing animals, therefore a timber post and wire netting fence, erected at least a metre away from the closest row of plants is recommended. The fence materials and style should meet with British Standard 1722: part 2: 2000.



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