

ADVICE AND INFORMATION

BTCV

01302 572 200 www.btcv.org

BTCV support environmental volunteers, providing training and conservation guidance notes. An extremely useful range of online handbooks is provided on their website

SMALL WOODS ASSOCIATION

01952 432769 www.smallwoods.org.uk

The Small Woods Association supports and promotes the work of owners and carers of small woodlands. They provide extensive information, courses and networking opportunities for those involved in woodland management.

TREE COUNCIL

020 7407 9992 www.treecouncil.org.uk

The Tree Council is an umbrella body for over 180 UK organisations working to promote the importance of trees within the environment.

THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

www.forestry.gov.uk

A number of useful publications are available by contacting your local Forestry Commission office or at www.forestry.gov.uk/publications

RECOMMENDED READING

'Hedging': Brooks, A. & Agate, E. (BTCV 2002) ISBN 0 946753 176

'Gardening for Wildlife' George Pilkington (2002) ISBN 1 873727 12 7

BTCV Handbooks are also available online at:

<http://handbooks.btcv.org.uk/handbooks/index/book>

MORE FROM THE MERSEY FOREST

For more free guides, call The Mersey Forest Team on 01925 816 217 or visit www.merseyforest.org.uk to find out more and get involved.

HOW TO PLANT AND MAINTAIN HEDGEROWS

The Mersey Forest guide



Photo copyright Mike Roberts



WHY PLANT HEDGEROWS?

Hedgerows are important for a wide range of species, providing nesting sites and food for birds, insects and small mammals, whilst also acting as wildlife corridors, connecting otherwise isolated habitats.

It is important to plant hedgerows as they are increasingly under threat due to neglect, poor management and removal for agricultural expansion and built development.

SOIL PREPARATION

The ground should be prepared prior to planting. The amount of ground preparation required varies depending on site characteristics but should aim to ensure the ground is broken up and cleared of any existing vegetation that would compete with the new plants.



SELECTING YOUR PLANTS

Bare root trees of 30cm to 60cm in height are the best for hedgerow planting.

When choosing which species to plant, think about the desired function of the hedge. For example if the hedgerow is for screening purposes



consider using species with year-round leaf cover such as beech and holly. For protection, use thorny species such as blackthorn, hawthorn, dog rose, guelder rose and holly, or if the hedgerow is for wildlife value, consider fruit and nut producing species like hazel or hawthorn.

For further advice on selecting plant sizes or species, contact The Mersey Forest Team on 01925 816 217.

WHEN TO PLANT YOUR HEDGEROW

It is best to plant between November and March, while the tree is dormant (before it starts to bud) and avoiding periods of heavy frost.

HOW TO PLANT YOUR HEDGEROW

To plant your hedgerow, dig a hole deep enough for the plant to be covered up to the root collar* and for the roots to sit in the hole without bending back on themselves. Replace the soil and gently firm in the plant to prevent air gaps around the roots.

Notch planting is a quicker option but requires more expertise to ensure the roots are properly covered. This is not recommended if you are planting with school children. It will also only be successful if the ground is soft or has been previously cultivated.



To notch plant use a spade to cut a 'T' or 'L' shaped slot at the depth required to cover the roots up to the root collar*. Using the spade, open up the slot so that the roots can be inserted. Once the tree has been positioned in the slot, the spade can be removed and the soil firmed gently around the tree to prevent air gaps around the roots. If the root system is too big to be notch planted it should be pit planted as described above.

* To identify the level of the root collar rub the stem at the top of the roots – the root collar is where the colour changes.

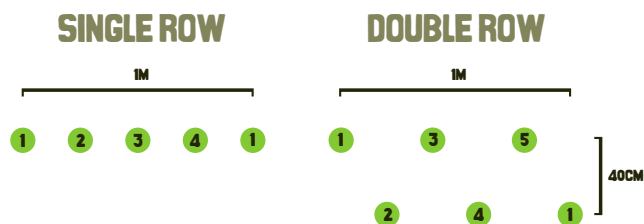


PLANT HANDLING

Bare root trees are delicate and must be handled carefully. It is important to plant hedgerow trees as soon as possible after obtaining them. Roots must be protected prior to planting to prevent drying out or frost damage (e.g. kept in bags in a cool, damp location). Even a slight breeze during the planting process can dry the roots.

SPACING OF HEDGEROW PLANTS

Hedgerows should be planted at a density of approximately four plants per metre if planted in a single row. To create a wider hedge, a second row can be planted at staggered intervals. These double hedgerows should be planted at 5 plants per metre, with 30-40cm between the rows.



PEST PROTECTION

If you are planting in rural areas where there may be damage from rabbits, hares or voles, plants can be protected by using:

CLEAR SPIRAL GUARDS - used with most species and will expand with growth of the plant.

PLASTIC MESH GUARDS - useful for branching species such as holly.

STOCK PROOF FENCING - used if the area is grazed.

Remember - guards should be removed once plants have become established (e.g. after 3-5 yrs)

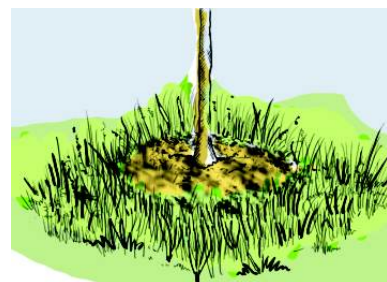
WEED CONTROL

Weed control is recommended to increase the success of a planting scheme. Grasses and weeds compete with trees for moisture and will dramatically reduce the survival rate of new planting. This is less of an issue in well managed areas such as school grounds.

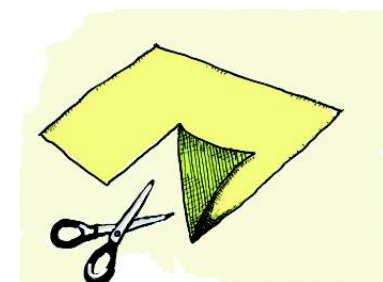
Try to maintain a 1m wide weed-free strip in line with the hedgerow (50cm either side of hedge) for the first three to five years of growth or until plants are successfully established.

The following methods of weed control can be used:

MULCH Organic mulch such as well rotted woodchip, bark, coconut fibre, grass cuttings, horse manure or farmyard manure can be laid around the base of the hedge to a 10cm depth. This should be applied in early summer (by May at the latest) and will need topping up in subsequent years. Hessian backed carpet squares flipped over with a slit cut in to place it around the tree can also be used.



Organic mulch



Carpet squares used as an alternative to organic mulch

MECHANICAL CONTROL Although cutting will control nettles and brambles, it will increase the growth of grasses and rosette forming herbs. Also be aware that trees can be seriously damaged by strimming operations. Take care to keep strimmer blades well away from tree stems.

CHEMICAL CONTROL Application of foliar herbicide such as Glyphosate, is often the most cost-effective method of control, but will require specialist knowledge and equipment. Herbicide control should be carried out during the spring of each year and subsequent applications may also be required later in the year.

HEDGEROW CUTTING

NEWLY PLANTED HEDGEROWS

A newly planted hedge should have an initial prune within the first couple of years of growth to encourage dense bushy growth.



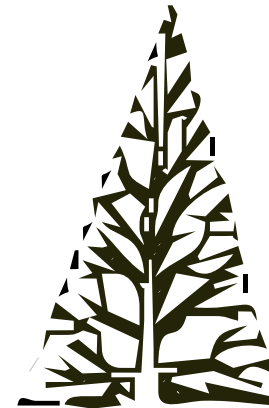
LONG TERM HEDGEROW MAINTENANCE

Trimming is an essential part of long-term hedgerow maintenance. The species present within a hedge will affect the frequency of trimming but in most cases an annual trim undertaken between November to February (when birds are not nesting) is sufficient to encourage dense twiggy growth and form a solid boundary hedge.

Hedgerows alongside Public Rights of Way or roads may require trimming twice a year – once in August and once in late autumn to facilitate safe public access.

Hedges in rural areas can be trimmed once every 2-3 years to maximize wildlife value. The flowers and fruits on the most common hedgerow species develop on 2-3 year old wood and therefore trimming more frequently than this will reduce the wildlife value. Growth should not be left untrimmed for longer than 3 years however, as the woody growth will become too thick to be cleanly trimmed with a flail.

A tall thick hedge with good growth at the base is good for wildlife (e.g. 2metres tall by 1.5metres wide). An 'A shaped' profile is therefore preferable however if a more vertical profile is required, chamfered top corners will help to produce a similar effect.

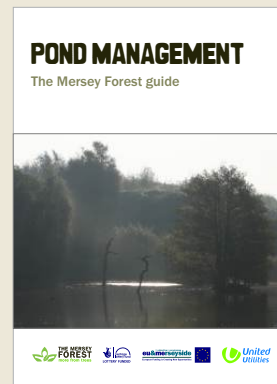
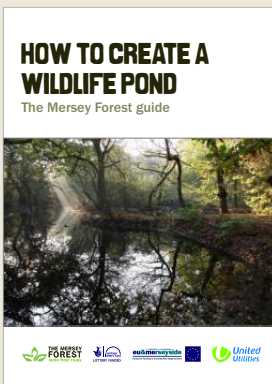


'A' SHAPED



CHAMFERED

Recommended profiles for cutting hedgerows



MORE 'HOW TO' GUIDES

If you found this guide useful you may be interested in further guides in The Mersey Forest's 'How to' series.

ONLINE

Online pdf versions can be found at www.merseyforest.org.uk which can be read on-screen, downloaded to your computer or printed off.

HARD COPY

The guides are also available as printed booklets, free to members of the public and community groups in Merseyside and North Cheshire.

To request copies of one or more of the guides, please contact The Mersey Forest Team and let us know which guides you would like.

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