

NEW FARM HEDGEROWS



Planting New Hedgerows

'New stockproof hedgerows are valuable additions to farms, wildlife and the countryside.'

When planning new hedgerows:

- ✓ Identify the reason for planting
- ✓ Choose native species
- ✓ Stock-proof
- ✓ Control weeds

Choosing Species

- Native species, adapted to Irish conditions benefit wildlife more.
- Locally grown plants, tolerant of local conditions, are likely to thrive.
- Plants grown from locally collected seed conserves local provenance (origin), but this takes time, effort and patience.
- Thorny species such as whitethorn or blackthorn are essential for a stockproof hedgerow.
- A variety of species provides a varied food supply throughout the year for more wildlife. Include another hedgerow species or climber approximately every metre. Include a nurse species such as alder.
- Include a tree species at irregular intervals, provided it will be allowed to grow up and is NOT topped when routinely trimming the hedgerow. Avoid trees that cast dense shade, such as sycamore, beech and chestnut.

Hedgerow Species

These species survive routine trimming as a hedgerow while individual stems can be allowed to grow up and mature into trees.

- **Whitethorn (Hawthorn):** Predominant hedgerow species. Hardy, fast-growing and tolerates most soils except very wet. High elevations unsuitable.
- **Blackthorn:** suits most soils except very wet. Suits exposed and coastal sites. Spreads by suckers, good for gapping up, but is invasive.
- **Holly:** slow growing evergreen. Tolerates exposed sites and shade. Suitable under trees. Male and female plants required for berries.
- **Spindle:** prefers alkaline, but tolerates a wide range of soils. Open, infertile site better for fruit production.
- **Guelder Rose:** prefers alkaline, fertile, clay soils and neutral wet soils. Acid soils unsuitable. Competitive in new hedgerows.
- **Hazel:** prefers heavier, fertile soils. Tolerates some shade. Understory species. Competitive in new hedgerows.



Whitethorn



Spindle



Guelder Rose

Climbers

Climbers colonise hedgerows, but can be planted.

- **Dog Rose:** tolerates wide range of soils. Provides rose hips.
- **Woodbine (Honeysuckle):** prefers neutral to light acid soils. Notable scented flowers.



Woodbine (Honeysuckle)

Trees

These trees are suitable in hedgerows, provided they are allowed to grow up and mature and are not topped when trimming the hedgerow.

- **Alder:** useful for very wet sites and river banks. Adapted to most soils. Ideal nurse species as shelters new hedgerows and fixes Nitrogen.
- **Crab apple:** thrives in all fertile and heavy soils.
- **Birches:** prefer light infertile soils. Don't like shade. Downy birch suits poorly drained peat. Silver Birch needs good drainage and sunny site.
- **Willows:** useful for wet sites and stabilising river banks. Tolerate flooding. Fast growing.
- **Wild Cherry:** prefers fertile soils. Wet soils unsuitable. Shallow rooting. Tolerates some shade. Susceptible to bacterial canker.
- **Rowan:** grows in poor thin acid soils. Suits exposed sites, up to 1000m. More fruit in open infertile sites.
- **Oak:** prefers clay soils and damp lowlands. Poorly drained infertile soils unsuitable.
- **Ash:** prefers well drained neutral to alkaline soil. Tolerates exposed or coastal areas. Shallow rooting system doesn't suit tillage fields. Casts shade.



Oak

Planting Hedgerows

Weather: Avoid waterlogged soil and very wet or frosty weather.

Timing: Plant from October to March. Autumn is best in free-draining ground, spring in heavy soil.

Soil preparation: Cultivation before planting is essential for optimum growth. Mounding is advisable in wet conditions.

Fertiliser: Digging in well rotted Farm Yard Manure encourages growth, but also weeds.

Plants: 2-3 year old plants are suitable. Bushy healthy roots and thick lower stems are more important than height. Roots must be kept moist before and during planting to avoid drying out and dying.

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Depth : Plant to the same depth as the plants were previously planted and firm in.

Spacing: Allow up to eight plants per metre. A staggered double row is preferable with plants 250mm apart and 300mm between rows. A single row at 300mm spacing may be adequate, if well maintained.

Pruning: Whitethorn plants (not other species) may be cut back to 75mm from ground level to increase density of new shoots at this level. Pruning is severe; planting rate is normally eight plants per metre. Used in conjunction with plastic, it is done at planting.



Plastic pushed over pruned whitethorn quicks, retained with inert material such as gravel or quarry dust to control weeds



Whitethorn pruned when planted and again the following year to get a dense base

Maintenance

- Plant only the length of hedgerow that can be maintained.
- Water in dry weather
- Control competing vegetation to prevent smothering and allow lower branches develop, giving a dense base.
 - Manual weeding
 - Chemical herbicides: Extreme care is needed as spray drift damages young hedgerow plants.
 - Mulching immediately after planting helps weed control. Mulch such as wood chippings, paper or cardboard must extend 150mm outside the plants.
 - Place plastic over pruned whitethorns, cut slits around other species and retain with inert material such as gravel or quarry dust.
- Fence off livestock using temporary fencing. Consider livestock reach and future access for machine trimming, when positioning the fence. Rabbit-proof fencing may be needed to protect from rabbits or hares.
- Replace plants which fail to grow.
- For the first few years after planting, cut whitethorn back to 75mm above previous level of cut, gradually shaping into a triangular shape.

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For further information contact your local Teagasc office or www.teagasc.ie.
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