

Planting a Stockproof Hedgerow

This hedgerow consists mainly of hawthorn and will be a stockproof alternative to fencing, providing a valuable habitat and shelter.

plants and tools required to plant 100 metres:

plants required:

- 500 hawthorn (or whitethorn)
- 100 blackthorn (or sloe)
- 15 holly
- 15 guelder rose
- 15 hazel
- 15 dog rose
- 15 spindle
- 15 crab apple
- 15 field maple (not native to Ireland)
- 5 hedgerow trees (oak, rowan, birch, whitebeam, wild cherry or bird cherry)

materials, tools and labour required:

- ground rock phosphate, compound fertiliser (10-10-20) or rotted farmyard manure (if necessary)
- hire of small digger / JCB with 18"-24" bucket
- spade
- pair of secateurs
- hedging plastic (black, UV-stabilised polythene, 1m wide, 120 micron thick)
- ± 5 tonnes of fine quarry dust
- appropriate fence type
- 2 mandays

before you start...

- the secret of planting a hedge successfully depends mainly on using good quality plants, cultivating the soil prior to planting, controlling grass and weeds and keeping browsing animals away for the first few years
- consider location, access points and traffic safety carefully
- start planning in summer, do it well and try to plant a short run of hedge every year
- fence off: protection for the first few years from cattle, sheep, goats, deer, rabbits and hares is critical

site preparation: essential for successful growth



- spread ground rock phosphate, compound fertiliser (10-10-20) or rotted farmyard manure where hedge is to be planted
- using a JCB or a small digger, dig soil over to 25cm (10") deep and 50cm (2') wide, flip soil over and with the bucket teeth, loosen and level soil
- ensure the site has sufficient top-soil and avoid waterlogged, shallow and very exposed sites
- keep at least 1m (3.5') away from any fence or wall
- if planting (or infilling) on the site of an old hedge: remove old soil and add fresh topsoil mixed with well-rotted manure
- avoid planting on top of an old ditch

plants and planting

- use 2-year old, graded plants between 0.50m - 0.90m tall with a single stem (do not buy plants already cut back in the nursery), bushy roots and a sturdy lower stem
- soak roots before planting (1 hour)
- plant trees directly from the bag, one by one (do not expose roots to air)
- plant a.s.a.p. after delivery, avoiding wet, windy or frosty conditions between december and february
- plant a double row of staggered plants using 5 hawthorn plants/metre (30cm (12") between the rows and 40cm (16") between the plants)



after planting:

- cut back hawthorn to 10cm (4")
- spread out black plastic over the stumps
- pierce stumps through plastic using a big nail (do not cut slits in plastic), bunch up plastic a little to avoid tearing it later on
- spread thick layer of quarry dust over plastic, covering plastic totally but leaving the stumps exposed
- plant other plants such as holly, guelder rose, etc. along plastic edge

please note: if the hedge is to be laid in the future, this weed control system would be inappropriate. Do not cut back after planting, leave the quicks to grow for 7-10 years and then carry out hedge laying.



after planting care

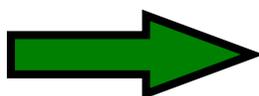
- cut tall weeds (such as thistles, nettles, docks, etc.) growing between the plastic's edge and the fence, twice during the growing season
- pull grass and re-colonising weeds (couch grass, buttercups, etc.) back off the gravel 3 or 4 times during the growing season using a rake or billhook
- *please note: biodegradable mulches (straw, grass, bark, rushes, etc.) used instead of plastic, work very well in sheltered areas if vegetation has been killed off prior to soil preparation and if regularly raked over and topped up. Use grass clippings in the summer and well-rotted manure in the autumn for instance.*

early hedge management

- monitor weed growth and carry out weeding if required
- replace dead hedge plants every winter
- cut back to 30cm (12") of current year's growth for the first three winters:



<< cut back after one year



3 years later >>



- shape hedge in an 'A' after 2-3 years (trim sides, do not top)
- remove fences after 5 years and carry out first mechanical 'A' trimming
- the new hedgerow should be fully stockproof by now and no further management is required but for some biannual side trimming

general remarks:

- use native, locally occurring species; a range of species is more attractive and valuable to wildlife
- appropriate hedging species:
 - hawthorn (whitethorn, quickthorn), blackthorn, holly, dog rose, guelder rose, hazel, spindle and gorse (also non-native field maple, ramanas rose, common and copper beech, hornbeam)
 - consider using (shade tolerant) holly in existing hedges
- hedging species to be avoided on the farm (because of aggressive growth or poisonous plant parts):
 - elder, ash, snowberry, box, yew, rhododendron, cypress, leylandii, cherry laurel, etc.
- appropriate hedgerow trees (every 20-30 metres)
 - oak, rowan, field maple, ash (sometimes), crab apple, wild cherry, bird cherry, wild pear, elder
 - use alder or birch on damper sites
- hedgerow tree species to be avoided on the farm:
 - sycamore, beech, chestnut, lime, elm, yew, cypress, leylandii, (sometimes ash), etc.