

HEDGEROW REJUVENATION



AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Hedgerow Rejuvenation

Trees and shrubs have a natural lifespan. Given time, space and lack of management, they grow up, mature and die. With limited natural regeneration or seeding within hedgerows, over time they can die. The lifespan of hedgerows can be extended by rejuvenation.

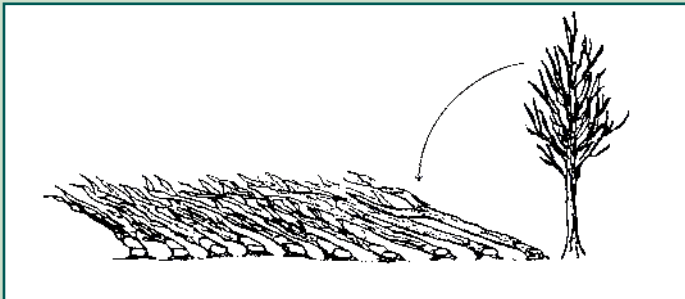
Rejuvenation is major surgery. It should only be carried out on relatively healthy hedgerows. If in doubt, try a short section and assess the response.

Hedgerow maintenance, including rejuvenation should be carried out between 1st September and end February.

Rejuvenation can be achieved by laying or coppicing.

Laying

- Stems are partially cut through near to the ground and bent over or laid to form a living barrier, which continues to grow.
- New growth comes from the cut stump at ground level and from the laid stem, thickening the hedgerow from the base.



Steps in hedge laying

1. Remove rubbish and wire.
2. Cut out unwanted, excess material such as awkward side branches.
3. A downward angled cut is made with a billhook, axe or chainsaw near to ground level, approximately three-quarters through the stem. The stem must be thinned sufficiently to allow it to bend. It is surprising how thin a contact may keep the stem alive.
4. The stem is laid over carefully and slowly. Older wood is more brittle and needs more care. Stems are a bit more flexible in autumn, while there is still some movement of sap.



First cut



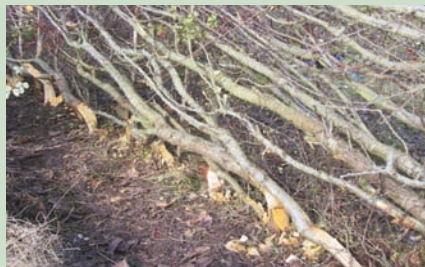
Second cut



Laying over



Cleaning the stump



Laid hedgerow

A long thin tongue or hinge allows the laid stem to be twisted and positioned to best advantage. However, it also increases the risk of entry of diseases such as Armillaria and Heterobasidion.



5. A laid hedgerow must be secured against strong wind and livestock rubbing. Laid stems can be woven between driven stakes or secured with natural or sisal twine, heavy stones or sods of earth, or a hooked stick or gabhlóg.
6. The remaining heel or stub is cut off at a sloping angle near to the ground.
 - to allow water to run-off
 - to encourage regrowth at ground level
 - to prevent injury to livestock

Coppicing

Stems are completely cut through, close to the ground, encouraging new growth at this level. Compared to laying, it is less time consuming, but the total removal of hedgerow material has dramatic short-term effects on landscape, shelter and wildlife. However, long term benefits are similar.

- Cut stems close to ground level (25-100mm) by hand tools, chainsaw or circular saw. Avoid splitting.
- A gentle sloping cut allows water to run off.
- New growth comes from below the cut at ground level.
- Fill in gaps with new plants.
- Fence off livestock using temporary fencing. Consider livestock reach and future access for machine trimming, when positioning the fence.
- Control competing vegetation as necessary
- For the first few years after coppicing, cut back to 75mm above previous level of cut, gradually shaping into a triangular shape.



Coppiced hedgerow fenced. Temporary fencing should be sufficient, provided new growth is routinely trimmed correctly, resulting in a stockproof hedgerow.

Safety

Circular saw hedgecutting machines and chainsaws are dangerous. Ensure they are in safe working order. Consult operators manuals. Keep safety guards in place. Ensure operators are competent and work in a safe manner, wearing appropriate personal protective equipment. Watch out for bystanders. Think safety and take action.

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For further information contact your local Teagasc office or www.teagasc.ie.
 Published by Teagasc, Oak Park, Carlow.
 November 2009