A new requirement in AEOS 2 is that farmers who joined AEOS 2 in 2011 must buy their trees and hedgerow plants from a registered producer or from a supplier who sourced the plants from a registered producer. AEOS farmers cannot buy plants grown by a person who is not registered by the Horticulture and Plant Health Division of the Department of Agriculture. The TEAGASC environment division does not currently have a protected zone status for this disease. Within the EU, Ireland currently has a protected zone status for this disease. This means that any host plants being sold into Ireland must originate from specially monitored nurseries to ensure that they are free from it.

**Prune, prune and prune again!**

If you want a stockproof hedgerow with a dense growth at the base? Immediately after planting, it is recommended to cut whitethorn plants to leave not less than 10cm above ground level. This prevents apical dominance of the leading shoot and allows clusters of buds to develop into shoots just below the cut. It also makes it easy to push a strip of waste plastic over the cut stumps to provide effective weed control. In the second year this cluster of shoots will have grown up and should be cut again to multiply approximately 10cm above the first year’s cut. The process should be repeated in the third year and as for as long as it is possible to get access to make the cuts.

Each time, you cut at the point where you want the shoots to multiply. Pruning must be carried out while plants are dormant, before leaves appear in spring. Cutting back young growing plants wastes much needed energy. The most common question asked is: what to do with hedgerows planted over the past number of years which were not cut back at planting and are now tall and spindly with little dense growth at the base? These plants can be cut back at any stage — after two, three years, or indeed, 100 years, which is the case when coppicing mature hedgerows. The important thing is to cut back close to ground level. Plastic may still be required to keep grass and weeds under control. If vegetation is present, it competes for moisture and nutrients from the hedgerow plants. If there is a dense mass of vegetation, there is no space for the hedgerow shoots to grow at ground level as desired.

For every 100 metres of new hedgerow, buy 590 whitethorn and 10 other hedgerow species