

Creating an amenity hedge near a rural house

Paddy Smith
Teagasc College, National
Botanic Gardens



As the bareroot season approaches, hedgerow planting, aka boundary hedging around one's dwelling, must be carefully planned and executed with good aftercare.

Common pitfalls begin with cost, whether outsourcing the operation to a landscape contractor or, if it's a DIY job, "cheaper is not always better." The same goes when sourcing planting material – you will always have to pay for quality.

Plants need plenty of room. Consider the following:

- How do I cut and maintain the back of this hedge along the boundary fence once established?
- What grazing animals will be present in the adjoining lands and is the hedge poisonous to them?

Domestic hedgerows should be planted 1-1.5m away from a boundary line. Planting too deep (soil above the nursery mark) and using planting material that is not suited to the site's location or soil type and condition are common mistakes.

What is the best planting method?

This depends on the quantity to be planted, topography of the site, time and labour availability, soil conditions and existing ground vegetation.

Most rural dwellings are sited on anywhere from 0.5-1.0ac of garden. Traditionally, the skill of planting was mainly undertaken by hand and spade, using the notch technique.

A manual auger can be damaging to both your wrist and the soil where larger stones are encountered. Soil smearing can occur when augers are used in undesirable conditions, which can also result in a reduction of backfill material.

Small, low compaction mini-diggers aided with sheets of plywood for traversing lawns, can be employed to dig a trench. This allows rotten farmyard manure (FYM) to be placed in the base of the trench to aid the plants.

This speeds up the planting operation, but nearly always leaves clumpy soil as backfill, which can be onerous to shovel back in.

Two machines that are often over-



A trencher positioned 1.2m away from boundary fencing planting 3 Lt potted prunus with a wind-breaker attached to the boundary fence.



Two-wheel tractor and rotary plough in action.



looked are a trencher or a combination of a two wheel tractor and rotary plough.

A tracked trencher ticks nearly all the boxes in relation to speed, maneuverability, low soil compaction and capability to create a desirable backfill material (soil tilth).

Trenchers can create a wide and deep enough trench to facilitate the incorporation of FYM and potted hedging.

The rotary plough is slower and can suffer from loss of traction on softer ground conditions, while creating

less suitable backfill material.

They often fail in expelling all the tilled soil from the excavated trench, which then requires shovelling, but I would have it any day over a mini-digger, spade or auger for this task.

Windrock is the rocking of stem of the tree, especially evident in taller, bare rooted hedging by the wind, which causes the loosening of the roots. This can be combated in two ways – with the installation of a wind breaker in the form of netting and the installation of a support structure/fence.