

Creating a Hedge

Planting a hedge

When planting a new hedge there are many factors to take into consideration. The best hedges for schools will include a range of native plants, shrubs and trees appropriate for the regional climate and the local soil.

Almost all native species can be sourced from reputable suppliers; it is worth checking garden centre stock carefully as often there might be ornamental and non native species on offer. Starter bundles of mixed native species are available from suppliers such as the Royal Horticultural Society.

Good hedge species include alder, ash, blackthorn, birch, crab apple, dog rose, english elm, field maple, hawthorn, hazel, holly, honeysuckle, hornbeam, ivy, wild cherry, and willow.

Traditionally, hedgelaying varies according to where in the UK you might be and what the hedge might have been used for. Schools can plant good hedges simply by digging a trench and ensuring their whips/saplings are spaced evenly and in a straight line.

There is a wide range of online advice available from a number of organisations, including the RSPB.

Maintaining a hedge

The majority of schools will already have hedges in place and will be looking towards managing these existing hedges.

A significant number of school hedges might be a single or mixed species such as privet, laurel, beech, holly, cypress. These have traditionally been planted to provide a quick growing "fence", usually including species with limited prickles and berries. Some older hedges provide opportunities for teaching and learning especially where brambles, nettles and other species have arrived naturally.

Management and maintenance of garden/school hedges is often focused on keeping paths and roads clear and the edges of playing fields tidy. It will usually not be managed by the science department unless a special request is made.

Some schools are successful in taking greater control of how their hedges are managed and in this case there is much advice available

No hedge should be cut or trimmed during the bird nesting season, regardless of the plant/tree species.

Where hedges are much older, more like the “hedgerow” or home to rare species, their management should be considered more carefully. If you are in any doubt about the type of hedge your school has then please contact your local Wildlife Trust for advice.