

CHOOSING YOUR HEDGE PLANTS

Ideally the plants chosen for the hedge should be 2-year-old transplants or cell-grown Roottrainers. Both of these methods create stout plants with well-developed root systems. Wherever possible stock should be of local provenance. This means that the plants have been grown from local seed, and are genetically suited to the area. Before buying any plants check that the nursery knows where they have come from.

The number of species planted will depend on the site, but should aim to have around 4 species present. Hawthorn would normally make up at least 75% of the hedge, with other species planted in small groups. The table below should help you to select suitable species.

Common name	Scientific name	Soil Type				Tolerances			Cost	Wildlife Value		
		Sandy	Clay	Loam	Chalky	Wet	Exposed	Shade		Winter cover	Pollen/nectar	Fruit/seed
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>								MED			
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>								MED			
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>								LOW			
Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus catharticus</i>								MED			
Buckthorn, Alder	<i>Frangula ulnus</i>								MED			
Cherry, Wild	<i>Prunus avium</i>								MED			
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>								MED			
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>								MED			
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>								LOW			
Guelder Rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>								HIGH			
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>								LOW			
Hazel	<i>Corlyus avellana</i>								MED			
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>								HIGH			
Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>								MED			
Oak, English	<i>Quercus robur</i>								MED			
Privet, Wild	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>								MED			
Rose, Dog	<i>Rosa canina</i>								MED			
Rose, Field	<i>Rosa arvensis</i>								MED			
Rowan	<i>Sorbus acuparia</i>								MED			
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>								MED			
Wayfaring Tree	<i>Viburnum lantana</i>								MED			
Wild Service Tree	<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>								HIGH			

PLANT SIZES

For planting during the November to March period use strong bare-root hedging plants. Plant heights should generally be 40-60cm or 60-80cm. The larger plants may be better when gapping up an existing hedge. It is best to use transplants (these have been transplanted in the nursery and have a better root system) rather than seedlings which will only have a small root system.

SPECIES TO BE AVOIDED

Box, broom, laburnum, rhododendron, snowberry, leylandii, common elder or yew. Most of these are poisonous to livestock or like rhododendron non-native and highly invasive.

CARE OF PLANTS BEFORE PLANTING OUT

Try to choose a delivery date for the plants as close as possible to the actual day you intend to start work. Be sure to inspect the plants after delivery, if the plastic bags holding the plants are split the plants are likely to be dry and

susceptible to frost damage. Soak any that have dry looking roots in water a few hours before planting.

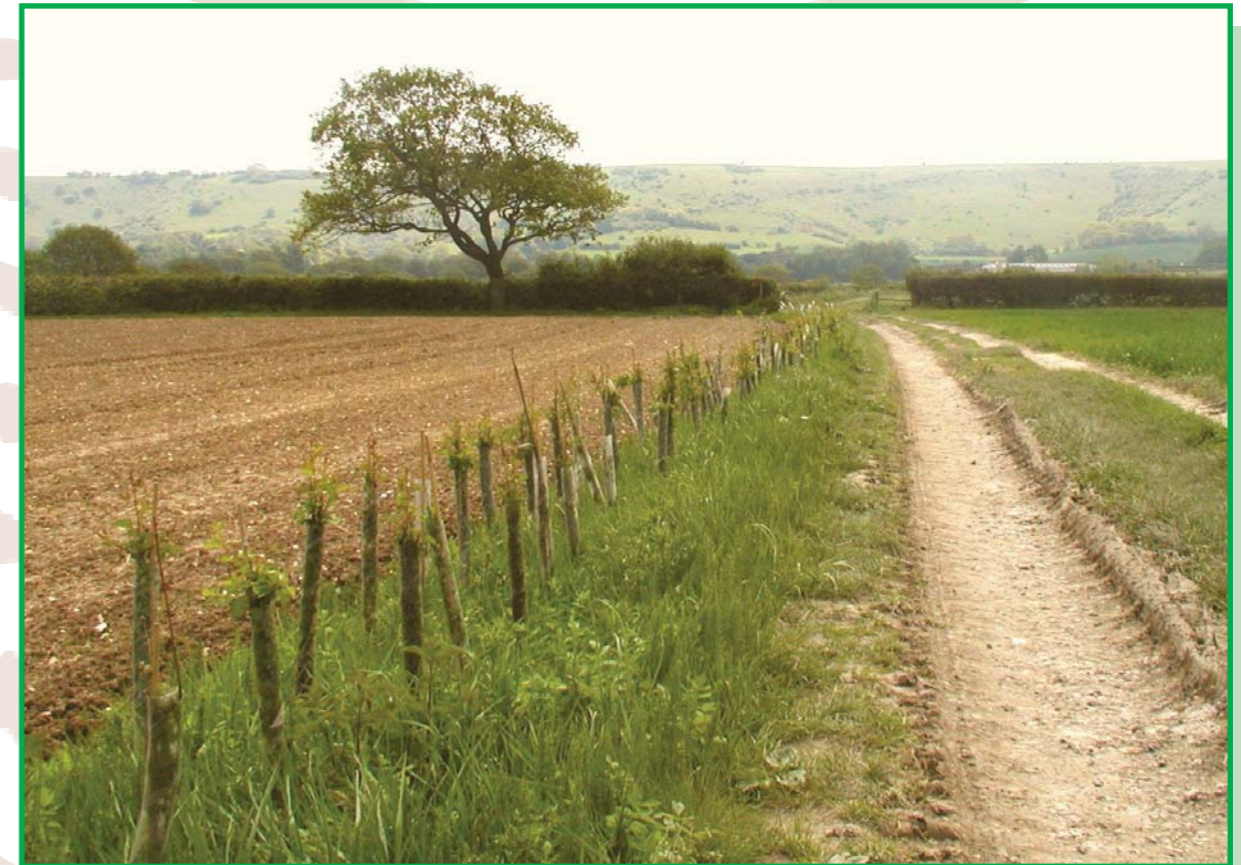
Plants should be supplied in plant bags, which if stored in the shade will keep them in good condition for about 10 days. If not, or if they are to be stored for longer they should be 'heeled' in to a trench that is large enough to hold the roots comfortably. Roottrainers can be stored in their trays for much longer, but should be watered occasionally, and kept out of frost or the reach of browsing animals.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE (including up-to-date grant information)

Kent and Sussex FWAG
 Sussex Office - 01273 891190
 Kent Office - 01233 813186
 High Weald Office - 01580 879399
 Surrey and Hampshire FWAG
 Guildford Office - 01483 404255
www.fwag.org.uk

TECHNICAL INFORMATION SHEET 1

PLANTING NEW HEDGES




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PREPARING THE GROUND

Ideally, if planting on land where a hedge has never existed, the new hedge should be planted into an area relatively free of rank grass and weeds, as these are the biggest competitors with the new plants for light, moisture and nutrients. It is best to do as much advance cleaning of the site as possible; ideally by cutting and rotovating well before planting. If the site is new, a follow up spray of herbicide can be used to control the re-growth.

If replanting an existing hedge, herbicides should not be used to avoid damage to associated ground flora.

When dividing arable fields, plough a single furrow in each direction along planting line, to create a bank. Planting can begin when the ground has settled.

EARLY MANAGEMENT

The initial management aims to create a good sturdy hedge, with a thick base. Careful trimming in the first few years will encourage early lower branching creating dense growth at the base. Each successive trim should be progressively higher and wider to encourage repeated branching, and gradually bring the hedge to its final width and height.

An alternative way to gain a thick base to a newly planted hedge is to coppice it at ground level after the first year or so. Although appearing initially destructive, this coppicing causes the plant to grow a number of branches from the cut stump, creating a much denser, thicker hedge, particularly at the base. Laying of the new hedges could also be considered, 5 – 7 years later.

WEED CONTROL

The newly planted tree's biggest competitor for light, water and nutrients will be the grass and other vegetation that will grow at the base of the newly planted hedge. To ensure a high plant survival and good growth rate, the hedge should be kept as weed free as possible for the first 3 years, with a pre planting treatment to clear perennial weeds, and more importantly post planting treatments, which can include:

Chemical weed control – Herbicides can be a quick, easy method of weed control ideal for new plantings but not generally recommended for sites where hedgerows have existed before. The selection and timing of the application is critical and advice should be taken. For the first few years, this will need to be done annually early in the year to reduce early weed competition.

Black plastic – This is probably the best method of weed control with the added benefits of moisture retention and not having to re-do every year (saving on labour costs). This method can, however, be expensive unless material such as old silage sheet can be recycled and used. The

PLANTING

Timing

All hedges should be planted between November and March, after the plants have lost most of their leaves and before they green up. Ideally they should be planted before Christmas, as the roots will develop over the rest of the winter, giving them a better chance in a dry spring. Using roottrainer plants will extend the planting season from September to May.

Avoid planting during frosts and on windy or wet days. Windy conditions may desiccate the bare rootstock before it goes into the ground, whereas wetter conditions may lead to compaction around the roots, inhibiting good root growth.

Planting rate

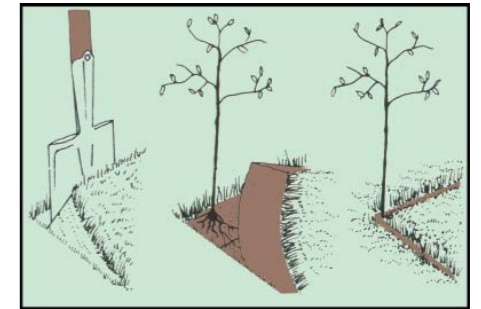
The suggested planting rate is 6 plants per metre in 2 staggered rows.

Planting depth

Planting depth should be to the same depth they were planted at in the nursery. This level should be clearly shown by a soil mark on the stem. Roottrainers should be buried so the top of the plug is just below the ground level. If the ground conditions are compacted, cultivation to a depth of about 30cm, and incorporation of well-rotted manure will aid establishment.

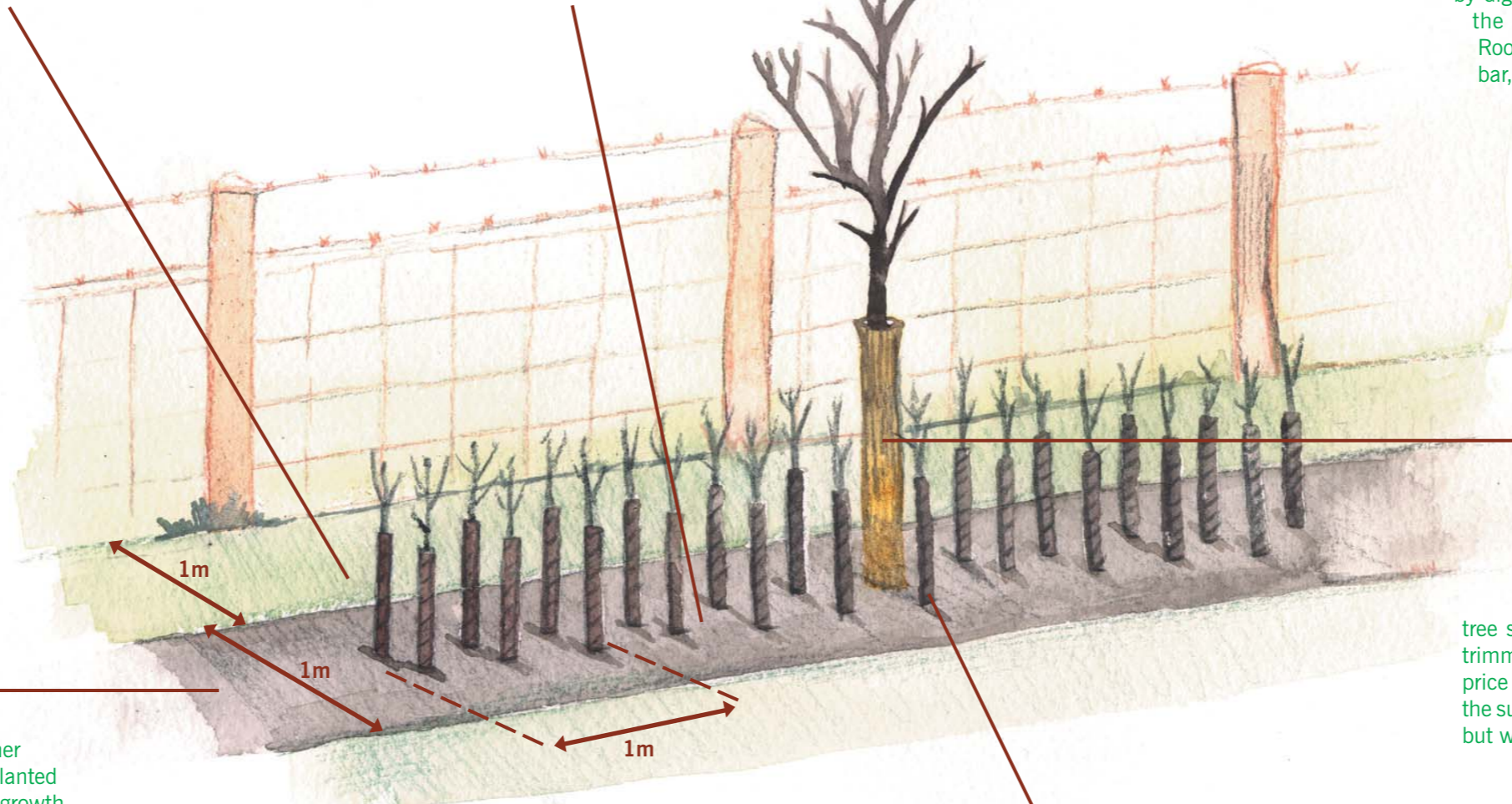
Planting method

The easiest method for planting relatively short lengths of hedge is to use notch planting (see diagram) or, if larger root systems, by digging a small hole. If using black plastic mulching, the notch can be cut directly through the plastic. Roottrainers can be planted into holes dibbed with a bar, or special planting spear.



HEDGEROW TREES

Consider planting a number of hedgerow trees within the hedge at approximately 1 every 50m, depending on the landscape. These should be marked with a coloured tag and not trimmed. Ideally these should be 2 – 3 year old whips (100 – 125 cm high). These should be protected using tree shelters, making them more obvious during future trimming operations. Whips are approximately twice the price of the 2 year old transplants or Roottrainers, and at the suggested rate, add little to the total cost of the hedge, but will provide greater diversity for wildlife.



plastic rolls or sheets should be secured by slotting into the surrounding ground and the hedge plants directly notch planted through it. The plastic should then be folded back around the base of the tree. Caution should be used in waterlogged sites as this may lead to anaerobic conditions developing under the black plastic.

Woven polypropylene – a good alternative to black plastic, which does not tear, and is permeable making it better on wet sites.

Other forms of mulching – old straw / hay, bark chippings and shredded brush. These may be cheaper than plastic, but may need maintaining over the 3 years.

PROTECTION

When planting a new hedge, protection from grazing animals, both livestock and wild animals such as deer and rabbits must be considered. The level of protection will depend on the level of perceived grazing. If protecting from stock, then permanent fencing will probably be required of sufficient height to restrict grazing over the top, and at a sufficient distance from the hedge to avoid grazing through the fence. A suggested distance would be 1m from the FINAL width of the hedge, which will avoid damage to the hedge even when fully grown as well as providing a buffer strip against farm operations and an area where associated ground vegetation, and wildlife can develop.

Rabbits can cause great damage to hedges and are abundant on most farms. If having to erect permanent fencing on both sides of a new fence, it may be cheaper to incorporate rabbit netting at this stage. This should be buried to about 15cm and turned out to the field to avoid rabbits digging under, or folded over the surface for at least 30cms and pinned well down. If fencing is not to be erected on both sides or for smaller stretches of new hedge, spiral guards supported by canes should be used. Clear rabbit spirals are now available that allow more light in encouraging growth lower down.

Plastic tree shelters are not recommended for hedges, as they tend to create straight stems with a lot of growth at the top. This leads to hedges with gappy bottoms with reduced wildlife potential. These can be laid or coppiced a few years later.