



How to plant a mixed hedgerow

SKILL LEVEL: ■■■■

TIME OF YEAR: NOVEMBER–MARCH

WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY: A mixed hedgerow provides food, nesting places and shelter for lots of birds, mammals and insects.

CLIMATE-FRIENDLY: Hedges create cool, shady places in what might otherwise be a hot, exposed site.

WHERE TO BUY: A good independent garden centre (try to shop locally where possible).

GARDEN FOR A LIVING LONDON

As our climate changes, gardens are becoming even more vital to wildlife and people.

They can provide shade, absorb carbon, soak up flood water and help to cool buildings. A well managed network of gardens stretching across the capital would also help wildlife to move more freely and adapt to climate change.

London Wildlife Trust's 'Garden for a Living London' campaign is asking Londoners to do one thing to create a wildlife and climate friendly garden. This 'How to' guide shows how to plant a mixed hedgerow. Follow the simple tips and get your garden working to help our city and its wildlife cope with climate change.

For more information on our campaign and to pledge your support visit www.wildlondon.org.uk/gardening

Planning your hedge

Include mostly native plants

- Generally these provide the best habitat for the widest range of wildlife.

Mix at least five different species throughout your hedge

- Aim for varied foliage, fruits and flowers throughout the year.
- Include evergreen and thorny plants for winter shelter and protection from predators.
- Add trees if you have space for diversity, height and extra shade. Good medium-sized trees include holly, crab apple or rowan. Good larger trees include oak, ash, whitebeam or silver birch.

A good planting mix

- 70 percent from a choice of hawthorn, blackthorn, buckthorn, privet, beech, hazel and dog rose.
- 25 percent from a choice of guelder rose, field maple, spindle, crab apple, holly and yew.
- 5 percent from a choice of climbers, such as honeysuckle, blackberry, ivy and native clematis.

Getting started

What type of plant?

- Choose bare-rooted plants, which are inexpensive and generally establish well.

When to plant?

- November–March when growth is slowest (but DON'T plant in frozen ground).

How many plants?

- One plant per metre gives a reasonable hedgerow but five per metre provides greater variety and more rapid cover.

What planting pattern?

- You can plant in a single straight line. For a thicker hedge, plant a staggered double line. For a more natural hedgerow, plant in an irregular pattern rather than in long blocks of individual plants.

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How to plant a mixed hedgerow (cont'd)

Planting your hedgerow

- Mark the shape and length of your hedge with cane and string.
- Dig a trench along the line at least 45cm wide and 30cm deep (or big enough for the roots to fit comfortably). Double the width if you're planting a double staggered row of plants.
- Stack the soil alongside the trench.
- Remove weeds to reduce competition for water and nutrients.
- Loosen the sides and base of the trench to help roots to grow and to improve drainage.
- Place your plants in the trench one by one. Add plenty of peat-free organic compost as you back-fill with the spare soil around the roots.
- Lightly firm the soil around the base of the plant until it is stable and level with the surrounding ground.
- Keep the roots of waiting plants in a bucket of water or cover with moist soil. **DON'T** leave the roots exposed because they will dry out quickly.
- Occasionally step back to check you are still following your planting line.
- Water each plant so that the water reaches just beyond the depth and spread of the roots. Keep plants well watered for at least one year until they are established (preferably use rain water collected in a water butt and do not overwater).

Finishing touches

When your hedge is established you can add plugs of woodland-edge species and native wildflowers. Make sure your plants come from reputable dealers and are not taken from the wild.

Looking after your hedgerow

Weeding

- Remove weeds by hoe or by hand to reduce competition for water.

Pruning

- Allow plants to establish for at least a year before pruning.
- Late winter is a good time to prune because fruit and berries will have been eaten and your plants will be dormant.
- Trim your hedge to keep it at the height and spread you want. Cut out diseased stems and dangerous branches and stop species such as beech, hawthorn and hazel from growing into trees (unless you want to include a tree or two).
- Don't trim all your hedge at once - ideally, divide it into thirds and trim one third every year. This provides some undisturbed areas for wildlife and encourages flowering.

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