

Introduction

Hedges, both on farmland and in gardens, are vital for wildlife. They provide shelter, nesting places for birds, and a network of route-ways for wildlife linking one garden to the next. Hedges support an amazing diversity of wildlife including invertebrates, small mammals, mosses, ferns and wildflowers.



House sparrow

Did you know...?

- Between 1947 and 1985 around 20,000kms of hedgerows were grubbed up in East Anglia. In Norfolk hedge length declined by nearly 50%.
- The breeding population of many bird species is higher in gardens with hedges than in gardens with fences.
- Garden hedges help support nationally declining bird species including dunnocks and song thrushes.
- Hedgehogs use the cover of garden hedges as both feeding and hibernation sites.



Blackthorn

This leaflet will...

Give advice on planting a new hedge.

Help you choose wildlife friendly trees and shrubs for hedges.

Provide top tips on wildlife friendly management for your garden hedge.

How to plant and manage a wildlife friendly hedge in your garden...

Top Tips for planting a wildlife friendly hedge:

- New hedges are best planted during autumn and winter (October – February). Avoid periods when the ground is frozen or water-logged.
- Dig over the area for planting, one spade blade deep, and remove any grass or weeds.
- Bare rooted trees and shrubs (whips) will be cheaper than pot grown and are better for establishing a hedge. Most hedgerow trees or shrubs do not require any compost unless your soil is sandy or heavy clay.
- You will need to weed around the base of your new plants for the first couple of years and water in dry periods during the growing season.



Garden hedge



Ivy



Primrose

Top Tips on managing a wildlife friendly garden hedge:

- Avoid cutting your hedge during the nesting season of birds (March to late July).



- If you have to cut before late July, check your hedge carefully for nests first and leave at least a metre uncut either side of any nest.



- Leave areas of long grass at the base of your hedge - this will encourage mice, voles and shrews into your garden.



- Flowers such as snowdrops, primroses, red campions, dog roses, honeysuckles, foxgloves and violets can be planted at the base of your hedge – these will encourage insects to visit. Foxgloves are especially attractive to bees and honeysuckles will attract moths at night.

Frequently asked questions

Can I cut my hedge if birds are nesting in it?

All wild birds' nests are legally protected and it is a criminal offence to intentionally damage or destroy a nest. If you know a bird still has eggs or young in a nest you must avoid cutting that section of hedge until the breeding season is over.

Which trees and shrubs to choose?

Attractive native trees and shrubs are better for wildlife than exotic species. Hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, beech, hornbeam, holly, privet and yew make excellent hedges. Hawthorn is a brilliant hedge species providing thorny cover, nectar bearing flowers in May and its 'haws' are food for birds in autumn and winter. Consider using 50% hawthorn plus a selection of three or four other species to add diversity. Once the hedge is established you can introduce climbers such as dog rose, honeysuckle and ivy, all of which will increase the value to wildlife of your garden hedge.



Blackberries

To find out more about Norfolk's wildlife visit **www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections**

Alternatively call Norfolk's free wildlife information service on **01603 598333**

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Protecting **Norfolk's Wildlife** for the Future