HEDGES

Apart from giving privacy and security, hedges are more attractive than fence panels – and have much to offer wildlife. Hedges planted with *Crataegus* (hawthorn), *Corylus* (hazel), *Ilex* (holly), *Fagus* (beech) or preferably a mixture of species, provide nectar from their flowers, food sources of fruit and nuts, as well as a protected nesting environment for birds.

- **Formal hedges:** trimmed back from an early age and encouraged to grow in a neat, compact habit. Many plants adapt to this form of training but flowers and fruit are greatly reduced.
- **Informal hedges:** left largely unpruned to give a natural habit – more suitable for wildlife.
- **Plant choice:** Choosing the right plant for your chosen type of hedge is important. Consider height, spread, soil type and its position – in sun or shade.
- **Width:** Few hedges require an ultimate width of less than 1m, even the very smallest such as *Lavendula* (lavender) will reach 60cm in width. To achieve height, the base spread has to increase and a 3m-high hedge such as *Taxus baccata* (yew) will have a base spread of 1.2m+.
- **Planting:** The best way to prepare soil is to dig a trench up to 1m wide and 25cm deep, adding plenty of organic material such as well-rotted farmyard manure, garden compost, spent mushroom compost or a proprietary planting mixture.
- **Planting distances:** Distance between each plant is important and with most varieties 60cm is about right. Space conifers at least 1m apart in the row.
- **Staggered rows:** Hawthorn, hornbeam and beech (pictured below) grow best when planted in two staggered rows with each row 40–50cm apart.
- **Fertilising:** Conifers, including yew, respond well to a dressing of dried blood in mid to late spring; other hedging plants prefer a general fertiliser.
- **Mulching:** A mulch of organic material used for planting plus cocoa shell or even gravel will help growth by cooling the soil in summer and protecting the roots in winter. Always keep the mulch directly away from the stems of the plant.
- **Pruning:** Prune young formal hedges in early to late spring. Reduce all growth by about 25% from the top and sides. Trim back deciduous plants such as beech and hawthorn in late spring to early summer, conifers in mid to late summer, and broadleafed evergreens such as laurel in early to late spring and again in mid to late summer.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Garden tools
- Seeds & plants
- Nesting boxes
- Bird table & bath
- Food
- Organic matter

For hedges:

- Secateurs
- Hedging shears
- Fertiliser
- Planting & mulching material

For more information:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice
www.plantforlife.info

HORTICULTURAL TRADES ASSOCIATION

THE HORTICULTURAL TRADES ASSOCIATION IS RUN BY THE GARDEN INDUSTRY FOR THE GARDEN INDUSTRY

It is dedicated to providing services, products, advice and information to help support and promote the business activities of garden retailers, growers, landscapers, wholesalers, manufacturers and service providers in the UK.

- Tel: **0118 930 3132** or visit **www.the-hta.org.uk**
- HTA Specialist Group – The HTA Tree and Hedging Group
- Plant*for*Life – visit **www.plantforlife.info**

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MAKING GARDENS

BENEFICIAL FOR WILDLIFE

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GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

Encouraging butterflies, birds and other wildlife into the garden is a joy in its own right and goes a long way to protect the survival of creatures within our environment. Many small steps can be taken to encourage wildlife into your patch. Think about the needs of birds and insects and choose plants for nectar and seed heads. Improve the environment by adding a pond, hedge or nest box. And change the way you garden – put down your chemical spray gun, let the lawn grow and don't be too quick to tidy up – that pile of leaves and old wood is home to many insects!

- **Garden ponds:** Introducing a garden pond aids the establishment of tadpoles, frogs and toads and encourages water insects such as dragonflies and waterboatmen. See our leaflet on *Ponds & Water Features* for more information.
- **Grass:** Let your grass grow longer with only the pathways mown close so that food and cover is provided for many creatures.
- **Chemicals:** Try using biological control and banish pesticides and weedkillers or at least reduce their use in your garden as they are natural enemies to wildlife. (see Organic Gardening opposite).
- **Hedges:** Hedges provide food and shelter. Think about growing a hedge rather than using fence panels (see section on Hedges).
- **Food sources:** Compost heaps teem with insects, worms, mites and other small creatures, providing a valuable food source for birds and animals as well as assisting the composting process. Seed-eating birds appreciate any flowers that have been left to produce seed. Log piles provide overwintering sites for all sorts of small creatures.
- **Care for your wildlife:** Once a collection of wildlife is established, give further help by providing nesting boxes for birds and additional winter foods for birds and animals. The joy of having your own colony of butterflies, frogs and even hedgehogs adds an additional element of attraction, while supporting wildlife that development is destroying.

PLANTS FOR WILDLIFE

Wildlife gardening brings together a collection of natural and cultivated plants that have a role or benefit to offer wildlife. Most plants have something to attract and sustain a wildlife population, so plant a range of different types to reap the most benefits.

- Ensure your garden includes shrubs and trees to provide nesting sites for birds.
- Choose herbaceous plants that are nectar and pollen rich, such as scabious, sedums, verbena, Michaelmas daisies, lavender, buddleia, thyme, pot marigold, echinops, marjoram, eryngium, echium and echinacea. All those pictured below are good sources. As a general rule, night-flying moths are attracted to white flowers, butterflies to blues and pinks and hoverflies to yellows.
- Food from berries and other fruits supports birds and small animal. Roses offer nectar and seeds in the form of hips as well as providing protective cover. *Viburnum opulus* (Guelder rose) has white summer flowers, which turn into red berries in autumn. Pyracantha, cotoneaster, skimmia, hawthorn and holly provide autumn and winter berries.
- Allow plants such as teasels, red-hot pokers, sunflowers, echinops and grasses to set seed as they provide a good source of food for seed-eating birds. Seedheads also help provide winter interest in the garden. Oak, ash and pine offer large numbers of fruits for small animals.
- Native wild flowers are more suited to our climate and conditions, so need less attention and are less prone to serious pests and diseases than many exotic plants. Many ornamental wild flowers can be raised from seed but always buy from a nursery – never take them from the wild. Oxeye daisies, primroses, cowslips, poppies and willow herb are good examples.

ORGANIC GARDENING

Organic gardening entails growing plants of all types, particularly vegetables and fruit, without the aid of artificial chemicals for feeding, pest and disease control, soil conditioning or weeding. Some chemicals harm beneficial insects and animals, so organic gardens provide a more attractive home.

FEEDING: Use organic fertilisers to ensure that plants receive the right balance of plant foods that they need. Our leaflet on *Watering & Feeding* has more information. Main plant foods include:

- Nitrogen for leaf & stem growth
- Phosphorous for roots
- Potash for flowers and fruit

Lesser amounts of trace elements are needed such as: Calcium, Iron, Boron, Manganese and Magnesium. Look out for organic plant foods including bonemeal (phosphates and some nitrogen); hoof and horn (phosphates and nitrogen); fish, blood and bone (high nitrogen and phosphates); dried blood (nitrogen); seaweed (root stimulation); wood ash (nitrogen and phosphates); garden lime (calcium), concentrated animal manures (nitrogen, phosphates and potash). Many liquid organic fertilisers are available, offering nitrogen, phosphate and potash in fast-acting formulations.

SOIL IMPROVEMENT: Organic material such as well-rotted farmyard manure, garden compost, spent mushroom compost and cocoa shell are all harmless to wildlife and help to improve the structure and fertility of the soil. For more information on making your own garden compost see our leaflet on *Managing Your Soil*.

PEST & DISEASE CONTROL: There are many organic methods and products available to control pests and diseases. See our leaflet on *Pests & Diseases* for more information.

WEEDING: a number of organic ways exist to control weeds:

- Use a hoe to cut off weeds from their roots
- dig out weeds using a fork
- pull out by hand
- smother annual weeds with a 5-8cm mulch of organic material such as well-rotted farmyard manure, garden compost, spent mushroom compost, cocoa shell or other proprietory material
- smother persistent perennial weeds with old carpet, carpet underlay or black plastic
- to stop perennial weed roots growing into an area from an adjoining garden, sink a barrier of heavy-gauge black polythene to retain the problem.