



## Hedging Cultural Instructions

### Preparing the Ground

Time spent on soil preparation before planting pays dividends year after year by encouraging solid and rapid growth. Start by double digging a trench 45cm (18in) wide and 50cm (20in) deep along the length of the proposed hedge. Whilst digging, incorporate plenty of well-rotted manure or garden compost to improve your soil. If your soil is very heavy and wet, add sharp sand or lime free coarse grit to improve drainage. Nothing stops a hedge growing quicker than weeds, so it is really important to remove all perennial weeds before planting. If you are using a weed suppressant ground cover, you will need to cut crosses with a knife in the fabric and then peel back the edges to expose the soil. Alternatively, you can apply a mulch of bark chips or similar after planting to help prevent weed growth, protect from frost and retain moisture in the soil, ensuring you leave a small gap around each stem.

### Planting

The spacing of the hedge will depend on the type of hedge. Bare roots need to be planted out quickly. Sometimes it's simply not practical to plant them immediately, so you can store them for a few days (soak the roots in a bucket of water for up to 2 hours and then keep the roots moist) in an unheated but protected position like a garage or shed (but not a greenhouse) or you can "heel them in" by planting them in a bundle, covered with loose soil that should be slightly moist. Plants that have been "heeled in" can be kept like that for a couple of weeks, but, however you store them, you will get a higher success rate if you plant them out properly as soon as possible.

When planting, the trench needs to be slightly wider/deeper than the roots and the level judged carefully so that the soil level will come to the old soil mark on the stems. We recommend the use of rootgrow™ to help aid establishment. This should be sprinkled evenly into the base of each planting position, following the recommended application rate. It is important when planting, that the roots are in contact with the rootgrow™. If you are using canes for support on taller plants, or to pin rabbit guards in place, take note of where to drive them in so that the root will not be damaged. Make sure that soil is firmed down well around the plant (but not compacted) so that there are no air pockets where frost could form. Water each plant thoroughly.

### Establishing and Maintaining Hedges

In the first year plants often come into leaf later than established plants and it should not be assumed that the plants have failed should they be late into leaf. It is essential in the first couple of years that the plants are kept well watered. As a rough guide, in dry weather use at least 5 litres of water per metre of hedging twice a week. Always water in the evening, so that the sun does not evaporate the water. It is critical that new plants get the space to themselves so that they can obtain moisture, nutrients and light so weeds and grass need to be kept away from the hedge for the first 2 or 3 years.

Once the plants are established it is good practice to feed the plants annually with a balanced fertilizer such as Growmore at 70g per sq m (2oz per sq yd). Hedges should be trimmed at least once a year to keep growth dense and healthy. Regular light pruning is better for the hedge and easier to carry out than infrequent heavy pruning.

## Edible Hedging

### Cherry Plum (*Prunus cerasifera*)

Masses of pure white flowers smother the branches in early March before the leaves appear and these are followed in autumn by cherry plums on mature plants. It will form a dense hedge and its thorny twigs will make it an effective barrier. Suitable for most well drained soils it requires a fairly sunny position. Plant 60cm (2ft) apart. Trim after flowering.

### **Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*)**

Forms an attractive deciduous hedge producing an abundance of pretty, white, cup-shaped flowers, that are blushed pink, during April and May and in autumn, the fruits, which are yellow- green in colour, flushed with red are ideal for making into crab apple jelly. Will act as a pollinator to apple trees in the vicinity. Suitable for most soils and in positions in full sunlight to partial shade. Also copes with exposed and sheltered positions. Plant 20-33cm (8-13in) apart. Trim in late winter or early spring.

### **Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)**

A fast growing deciduous hedge with fine green fern-like foliage, producing clusters of creamy white flowers in June and July which develop into small glossy black berries. Both the flowers and berries can be used in cordial and wine making. Will grow in most positions and in moist, but well drained soils. Also suitable for coastal areas. Plant 60cm (2ft) apart. Lightly trim in late winter or early spring.

### **Pear (*Pyrus communis*)**

Forms a dense deciduous hedge with thorny twigs making it an effective barrier. It produces clusters of pretty white flowers in April followed by edible fruits in late autumn that can be eaten raw, cooked with, or used to make perry. It is suitable for growing in normal soils (except chalk) and does well in any light, but particularly likes semi-shade. Space plants 35-60cm (1ft 2"-2ft) apart. Trim in late winter or early spring.

### **Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)**

This fast growing hedge is impressive when draped with its long, yellow catkins in late winter. The leaves turn yellow in the autumn and the nuts are delicious. Suitable for most well drained soils, apart from chalk and should be planted in full sunlight or partial shade. Plant 60-90cm (2-3ft) apart. Can be planted in exposed, windy areas. Trim in March, taking care to leave some catkins and female flowers if nuts are wanted.

### **Sloe, Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)**

A dense hedge with dark spiny branches, crowded in early spring with small white single flowers. The fruits can be used for making sloe gin. Suitable for most soils but not chalk. Can be planted in full sunlight or partial shade. Will tolerate an exposed/windy site and sea air. Plant 45cm (18in) apart. Trim as necessary during June or July.

## **Ornamental Hedging**

### **Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) & Purple Beech (*Fagus sylvatica atropurpurea*)**

A superb and very dense, clipped deciduous hedge. The leaves can last well into the winter in sheltered areas. Suitable for most well drained soils (including chalky soils). Not suitable for heavy or wet soil. Ideal for exposed windy areas but do not plant in a frost pocket. Requires full sunlight or partial shade. Plant 23-45cm (9-18in) apart or for a denser hedge plant in a staggered row with 38cm (15in) between rows and 45cm (18in) between plants. Trim in July or August.

### **Wild Rose Red (*Rosa rugosa* 'Rubra') & Wild Rose White (*Rosa rugosa* 'Alba')**

An excellent dense fast growing hedge covered in large fragrant, single white or reddish-purple flowers throughout the summer and large glossy orange-red hips in autumn – much liked by birds! Densely branched and covered in masses of small, sharp thorns, it is suitable for most well drained soils (including chalk), but should be planted in a sheltered position in full sunlight or partial shade. Plant 30-60cm (1-2ft) apart. Prune during the dormant season, which is from autumn, once the leaves have fallen, but before the buds break in spring. Leave the hips for the birds and prune when all have been eaten. Trim old stems back as desired and remove one quarter of stems completely.