

Hedges for Wildlife

1. There is good research showing that the wildlife value of a hedge increases with its cross-sectional area (height X thickness), so it's important to plant them in places where they can be allowed to grow to a decent size. Alongside busy tracks and footpaths it may be necessary to keep them small, requiring regular trimming and reducing their usefulness.
2. Many hedging species, including thorns like hawthorn, buckthorn and blackthorn, flower and fruit mainly on last year's growth, so annual trimming greatly reduces their value to insects and birds.
3. I would avoid trying to make a hedge from fast-growing, potentially large trees like willow, oak or ash (I have not planted any ash since die-back came on the scene). However, occasional large hedgerow trees can increase the value of the whole hedge.
- 4 Depending on soil type, I quite like including some interesting species like wild privet and native roses.
5. A very interesting paper has just come out comparing woods of different sizes around Oxford. The author has assured me that there is no minimum size to be worthwhile – any group of native shrubs or trees will benefit something!
6. Try to buy plants that have been grown in this country rather than imported.

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