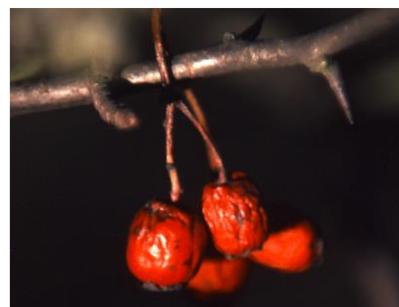# BETTS

HEDGEROWS — MANAGEMENT POLICY

Native hedgerows are one of the defining features of the British lowlands. They can be centuries old and mark ancient boundaries, often in combination with a ditch and lynchet, or they can be recently planted with a mix of native woody species. All are valuable wildlife habitats, nesting/roosting/sheltering places and corridors along which species can move and connect with other habitats. They can be thought of as linear woodland, especially when they contain trees, as many do. A mature hedge with trees connecting two tracts of woodland is an especially important feature that isolates wildlife if broken by a new road or other intrusion.

Part of the hedgerow habitat is its ground flora. Beneath a hedge, we find shade-loving vegetation and spaces where the old favourites of our walks and paths so often grow, their common names reflecting their botanical place: Jack-by-the-hedge, hedge woundwort, hedgerow crane's-bill, *etc*.

Anemone nemoralis wood anemone is a common flower at the base of hedges.

Research[1] shows that hedgerow management has a significant influence on the value of hedges for wildlife in terms of ecological connectivity ("wildlife corridors"), faunal food resources (especially flowers, fruit, and foliage), and in how it changes ecological factors such as predation and parasitism. Hedgerow management regimens affect different wild species in different ways, so heterogeneity of management is considered the preferred option over a large site, but the best "standard" regime is to cut in late winter rather than autumn and to promote taller, wider hedges using an "incremental cutting intensity" that allows smaller hedges to grow by, say, 10cm in breadth and width each year.

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[1] *E.g.* that collected in *The Ecology of Hedgerows and Field Margins* edited by J. W. Dover (Routledge, 2019).

BETTS

OUR MANAGEMENT

To maximise their biodiversity value, we follow a particular regime for managing hedges on our land:

- We limit hedge cutting to the period September—February to avoid active birds' nests with a preference for late winter cutting for general biodiversity benefits.

- We protect the rhizosphere (root zone) of hedges and their trees by keeping ground disturbance operations and new buildings away from them.

- Where hedges are gappy, we infill with new native plantings.

- When we cut hedges, we avoid any trees and aim to maintain the hedge with thick bushy growth, trimming annually (see below) but allowing species such as hawthorn that flower and fruit on the previous year's growth to remain uncut in parts, such as along one side of the hedge. We instruct grounds staff and contractors to avoid using flails in general hedge trimming and to use bespoke hedge-cutting tools that trim tidily if they can. Flails can leave an untidy "slashed" finish and can be inimical to some species when they smash up the branch ends and thus crush those invertebrates that live there, such as the twig-tip pupae of the hawthorn sawfly, which otherwise would mostly fall to the ground with the cut twigs rather than be crushed.

- For Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) we need wide, tall hedges so we aim for no less than 2m broad and 3m tall, usually in an "**A**" shape, trimming smaller hedges incrementally to increase width and height by about 10cm per annum.

- We maintain the ecological resources of dead wood, knot holes, fungi, hollows, sap runs and epiphytes (ivy, lichens, bryophytes, *etc*.).

- We maintain the umbricolous hedge-bottom flora at FCS, which means no or only occasional winter strimming, maintaining a meadow strip of a metre or so along each side of the hedge and avoiding short mowing there; and we enrich the ground flora where necessary with native herbaceous and other species.

- Where possible, we manage grassland that runs up to hedges as a species-rich pollinator-positive, typical type (such as the mesotrophic National Vegetation Classification MG5 where there are circumneutral soils). (See our grassland policy in this series.)

DESIRABLE NATIVE WOODY HEDGEROW SPECIES

Thin, gappy, shorn, species-poor hedges are proscribed, as are monospecific barriers of exotics such as cypress, garden privet and laurel. We promote thick, tall species-rich hedgerows. Here are some species we like to see:

Cornus sanguinea dogwood — a typical hedgerow species

Acer campestre field maple
Alnus glutinosa alder
Betula pendula silver birch
Betula pubescens downy birch
Carpinus betulus hornbeam
Cornus sanguinea dogwood
Corylus avellana hazel
Crataegus laevigata Midland hawthorn
Crataegus monogyna hawthorn
Cytisus scoparius broom
Euonymus europaeus spindle
Fagus *sylvatica beech*
Frangula alnus alder buckthorn
Fraxinus excelsior ash
Hedera helix ivy
Ilex aquifolium holly
Lonicera periclymenum honeysuckle
Malus sylvestris crab apple
Populus nigra black poplar
Populus tremula aspen
Prunus avium wild cherry
Prunus domestica wild plum

Prunus spinosa blackthorn
Pyrus pyraster wild pear
Quercus robur pedunculate oak
Rhamnus cathartica buckthorn
Rosa canina agg. Dog rose
Salix caprea goat willow
Salix cinerea agg. grey willow
Salix fragilis crack willow
Salix viminalis osier
Sambucus nigra elder
Sorbus aria common whitebeam
Sorbus aucuparia rowan
Sorbus torminalis wild service-tree
Taxus baccata yew
Tilia cordata small-leaved lime
Tilia x europaea lime
Ulex europaeus gorse
Ulmus glabra wych elm
Ulmus procera English elm
Viburnum lantana wayfaring tree
Viburnum opulus guelder-rose

Please also read our other policy and biodiversity papers on the web site.

Professional service
Sustainable land management
Better planning results
Enhanced biodiversity