



Planting a Traditional Devon Hedge

What size of plants should I use?

It is best to plant very young shrubs and trees (1-3 years old) as they will establish easily and grow fast. These are often called 'whips', and can be bought from tree nurseries in a range of specified heights. For a hedge you can use shrubs that are '20 to 40cm' tall, or '40 to 60cm' tall. For hedgerow trees you could use these really small sizes, or chose plants that are slightly taller (60 to 90cm or 90 to 120cm) to help remind yourself that these are the standards and not to be pruned!

How many plants will I need?

To make a good thick, dense hedge, you have to plant quite a lot of shrubs/trees. It is best to plant at least 5 plants per metre of hedge (in a double, staggered row – see below). If your hedge doesn't need to be stock proof you can get away with 3 or 4 plants per metre, but it will take longer to thicken up.

What varieties should I use?

Traditional-style Devon hedges, have three key components:

- the bulk is made up of blackthorn, hawthorn, field maple and hazel.
- there will be a scatter of other shrubby species – frequently holly, with some other shrubs or climbers - exactly which you should plant will depend on your circumstances, eg soil type and whether you need to avoid poisonous berries.
- there will probably be a few standard-sized trees too – ash and oak are most common, but you could add a few others to suit your personal preference.

The table below suggests a standard mix of suitable hedge species for neutral soil, but you can vary the 'Additional Species' to suit. The numbers given are for 5 metres of hedging at 5 plants per metre.

Species	Number
Key hedge species	
Blackthorn	30
Hawthorn	30
Hazel	25
Field Maple	10
Additional species	
Holly	5
Elder	5
Wild Rose	5
Guelder Rose	5
Spindle	5
Standard Trees	
Oak, Ash, etc	5
Total	125 (=25m worth)

More info about suitable hedging plants

Key hedge plants

The main bulk of most traditional Devon hedges are made up of these four species.

Key: E = suitable for exposed sites. S = suitable for shady sites C = tolerates sea winds F = fast growing
P = may be poisonous - children beware!

Species	Max height	Preferred conditions
Blackthorn	13ft/4m	Tolerant of most soils. Found in hedges right across the district. Its spines keep livestock at bay, but beware of suckers if the adjacent ground is not regularly grazed or mown. Good for sloe gin! – C, E & F
Hawthorn	30ft/9m	Very tolerant - all but very wet or acid soils. As with blackthorn, this is a key, traditional hedging plant with spines to keep livestock at bay – C, E
Hazel	30ft/9m	Very tolerant and found in hedges almost everywhere. In taller hedges it may reward you with nuts - S
Field Maple	65ft/20m	Tolerant of most soils. Found in hedges almost everywhere, usually as part of the hedge itself (kept small by trimming) but could also be grown as a hedge standard tree - S

Additional hedge plants

A scattering of these species can be included to add variety within your hedge – they look good and attract more wildlife.

Alder Buckthorn	15ft/5m	Good as part of a hedge mix on damp & acid soils – Berries P
Broom	7ft/2m	Good for sandy soils. Colourful flowers – E
Dogwood	13ft/4m	Avoid acid soils. Leaves go an attractive purple shade in autumn
Gorse	7ft/2m	Tolerant and resilient even in very poor soils so a possibility for places where little else will grow, but try to mix with other varieties, as it will eventually grow tall and leggy. It is very spiny. Colourful, fragrant flowers – C, E
Guelder Rose	13ft/4m	Avoid acid soils. Attractive flowers and berries and excellent for wildlife – P (slightly)
Holly	65ft/20m	Tolerant of most soils. Evergreen with attractive berries. Frequently found as part of the hedge itself, but can also be a standard tree - S
Spindle	13ft/4m	Avoid acid soils. Has very attractive, but poisonous, berries – P
Wayfaring Tree	13ft/4m	A good one to add to your hedge mix if you have alkaline (limestone) soil - P (slightly)
Wild Rose	3-10ft/1-3m	Tolerant of most soils. Add to hedges for colourful flowers and berries. Useful if you want something spiny. Dog rose is very vigorous and will quickly establish and grow tall. Field rose is smaller - F
Elder	30ft/9m	Fairly tolerant. Good for wildlife and wine makers! – C, F, Raw berries P
Grey Willow	30ft/10m	Its growth is rather 'lax' so it is not good for making dense hedges. However, it is happy on wet soils, so good for hedges alongside streams or in damp meadows – C, F
English Oak	100ft/30m	Tolerant, but avoid very wet soils. A classic hedgerow tree, but in Devon it also often forms part of the hedge itself, kept small by trimming – C, Acorns P

Hedgerow standard trees

A scattering of standard size trees along your hedge will add to the landscape and wildlife value – plant them at random intervals to avoid them looking too regimented.

Crab Apple	30ft/9m	Tolerant. Useful for hedges next to orchards, where they will help to cross-pollinate the orchard apples - fruit edible, but very sour
Rowan	30ft/10m	Prefers light, acid soils - avoid heavy soils. Popular with people and birds for its attractive berries – C, E
Alder	70ft/22m	Prefers wet soils, so very useful if your hedge is in a damp field or beside a stream E, F & S
Field Maple	65ft/20m	Tolerant of most soils. Found in hedges almost everywhere, usually as part of the hedge itself, kept small by trimming, but could be grown as a hedge standard tree - S
Wild Cherry	50ft/15m	Fairly tolerant, fast growing. Attractive, but short-lived blossom - F
Ash	90ft/28m	Very tolerant. Very fast growing. Attractive hedgerow tree – C, E & F
English Oak	100ft/30m	Tolerant, but avoid very wet soils. Classic hedgerow tree – C, Acorns P
Sessile Oak	100ft/30m	Prefers thinner, more acid soils than English Oak. Use instead of English Oak on moorland fringes and Haldon Ridge – Acorns P
Small-leaved Lime	100ft/30m	Prefers fertile, clay soil. More a hedge tree for formal or parkland settings – S

Planning, Planting and After-Care

Planning a planting scheme

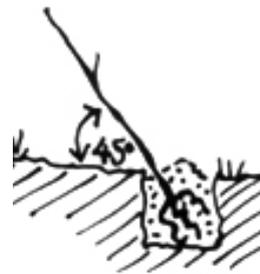
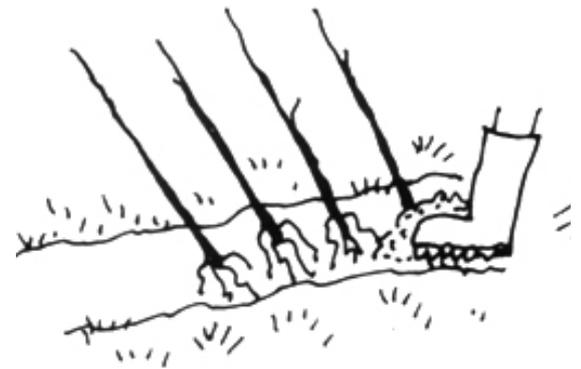
- Think about soil type and drainage: is your site acid or alkaline, sandy or clayey, wet or dry, exposed or sheltered? Pick species that like your conditions.
- Look at your site from several different places and try to imagine a mature hedge there - would it look right?
- Think how large the hedge will get and how much management it will need. In small spaces, gardens or close to buildings a traditional Devon hedge may not be the right choice – smaller ornamental species may be better.
- Never plant trees under or near power or phone lines and try to avoid underground services, especially drains.
- Don't remove an old hedge to plant a new ones – a bit of care and pruning will usually revive an old hedge. You can plant up in the gaps if they are large, but the young shrubs will need extra help to compete with the existing hedge plants (eg more watering). Coppicing the old hedge will allow in more light and will reinvigorate the existing plants.
- Well-established hedgerows are not usually a suitable site for tree planting! There is a lot of competition for light and moisture. It is also difficult for hedge trimmer operators to identify young trees and manoeuvre around them. It is often better to select an existing plant of a suitable species with a straight and sound stem – mark it well and it will have a better chance of survival. If trees are planted, a gap must be cut in the hedge for them, and mulch mats should be used with a high tree guard and a painted marker state for protection.

Planting Season

Planting is most successful between early December and early February. It is important to get your trees/ shrubs planted before they burst into leaf. Planting should never be carried out in frosty or water-logged conditions.

Before Planting

- Trees and shrubs should always be handled with care - roots are easily bruised and damaged and roots must never be allowed to get dry.
- Keep them in plastic bags, or a bucket of water until the second you are ready to plant them.
- Add water to the bags if necessary, and 'dunk' the roots in a bucket of water just before planting.
- It is important the young plants are kept moist and kept covered, as exposure to a cold wind for even a minute or two can kill them.
- They are best kept inside two plastic bags - a white outer bag and a black inner bag. (This keeps them at the right temperature).
- If they cannot be planted within 2-3 days of fetching them from the nursery the plants should be "heeled in" in light moist soil until planting is possible.

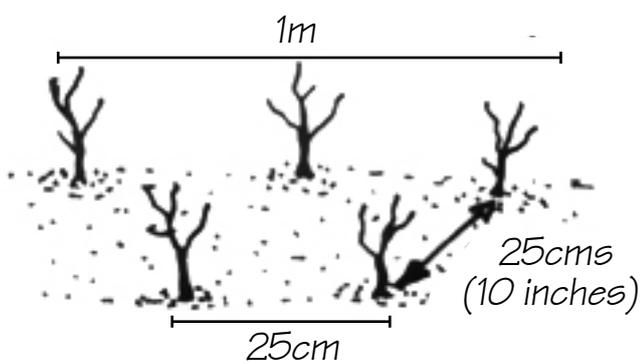
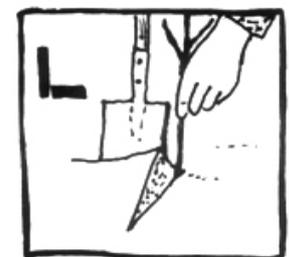


*Heeling in
Dig trench,
lay trees at
about 45° to
the ground and
lightly firm the
soil about the
roots. Water in.*

Planting your hedge

Notch planting is suitable for most small trees and shrubs:

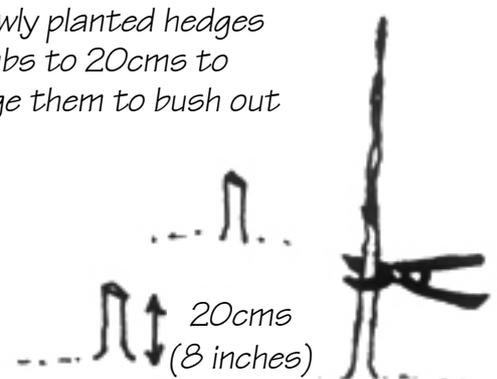
- Make two slits with a spade in the form of a 'T'.
- (Drive in a cane if you are going to use one).
- Hold the notch open with the spade, and place the shrub in the hole with the mark of the previous planting just below ground level.
- Then lift the tree up a little so that its roots can spread out.
- Firm the ground down and water the shrub in well. Water the plants even if it is raining – this is to wash the soil around the roots.
- If a tree guard is to be used then carefully put it over the plant.
- If a tree mat is to be used, put it around the plant and peg it down.
- Prune hedge shrubs to about 20cm (8") high. This will encourage young plants to bush out. It will also reduce the loss of water through the leaves in spring and the risk of the plant bending over.
- Don't prune the trees you want to grow into standards, though. They need a single strong 'leader' shoot.



Heeling in

5 plants per metre 25cms between plants

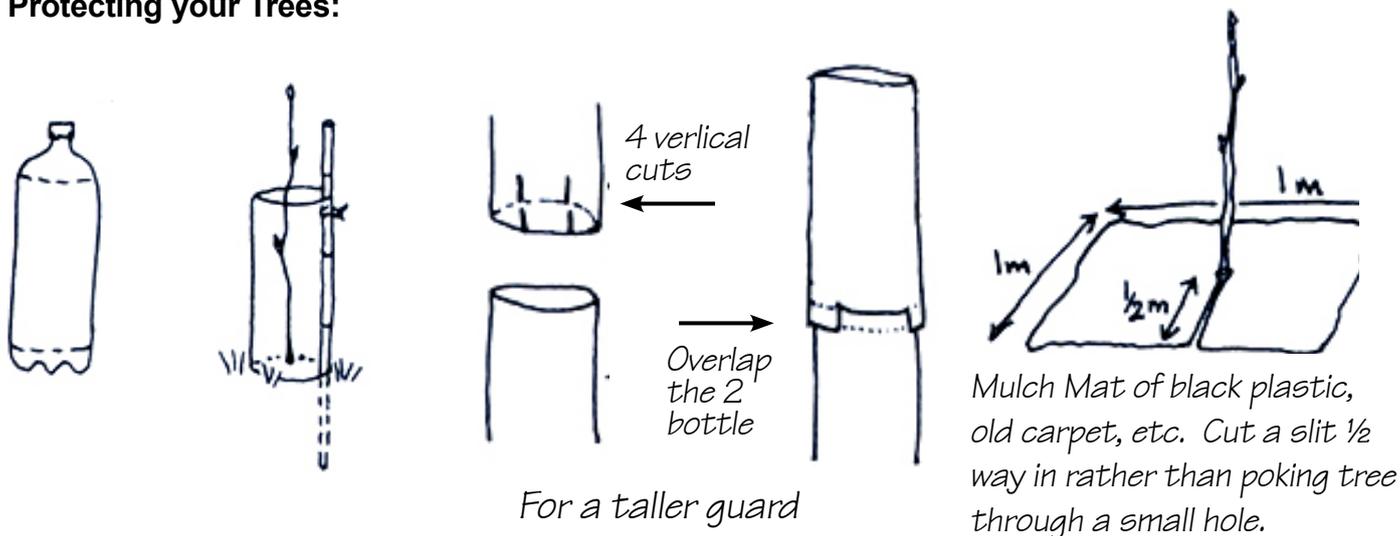
*Prune newly planted hedges
and shrubs to 20cms to
encourage them to bush out*



Notch Planting Protecting your hedge

- If the area is grazed, your trees must be fenced against livestock. Fields grazed by horses must have high fences a good distance from the planting area. Use rabbit netting if there are rabbits about.
- Weeds in the planting area must be removed to stop them competing with the tree for light and water. A 1 metre diameter area around each tree should be cleared free of weeds either:
 - by spraying before planting with a herbicide such as glyphosate, e.g. "Roundup", which is available from garden centres. Always follow the instructions on the label carefully.
 - by covering with a plastic mat, old carpet, a cheap tarpaulin or silage wrap. Lay a strip along the hedge line and cut through it to plant the shrubs.
 - by covering with an organic mulch,
 - or by weeding by hand.
- Make sure the mulch or mulch mat stays just clear of the tree stem to avoid any danger of the tree rotting and peg plastic mats down at the corners.
- Hedge shrubs and small trees will not need stakes or fertiliser.
- Tree guards protect plants against vole and rabbit damage and against strimmers and mowers! Guards mark the trees' presence clearly and provide a mini greenhouse environment that speeds growth. The guards may need to be held upright with a cane or stake. You can buy special guards (spiral, tube or mesh) or you can make your own from 2 litre, plastic drinks bottles. Cut the top and bottom off and attach one on top of another for a tall, rabbit-proof guard (see diagram below). Slide a cane through slits in the bottle, or tie it on so it won't blow away.
- Depending on the animals to be protected against and the size of plant, tree guards can be bought in varying heights and diameter. As a guide, approximate heights are given below:
 - Rabbits/Hares/Voles and strimmers – up to 75cm
 - Sheep – 1.5m
 - Deer – 1.8m
 - Cattle/Horses – 2m

Protecting your Trees:

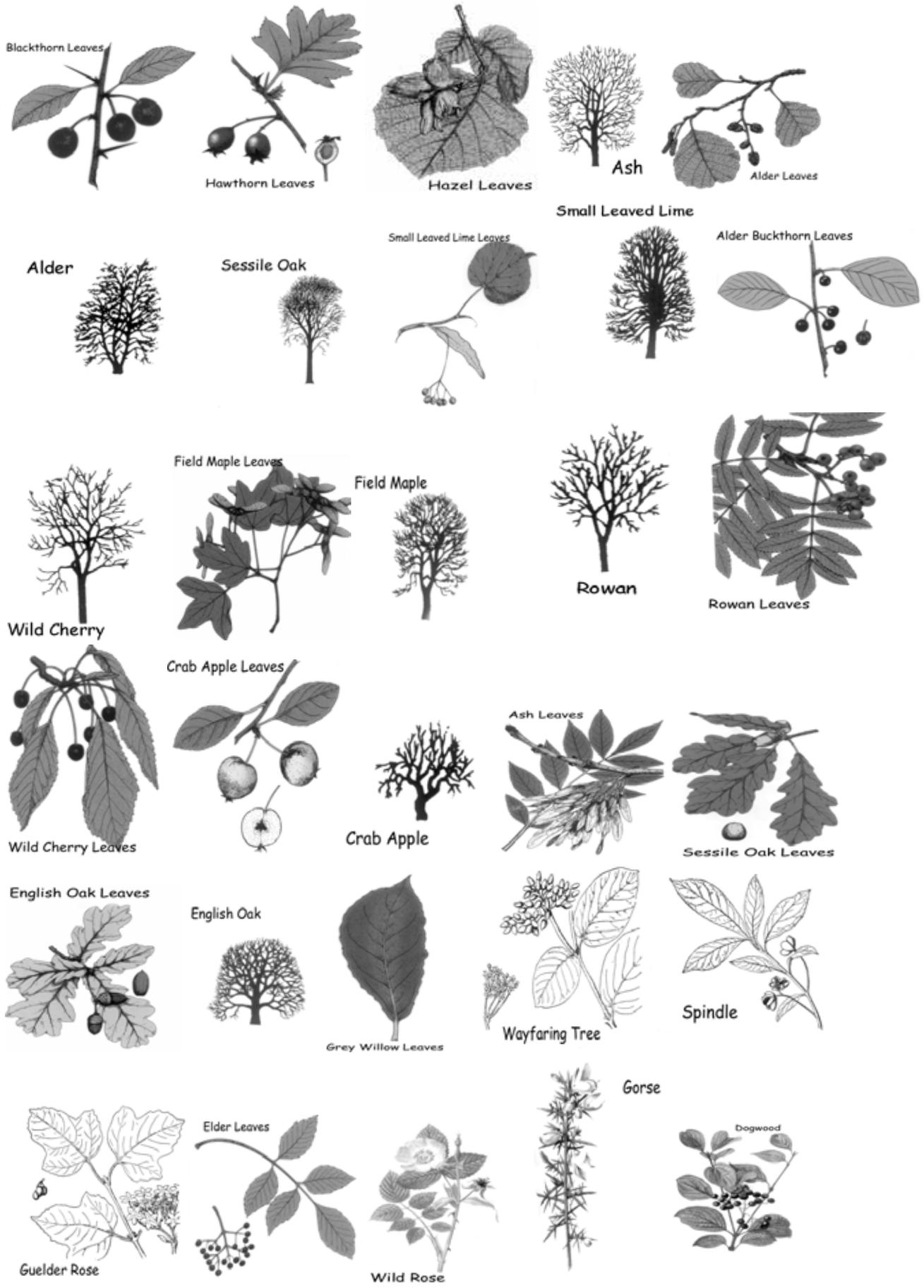


After Care

Young trees and shrubs need to be kept weeded for at least 3 years, either by hand weeding or by using a mulch or mulch mat (you may have to replace organic mulch from time to time).

Mowing and strimming are not good methods as grass thrives when cut and will take valuable ground moisture from the young tree. Strimming is also likely to bruise, "ring bark" and quickly kill the tree, no matter how careful you are.

For the first few years the young plants should really be watered in dry weather – 5 litres of water once a week is better than one litre a day, as slightly dry conditions stimulate root growth.



Contacts:

Landscape & Biodiversity Officers,
 Teignbridge District Council 01626 215747 designandheritage@teignbridge.gov.uk

Funding schemes:

Environmental Stewardship Scheme www.naturalengland.gov.uk
 English Woodland Grant & Farm Woodland Premium Scheme www.Forestry.gov.uk