Hedgerows for Screening and Wildlife in Wokingham

Hedges form an essential part of the structure of the landscape. They are important for biodiversity conservation in their own right but also because they link woodland habitats & form wildlife corridors. The physical structure, species mix & composition of hedges changes from region to region & even between the different landscape character areas in the Borough. This Guidance Note is a simple guide to planting hedges in Wokingham & will assist in the design & planting of new hedgerows in the Borough.

SPECIFICATION

Ground Preparation:	Ground to be thoroughly de-compacted by hand, if necessary, prior to planting.
Size of stock:	Transplants 45-60cm tall or whips 60-90cm tall as appropriate to the species selected. Hedgerow standard trees should be half standards under-planted with shade tolerant hedge species. Trees spaced at 6 to 15 m intervals as appropriate.
Form:	Bare root or pot grown as appropriate for each species.
Type:	Certified local provenance.
Density:	For most hedges double staggered row, generally 'notch planted', 0.33 metres apart at 0.33 metre centres (this works out at 6 plants per linear metre). Hedgerow standards should be 'pit planted' (where appropriate) at 6-15m centres.
Support and protection:	Protection (rabbits & deer) – individual Tubex tree shelters of appropriate size, staked & secured or stock fencing around new trees & rabbit proof wire at base.
Establishment:	For 2 years after planting, maintain an area of 1m2 weed-free around each new plant, either by hand (where replanting hedges & which will appropriately preserve remnant field-layer plants) or by another weed control regime appropriate to the circumstances.
Maintenance:	Any plants that die or become diseased within 5 years of planting must be replaced to the above specification. Watering of hedge to ensure establishment of all plants to be carried out as required.
Plant Specification:	All whips to be young trees without feathered growth, 0.6–1.2m high. All transplants to conform to BS 3936: Part 1:1992 and to be no less than 2 years old. All trees and shrubs to be delivered to site clearly labelled with botanical name. For specification of hedgerow standard trees see WBC advice note on 'Tree planting in Wokingham'. Holly to be pot-grown ensuring establishment.
Standard trees:	Where standard trees are required tree species should be left uncut to grow through the hedge, at least one every 6m, with existing standard trees incorporated into the new hedge wherever possible. Standard trees planted either side of gateways encourages the use of hedges as natural networks by birds, bats, dormice, etc.

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CHOICE OF SPECIES FOR DIFFERENT HEDGES/HEDGEROWS

Countryside Hedges: Some of our hedges are ancient, dating from very early plantings of stock–proof boundaries, or were the thin belt of trees and shrubs left over when woodland was originally cleared to make fields. They tend to be very rich in species, mainly because of their antiquity. Simpler hedges, mainly of hawthorn & blackthorn, tend to be the more recent ones, planted as common land was enclosed within the last 200 years. Except on the most sandy soils the following species should be used:

Shrub / hedge plants

50% Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
23% Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)
5% Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)
5% Field Maple (*Acer campestre*)
5% Hornbeam (*Carpinus betula*)
5% Holly (*Ilex Aquifolium*) shade tolerant so good under hedgerow trees

with:

1% each of Dog rose (*Rosa canina*), Field rose (*Rosa arvensis*), wild service (*Sorbus torminalis*) guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*), yew *(Taxus baccatta),* oak (*Q. robur*) and ash (*F excelsior*) transplants, (7% of total

Hedgerow standard trees

Oak (*Quercus robur*) half standards or larger (70% of total standards)
Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) half standards of larger (30% of total standards)

River Floodplains: Hedgerow mixtures in the floodplains of the Thames, Loddon and Blackwater rivers can be similar to those for the open countryside. However, in damper areas the species mix can be tweeked to include hedgerow standards of large species trees requiring damp conditions e.g.

Willows (Salix species such as the large trees *S. fragilis* and *S.alba* or the smaller, more shrubby *S.caprea* and *S.cinerea*) but not to be planted near buildings.

Black poplar (*Populus nigra var. betulifolia*) only confirmed local stock.
Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)

Designed Formal Landscapes: Most such hedges are designed for formal landscapes and use a limited number of plants to form single species clipped, formal, hedgerows. Suitable species are as follows: beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), yew (*Taxus baccata*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), box (*Buxus sempervirens*). Mixes of these species can be used to form 'tapestry hedge mixes' which are rich in texture with colours which change throughout the year but which need only minimum maintenance. A relatively low maintenance tapestry hedge, requiring only one or two cuts per year can be achieved by planting 33% each of yew, hornbeam and beech.

Choice of species: Some other species are favoured for their quick establishment & rapid growth. However, they are often poor in terms of their nature conservation benefits or look out of place in the landscape. An example of such a species is Leyland cypress (*Cupressocyparis leylandii)* which is often cited in formal High Hedges complaints. Its use is generally discouraged. On the other hand, Yew *(Taxus baccata),* makes an exceptional formal hedge, the finest of all green architecture. Yew is not as slow growing as is popularly believed & a hedge of 6 feet can be achieved in five or six seasons if the ground is well prepared. Where berries are required to encourage fruit eating birds, then both male and female plants must be planted.

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL