

Hedgerow Laying Guidance

Laying style

- If the hedge is not on top of a high bank or 'kest', we recommend the Lancashire and Westmorland laying style. This style is simpler and quicker than the 'Midland's' one.
- Nick each stem low to ground, at 2-4 inches, for strong-regrowth of the new stems that will form a thick hedge and can be laid next time.
- Cut the remaining 'heel' off on a backward angle to promote water run off.
- Laid stems or 'pleachers' to be laid up the slope of the land, all in the same direction at an angle between 30-45 degrees. The less thorn in a hedge, the angle may be slightly lower, especially where ash, hazel or sycamore are the dominant species. If laying on a tall earth bank or kest a lower number of pleachers are laid at a very low angle ('Cumberland style').
- If laying on a flat field lay in the direction of the prevailing wind, or if near a river in the same direction as the water flow.
- Finished hedge height to be a minimum of 3 foot 6 inches (or 3.2 metres)
- Leave brushwood on both sides of the laid hedge to create a strong stock proof barrier.
- The amount of pleachers to lay into the hedge should provide a good barrier, but not be packed so densely to restrict light to allow good re-growth from the nicked base.
- Cut out by coppicing low to the ground fast growing species, especially dog rose, elder and willows, so they don't dominate the re-growth.

Staking and protection

- Either coppiced stakes such as hazel or sycamore (from within the hedge itself, if possible), or purchased from a coppice worker, OR more commonly, softwood cut stakes from a wood yard/timber mill. Length about 5 foot (1.5 metre) and 2 inch diameter (5cm).
- Place stakes in a double line either side of the hedge, staggered pattern, approximately a metre apart to support the laid pleachers.
- Sometimes fewer stakes can be used if an existing fence line is tight with one side of the laid hedge.
- Where the fencing has been removed to allow for the laying, and/or perhaps the posts were rotten, reference allowing space for any maintenance, the next laying and to create a bio-secure field boundary. A 3 - 3.5m gap between the fences on either side of a hedge is recommended.



A competitor laying a hedge at our competition



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Brash

- Some farms with biomass boilers will chip all the brash for wood-fuel, or chip it and use as a mulch for new planted hedgerows or tree planting.
- Avoid burning unwanted brash if possible. Leaving a decent width between the fences allows for any unwanted brash to be added behind the fence for extra wildlife habitat. Do not cover the laid pleachers where you want the light in to encourage re-growth. OR create habitat piles elsewhere on the farm, which will slowly rot down and benefit a range of wildlife.

Below: A recently laid hazel hedge with regrowth base



Any Questions?

Get in touch:

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For more information about our hedgerow work, scan the QR code or see our website:



Below: An open class competitor's laid hedge



Aftercare

- Ideally leave the laid hedge to grow without trimming until its next laying cycle in 8 - 15 years. The time period between lays depends on species, soil fertility and local climate.
- If you want to extend the time-span in between laying cycles, then incremental trimming is acceptable for several years, avoiding cutting the hedge at the same level every year, which creates a hard knuckle, putting extra strain on mechanical cutting machines and makes the next laying process harder and produces a poorer quality hedge. If possible don't cut the hedge every year, and have a mix of hedges structures and sizes across your farm.
- Avoid cutting hedgerows before January to provide vital feed during the autumn for farmland birds and mammals.

Below: Gatekeeper butterflies are one of many specialist species that rely on healthy hedgerows to survive

