

# HEDGE TRIMMING

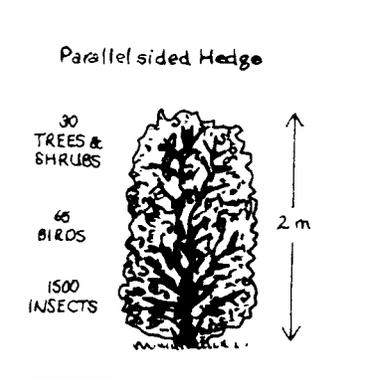


## *Introduction*

Hedge trimming is necessary if a hedge is to be maintained at a particular height or shape. New shoots will appear just behind the cut end of a twig and so appropriate trimming encourages bushy, dense growth. Some hedges may never be trimmed but can still be kept stockproof by laying on a rotation of about 20 years.

However, many hedges are overtrimmed and are traditionally cut back hard to the same point every year over many years. This is not good for the vigour of the hedge and often results in a small bare trunk with a few weak twigs on the top. Consequently the hedge cannot thrive and has a lower wildlife and landscape value. Tidiness should not be the only consideration in hedge management - less frequent

and less severe trimming can save time and money and can benefit the hedge in the long term.



## *When trimming, try to:*

- **adopt varied trimming regimes** over the farm;
- **use a 2 - 3 year rotation** to reduce disturbance to wildlife. In this way, at least some sections of the hedge can flower and set fruit each year. It also allows the hedge to grow and gain strength.

Hedges with gappy bases can be left to grow taller before laying or coppicing.;

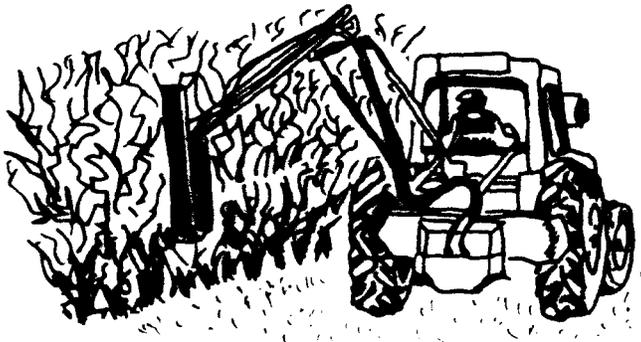
- **trim less often.** This will benefit wildlife and save money and time, although with 2 or more years growth the trimming will take slightly longer and therefore cost a little more than one annual trimming. Roadside hedges may need trimming annually for access and safety reasons;
- **trim between January and the end of February** to allow the birds and mammals to take any hedgerow fruit over the winter. Trimming should never be carried out in the nesting season as this could disturb nesting birds which is an offence under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act.;

- **cut a few inches further out** from the last trimming line. Cutting back to the same point each year will

environmental needs; and

2. knowing the limitations of the selected type of

material up to 5cm, depending on the type of knife fitted, but they are generally better suited to smaller material.



- Circular blade cutters vary much more widely in their capabilities depending on the type.
- Material over 15-20cm should be sawn out by hand before mechanical trimming.

remove much of the new branching points and will eventually result in the tips of old shoots becoming woody, splintered and lacking in vigour. However, by trimming further out each successive cut, the hedge will grow in overall height and width and may eventually need to be reduced in size. This could be done as part of the laying/coppicing rotation, or with a shape-saw.

cutter/flail in relation to these requirements.

If well maintained and used carefully and correctly, modern mechanical equipment can make an excellent job of trimming a hedge up to 11-12ft high. The Agricultural Training Board runs courses on the correct maintenance and use of such equipment.

#### *Further Information*

For details of your local FWAG Group, please contact FWAG at the National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2RX  
Tel: 024 7669 6699

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in this information sheet. However, FWAG can not accept liability for any errors or omissions.

- ***Using machinery***

The two main elements of mechanical hedge management are:

1. knowing the best size and shapes of hedge to meet agricultural and

#### ***Selecting suitable machinery***

- A Light Duty Flail will be able to cope with material up to 2.5cm; a Heavy Duty Flail will cope with material up to 10cm thick.
- A Reciprocating Knife Cutter can be used on