

HEDGES

CREATING HEDGES FOR BORDERS, SCREENS AND PRIVACY

Hedges through the ages have constituted many things to many people – design, luxuriance, privacy, colour, contrast – even a device to create anticipation.

Used wisely in garden layout a hedge is a wondrous thing. Nothing is more suggestive of space and perspective than a hedge – it is three-dimensional gardening at its most attractive.



Gardeners in the main do not always make the most of their design potential. An attractive hedge often can be incorporated with stunning effect. Remember, a hedge can be any grouping of plants however few. A three metre long hedge at 30cm in height can be very eye-catching. It can delineate an area – it can accentuate design and with a clever choice of plants, it can add colour. Most of all *hedges are used for screens to provide privacy, as an alternative to fences or walls*. Below are some tips on how to select and maintain a healthy hedge which we hope will help you enjoy a hedge in your garden soon.

TYPES OF HEDGES

FORMAL – Plants with dense twiggy growth cut into a regular shape by constant clipping which suppresses most of the flowers and fruits. This type is also suitable as an alternative for a fence or wall.

SEMI-FORMAL – Plants that are allowed to develop some flowering and fruiting wood. Usually this type is not subjected to quite so meticulous clipping. This type is also suitable as an alternative for a fence or wall.

INFORMAL – Plants are allowed to grow almost naturally, they are clipped infrequently, if at all, then only to keep tidy. This type is basically a line of shrubs to provide a screen.

EVERGREEN OR DECIDUOUS – Most hedges chosen are evergreen for privacy. A compromise must sometimes be made to let in sunlight in winter months by using deciduous plants.

SOIL PREPARATION

This is very important to give your hedge a good start. The most important task is to thoroughly weed the area. **ZERO** or **ROUNDUP** is very useful for this task. A week or two weeks after the weeds have been sprayed they should be removed and if necessary, the area sprayed again and left for another week. **COW AND COMPOST** or **MULCH AND COMPOST** should be dug through the area before planting. It should be well watered then left for a few days before planting. Remember, as the plants in a hedge are close together, they *compete for food and water*. Good soil preparation is therefore essential to ensure a vigorous healthy hedge.



PLANTING

Spacing of the plants is necessarily close so as to form a dense mass of foliage and stems to ground level. A hedge with the plants too far apart may take years to grow together so spacing is most important. Most plants used for hedges should be spaced a fifth to one quarter of the average width of a free standing specimen apart, e.g. a plant width of 2.5-3m will require a spacing of 0.6m.

After planting, ensure the hedge is thoroughly watered. It is a good idea to mulch the soil to maintain an even soil temperature, to slow the evaporation rate and help control weed growth during summer. A mulch is particularly advisable in summer when establishing a hedge.



CLIPPING

FORMAL AND SEMI-FORMAL HEDGES

Clipping should commence during the first year. Shears must only be used lightly until the hedge has developed a bushy side growth. The general aim should be to make a short bushy hedge first, then allow the height and width to increase as required.

This method takes a little longer but the dense well-leafed result will justify the extra effort.



CARE

As hedge plants are planted closely together, special attention should be paid to regular watering and fertilising. An application of **MANUTEC GRANULAR COMPLETE** or **DINOFERT** should be given in early spring and mid-summer. For Australian Natives use **BLOOD & BONE**, **NITROSOL** or **GARDEN GOLD NATIVES** or other native plant foods.

A mulch is advisable during the warmer months of the year. This will keep the soil temperature down and help stop drying out during summer. Each year the old mulch should be removed and replace with a new layer thus suppressing unwanted weeds.

PLANT HEALTH

An ideal hedge plant is long lived and relatively disease free. Any sign of insect or fungus trouble should be treated quickly as this can spread rapidly through the hedge.

To overcome any potential pest or disease problems it is advisable to water with a solution of **HARVEST**, **UPLIFT**, **NITROSOL**, **FISH EMULSION**, **SEASOL** or **POWERFEED**. Any of these products used will provide sustained plant health.

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