



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
Standing up for your countryside

# A LITTLE ROUGH GUIDE AROUND THE HEDGES

Why our hedgerows matter  
and how you can help

# OUR HEDGEROWS ARE SPECIAL



**T**his guide is a celebration of hedgerows. We wanted to share our passion for them and encourage more people to care about them too. And to entice you further, we've included a handy hedgerow plant identifier for when you're next exploring our beautiful countryside.

Hedgerows are the vital stitching in the patchwork quilt of the English countryside. They need to be protected and cared for.

They tell us about the history of a place and its people. In an age of increasing uniformity, hedgerows make an important contribution to local distinctiveness – giving a real sense of place and continuity with generations past, present and future.

Not only that, hedgerows are a crucial factor in the existence of many plants and animals – in fact many declining species rely on hedges to survive.



Hedgerows are the most widespread semi-natural habitat in England. Over large parts of the lowlands they are the main surviving habitat of this kind.

The beauty of hedgerows in the landscape should be a pleasure future generations are able to enjoy – so they can discover their own history and appreciate what's special about where they live.



# HEDGEROWS UNDER THREAT



**H**edgerows are man-made and need looking after to survive. Alongside heathland, chalk grassland and moorland, hedges will disappear if we don't protect and manage them.

## A VANISHING ACT

From 1870 until 1945 there was very little change in the extent of hedges. Aerial photographs from 1940 show a comprehensive network of hedges across much of the country, even in arable areas.



## LACK OF TENDER LOVING CARE

Hedgerow management has to be sympathetically carried out – over-management can be just as damaging as neglect. Over-management (often seen with hawthorn hedges) is caused by excessively tight trimming over a long period, which can slowly kill off the hedge.

But, between 1950 and 1975, the loss of hedges became one of the most shocking and visible aspects of damage to the English countryside. Since then, tens of thousands of kilometres of hedges have been taken out.

Although many farmers look after their hedges, changes in the nature of farming have been one of the major causes of the disappearance of hedgerows across the countryside.

On the other hand, neglect allows a hedgerow to proceed through its natural life cycle in an uncontrolled manner. The end result is an over-tall, ageing hedge, which leaves few options for management other than coppicing and planting the gaps.

Roads and development, particularly on the edge of towns and villages, are the two other main causes of hedgerow loss. Even hedgerows that are deemed 'important' under the Government's Hedgerows Regulations can be removed because planning permission for development overrides their protection.

Neglect can also turn a hedge into a line of trees. Although these can be important for bats and larger tree-nesting birds, it's important we maintain dense hedges, with the rich habitat they provide, to fulfil their function as field boundaries.

# GET TO KNOW HEDGEROWS



WHEN YOU'RE NEXT OUT  
IN THE COUNTRYSIDE,  
USE THIS HANDY GUIDE  
TO IDENTIFY WHAT YOU  
SEE IN THE HEDGEROWS



**CRAB APPLE**



**BLACK POPLAR**



**BLACKTHORN**



**ASH**



**ALDER BUCKTHORN**



**BEECH**



**BUCKTHORN**



**WILD CHERRY**



**ENGLISH ELM**



**DOGWOOD**



**GORSE**



**ELDER**



**GUELDER ROSE**



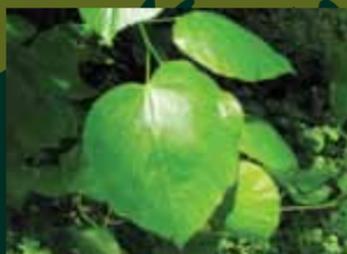
**HAWTHORN**



**HORNBEAM**



**HAZEL**



**LARGE-LEAVED  
LIME**



**HOLLY**



**FIELD MAPLE**



**PEDUNCULATE OAK**



**SPINDLE**



**DOG ROSE**



**WAYFARING  
TREE**



**WILD SERVICE TREE**



**GOAT WILLOW**



# HOW CAN HEDGEROWS BE PROTECTED?

**I**ncredibly, hedgerows weren't given protection until Hedgerows Regulations were introduced in 1997 following campaigning by CPRE.

These Regulations provide the first legal protection for important hedgerows.

Broadly, a hedgerow is considered important if it is over 20 metres long, at least 30 years old and is home to a certain number of plant or animal species. Its historical significance and whether it contains features like a hedge bank, ditch or tree are also taken into account.

The Hedgerows Regulations require local authorities to be notified by the owner if he or she wants to remove any countryside hedgerow over 20 metres in length, or which joins another hedgerow.

Unfortunately, a hedge can only be protected by the Hedgerows Regulations if the owner puts in an application to remove it. The local authority may only refuse removal if the hedgerow is classed as important. And garden hedgerows and hedges standing in the way of built development are exempt from the Regulations.



# DID YOU KNOW?



**M**ore than 80% of our farmland birds rely on hedges for protection and food.

**M**any rare or threatened species, including the hazel dormouse, most species of bat and the great-crested newt, rely on well-connected networks of hedgerows to survive.

**B**y far the commonest hedge shrub is the hawthorn, but no one really knows why (it could be from the Celtic tradition of planting it around sacred places). Practically, hawthorn is a good choice because it produces a hard-wearing wood, ideal for making tool handles and bowls as well as for firewood. And the thorns are a good deterrent to straying cows and sheep.

**H**awthorn blossom is the original wedding confetti as it was traditional to get married in spring.

**T**he oldest known surviving hedgerow in England is Judith's Hedge, Cambridgeshire, which is over 900 years old.

**H**edgerows help to prevent fields from losing soil, because they reduce wind and water erosion – and they regulate water supply for crops.

**H**edgerows provide sustainable drainage, reduce the amount of air pollution and provide a habitat for urban wildlife.

**H**edgerows play a role in reducing the rate of climate change. Each kilometre of a new hedgerow may store 600–800 kg of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, for up to 20 years.

# HOW CAN YOU HELP?



## GET OUT AND ABOUT

Take this pocket guide and enjoy some fresh air exploring the countryside and hedgerows near you.

## WORRIED ABOUT HEDGEROW REMOVAL?

If you're worried about the loss of local hedgerows due to development, contact your local authority to check permission has been given.

It's also worth asking your local authority to save existing hedgerows from future development. It can require the developer to do this by attaching conditions to planning permission.

## KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH CPRE

Get our monthly Campaigns Update e-newsletter delivered straight to your inbox. It will give you the latest news about all our campaigns, including our work protecting hedgerows, as well as quick and easy actions you can take to help us. Sign up at [www.cpre.org.uk](http://www.cpre.org.uk)

## MEET LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

CPRE groups and volunteers all round the country work to protect hedgerows and local landscapes. We'd love you to join us. Call us on **0800 163 680** or email [supporterservices@cpre.org.uk](mailto:supporterservices@cpre.org.uk)

**JOIN US ►**

**IN STANDING UP  
FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE**

# CPRE'S CAMPAIGN FOR HEDGEROWS



**W**e began our campaign for hedgerow protection in the 1970s and were instrumental in getting the Government to introduce the Hedgerows Regulations in 1997.

Our 2010 survey of English local authorities revealed that the Regulations protected 42% of the hedgerows people applied to have removed



We're continuing to campaign for hedges because we want the Regulations made easier to use and local authorities given more of a say in which local hedges are saved.

Across the country, CPRE is working hard to protect hedgerows and joining forces with schoolchildren to plant new hedges to be enjoyed by generations to come.

We're also part of Hedgelinek, a group of organisations working together for a better future for hedgerows.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

Campaign to Protect Rural England: [www.cpre.org.uk](http://www.cpre.org.uk)

Hedgelinek: [www.hedgelinek.org.uk](http://www.hedgelinek.org.uk)

Naturenet: [www.naturenet.net/trees/hedgerow](http://www.naturenet.net/trees/hedgerow)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs:  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

Natural England: [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
Standing up for your countryside

The Campaign to Protect Rural England fights for a better future for the English countryside. We work locally and nationally to protect, shape and enhance a beautiful, thriving countryside for everyone to value and enjoy.

[www.cpre.org.uk](http://www.cpre.org.uk)

