



Crop protection

Shelter

Soil protection

Wood fuel

Wildlife

Pollinators

Reduce pollution

Pest control

The benefits of healthy hedgerows

Shade

Flood control

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## What have hedgerows ever done for us?

As well as their value to wildlife, they deliver benefits that can save you money and increase the profitability of your farm.

### Crops

**Wind damage** - hedgerows can provide a wind break and increase crop yields by reducing damage that cold strong winds do such as:

-  crop lodging which makes them much more difficult to harvest and dramatically reduce yield.
-  premature flower and fruit shedding,
-  shoot damage
-  chilling injuries

**Reduced pesticide use** - hedgerows increase populations of predator and parasitic species which are the natural enemies of crop pests. Farmland birds and predatory invertebrates such as spiders, beetles and wasps all feed on, and therefore limit, pest species.

**Pollinators** - hedgerows help support diverse pollinators, essential for crop pollination and crop yields. They provide food for pollinators throughout the year when crops aren't in flower, as well as places to nest.

### Soil

Hedgerows reduce soil erosion by:

-  reducing surface wind speeds
-  acting as a barrier to water runoff
-  their roots which help to stabilise the soil surface

Tree and shrub roots grow deeper than crops to access nutrients deeper in the

soil profile. This process cycles nutrients into the topsoil.

Shelter creates warmer soils, extending the growing season.

### Livestock

**Shelter** - livestock without shelter have a higher mortality and require more food. Shelter increases lamb survival rates, reducing the effect of wind chill and hypothermia.

**Shade** - in the summer months, heat stress reduces milk yield in dairy herds and affects fertility, growth rates and disease resistance.

**Diet diversity** - supplementary feeding on native hedgerow plants can increase livestock gut microbial diversity, help immune function, and improve feed conversion efficiency.

**Biosecurity** - thick, stock-proof hedges can create barriers to the spread of disease such as bovine TB by reducing animal-to-animal contact between farms.

**Parasitic load** - livestock may self-medicate by browsing on common species found in hedgerows. Some leaves have anti-parasitic properties, rough surfaces that act as a rasping plug or can cause a purging response.

### Water & flood control

**Water infiltration** - plant roots help soils absorb water faster. This enables the soil to act like a sponge soaking up flood water, rather than allowing it to run off the surface.

Tree and hedgerow roots run deep, allowing a larger, deeper area of the soil profile to act like a sponge, thus absorbing more water.

The soil under a hedge stores more water, and stores it faster preventing and delaying its movement downslope.

**Water uptake** - trees and shrubs remove water from soils by absorbing and transpiring it.

**Reducing silt in waterways** - silted waterways are more prone to flooding. Much of the silt in our waterways is field run off. Hedges and hedgerow trees help prevent soil erosion and stop sediment reaching our streams and rivers.

**Slowing flood water** - by slowing water flows, trees reduce the impact of flooding, allowing more time for soil infiltration, and time to respond to flood warnings.

### Our environment

**Carbon storage** - hedgerows store carbon above and below ground, so can help us in our fight against climate change

**Pollution** - hedgerows reduce the amount of fertilisers, pesticides and sediment that reach watercourses. They act as a physical barrier, increasing infiltration to the soil, and recycle nutrients through the trees, shrubs and

other plants. They also improve air quality by capturing pollution particles.

### Other

**Sustainable wood fuel** - hedges and hedgerow trees can provide sustainable wood fuel, without losing land from production. This can be used or sold as fuel or timber.

Pollarding, a traditional tree management technique, can provide both wood fuel and animal fodder.

**Privacy** - hedgerows can act as a screen and protect privacy, shielding farm assets and buildings from public sight.

**Sense of place** - hedgerows are a defining feature of our countryside, with deep and significant cultural and historical importance. They tell the story of our farming traditions over many centuries and add to regional distinctiveness. They make farms more attractive which may help with farm diversification projects.

**Wildlife** - hedgerows provide a home, food, shelter and corridors to travel for wildlife. 70% of the UK is agricultural land so the importance of your hedgerows for wildlife cannot be overstated.