



LISTED HERITAGE Garden



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Marian Boswall discusses sympathetic hedge planting and hedge renovation around a period property.

Setting boundaries: *Finding the perfect hedging for your period property*

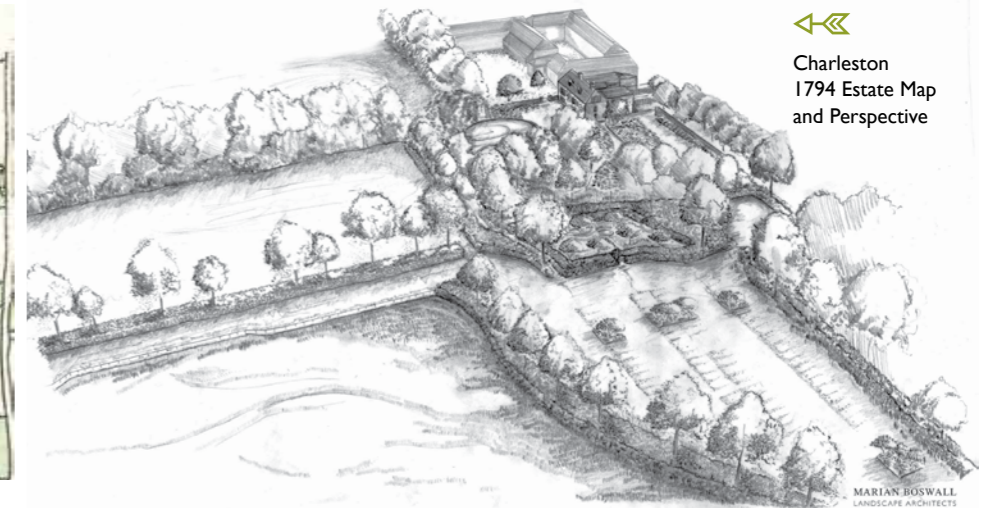


William Daniel
National Champion
Hedgelayer - Elm
hedge after one
year regrowth

An Englishman's home is his castle, and whilst the days of need for a moat to keep out the marauding beserkers are gone, we do still like to delineate our property, whether for security or aesthetics.

So how do we get the boundary treatment right in a period property so that it is in keeping with what has been before, is cost effective to build and to maintain, and keeps the dogs and children in and unwelcome visitors out?

There are a variety of ways to suit each property, location and budget. Walls and fences are of course options and important in many locations. I will talk about repairing, reinstating and introducing walls and fences in future issues but as winter is the perfect time to plant and renovate hedging, here I look at ways of renovating an old or establishing a new hedge.



Charleston
1794 Estate Map
and Perspective

MARIAN BOSWALL
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



Beech
hedges



Hawthorn
hedge

The first thing is to understand the setting and what is there now or has gone before. A rural setting may have a country hedge around the garden and in particular to delineate the boundary of the property, along an old way which may have become a lane or road.

The hedge that is there may be as old or older than the house and may be of archaeological significance or delineate an ancient way. Old maps and field plans can be helpful to understand the hedge patterns. They can be a good place to start to know the ancient lay of the land and its hedgerows if you are restoring an old property or estate.

As part of the Charleston Centenary project, new access was needed to the beautifully renovated exhibition barns at Charleston Farmhouse. For this we worked with the old field patterns shown on old estate maps to

put a new car park within the old 'Hogg's Pitt' field, and so maintain the pattern of hedges around it. The result is something that fits in to the existing landscape and is unobtrusive from the Firlie above as well as on the ground.

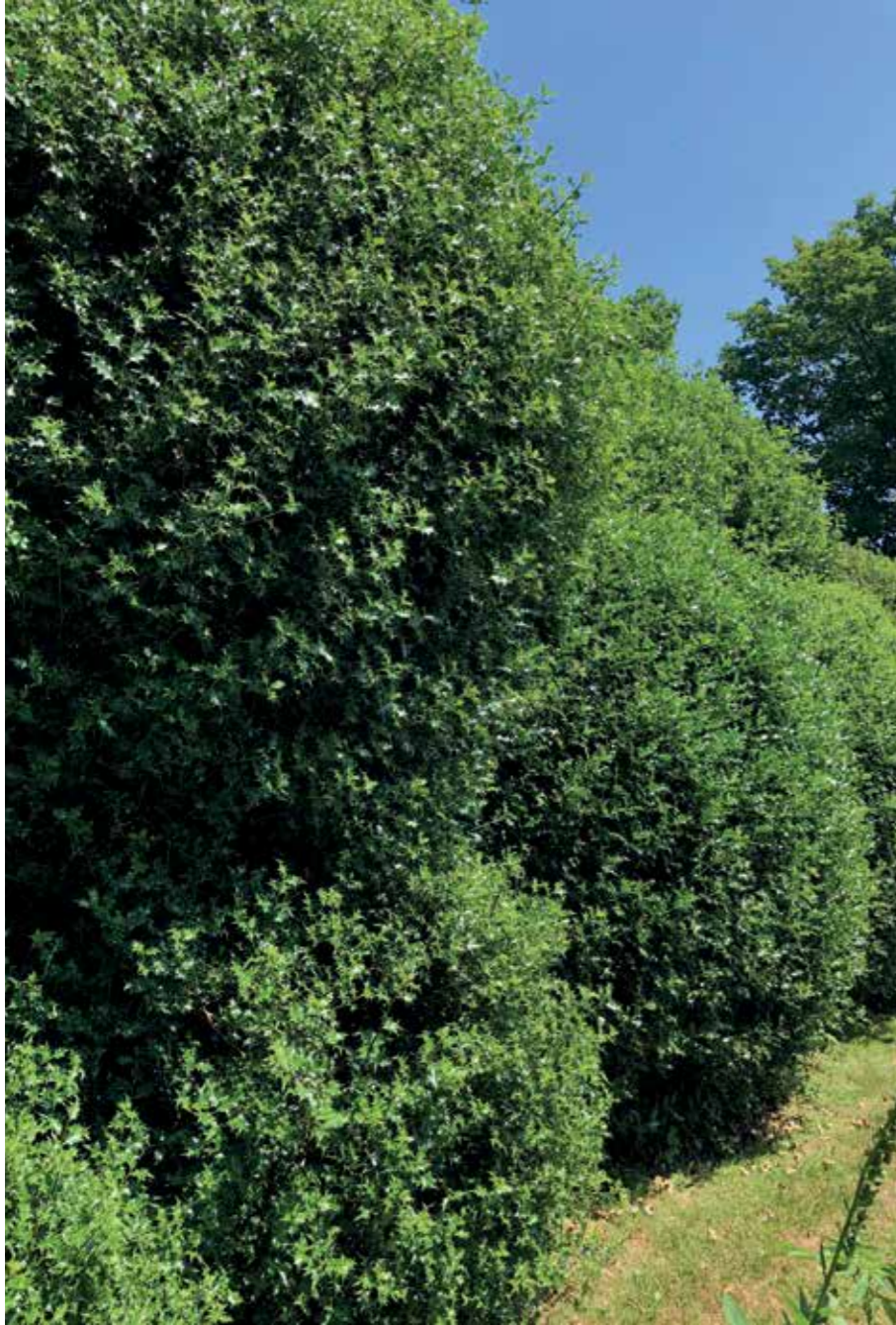
Old Hedges can also be dated by counting the number of species in them. 'Hooper's Law' gives us a way to estimate the age of a hedgerow, in essence by counting the number of different species of tree and shrub in a 30 yard stretch and regarding it as equal to the age of the hedge in centuries. This method is only a rule of thumb, so it should always be backed up by documentary evidence and other factors taken into account. Caveats include the fact that hedgerows with elm and hedgerows in the north of England tend not to follow the rule as closely, and some hedges planted by farmers for stock control can be mono-species: hawthorn, blackthorn, and (in the southwest) hazel.

The structure of the hedge line can also tell us about its history. After c.1800 the original row of hawthorns may still be visible and an ancient hedgerow may have old coppice stools at its base, or even pollarded trees.

A species-rich hedgerow will be home to many animal and plant species, especially birds and small mammals. The hedgerows are the living corridors that link habitats for these animals, and as such are hugely important for biodiversity and the health of the countryside.

When choosing a new hedge mix, bear in mind the type of soil and site and the reason for the hedge, besides being a home for wildlife. The addition of holly to a mix adds some evergreen screening as well as a prickly deterrent to any unwanted visitors. Wild rose is a favourite of mine with its summer flowers

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Cloud pruned
Holly hedge by
Will Smithson
in Devon



Forage
Hedgerow



Hedge Dog
rose

and autumn hips, and honeysuckle and even hops are found in a good foraging hedge. It is good to leave some standard trees in the run of the hedge too, for shelter and shade. Some hedge supplier websites allow you to choose a mix of species and have a handy calculator to show how many whips you will need for the length of hedge you are planting. Don't forget to use rabbit guards as well, as rabbits can decimate a new hedge in a single unguarded night.

A country hedge would traditionally be plashed or laid, by allowing the hedge to grow up to about eight foot and then split with a bill hook axe (or chainsaw) almost through the stem, just leaving enough to bend it at an angle, and from that cut the new growth will come. Hedgelaying can also restore an old, sparse hedge by encouraging regrowth from the base. Most native species within a mixed hedgerow will respond well.

A hedge needs to be a minimum of 2.5 metres high before it can be laid, because laying reduces the height by approximately half. Hedges are best laid between October and March. After laying, maintenance consists of keeping the base free of weeds during the first year and an annual trim. There are some grants available for enhancing the countryside which are worth investigating if you are looking for funding to help lay a hedge and bodies like the National Hedge Laying Society run courses if you want to learn to do it yourself.

Where a more formal look is needed a single species hedge can be used such as yew which is perfect inside a town or village or inside a formal garden. Some people are put off by the reputation of yew as slow growing, but it can grow up to 40cm

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a year and the great benefit it has, beside being evergreen, is that it can take a very hard pruning. If you have inherited an old overgrown yew hedge you can cut it right back to the trunk in order to renovate it. It is wise to do one side one year and the other the next in order to allow the plant enough leaf cover to photosynthesise in between. If you need help with a specimen yew or box hedge the European Box Topiary Society has a list of specialists. It is worth noting that yew does not like wet feet however, so in areas prone to waterlogging hornbeam or beech would be preferable, and in heavy clay be sure to plant on a slight mound to avoid fungal diseases.

Finally, when renovating a hedge watch out for wild birds. It is against the law to disturb nesting wild birds, so before you start to renovate or cut back a hedge check there are no birds' nests currently in use. To be on the safe side you can trim hedges during the winter months when there is no danger that birds may be nesting. 🌿

Gardening

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I need permission to remove a country hedge or hedgerow?

You might need permission from your local council to cut back or remove a hedge if you live in a conservation area or if trees in the hedge are protected by a tree preservation order. Check with your local council before you do any work. For more information see the Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas section of the planning practice guidance www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas.

The removal of countryside hedgerows is regulated under different legislation. See www.gov.uk/protection-of-countryside-hedgerows

Can shrubs and hedges be protected by a Tree Preservation Order?

Authorities may only use an order to protect anything that may ordinarily be termed a tree. This would not normally include shrubs, but could include, for example, trees in a hedge or an old hedge which has become a line of trees of a reasonable height. See also www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas.



Inside an ancient beech hedge at Kilruddery Garden Co. Wicklow



Renovating a yew hedge at Penshurst

USEFUL RESOURCES:

National hedge laying society
www.hedgelaying.org.uk

European Box Topiary Society
www.ebts.org