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Irish Hedgerows are bursting with wildlife

Grant Jenkins of The Tree Company looks at the appeal of planting a native hedge and how to go about it.

Trees and shrubs have been used as boundaries for thousands of years. The patchwork of fields and hedges that dominate the Irish countryside have evolved and survived over the centuries because of the widespread farming practice of livestock and grassland. Although many hedgerows in recent times have been grubbed out in favour of larger fields or for development many still remain. Often overlooked and sometimes taken for granted, Irish hedgerows are a hive of activity throughout the seasons.

Broadleaved woodland and especially ancient woodland is rare in Ireland, therefore hedgerows are important environment for native trees, shrubs, plants and animals to thrive relatively undisturbed. Hedgerows can often closely resemble the broadleaved woodland edge which has a rich and diverse habitat, many of the same plants and animals are found in both environments. Bluebells and Primroses can be found in spring, while Foxgloves and Lords and Ladies can be seen later in the year. The grassy, herbaceous edge of the spring and summer hedge will grow

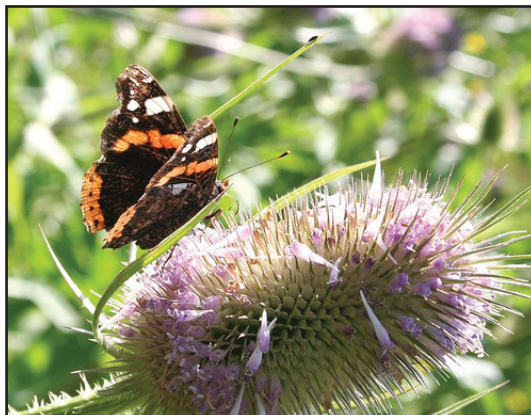


food plants like nettles for Small Tortoise shell, Peacock and Red Admiral butterfly larvae. The Speckled Wood butterfly typical of woodland edges can be seen frequenting the hedgerow fringe. Hedgerows provide corridors for all sorts of wildlife, these wildlife highways allow plants, animals and insects to spread in safety from one habitat to another. A mature hedge is especially attractive to birds that will use the hedge for nesting and roosting. There is a wide range of food available because of the varied plant communities which give birds more choice in their diet throughout the year. Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, Wrens, Chaffinches, Bull Finches, Tree Creeper and Long Tailed Tits will all make use of the hedge in their own way, the thicker the hedge the more bird life it will contain. The Sparrow Hawk and occasionally a Barn Owl can be seen

hunting along the hedgerow fringe, seeking out Wood Mice and Bank Voles. The mature hedgerow is also home to Stoats, Foxes and Badgers that use the hedge for concealment, hunting and foraging. Bats may use the larger trees for summer roosts feeding nocturnally on the array of flying insect of which the Hawk Moth who lives in the hedge may be one. The shy Hedgehog as the name suggest live and hibernate in the hedge, they use their sense of smell to locate beetles, worms and slugs.

To create a native hedge is quite simple, first you need to choose your species, and Hawthorn and Blackthorn are the work horse species for any native hedge and often provide the bulk planting.

Dog Rose, Dogwood, Wild Privet, Guelder Rose, Hazel and Holly are some of the native trees and shrubs which can be



included in the mix of plants as they provide interest and colour.

You could plant Crab Apple, Wild Pear, Damson, Elder and Wild Cherry these trees provide food source for wildlife and if you are feeling adventurous can be used in home cooking and wine making of which Damson jam and Elderberry wine would be my choice. Climbing plants like Honeysuckle, Clematis and Ivy can be used to ramble through the hedge taking advantage of the support from the hedgerow trees. Include Ash, Oak, and Holly which if allowed to grow uncut will provide a hedge interspersed with mature trees.

Trees should be planted as two to three year-old whips at roughly six per metre staggered in two rows. It is best to plant into cultivated ground free of weeds and grass, if the soil is impoverished the use of well rotted organic matter may be

required. Keeping a new hedge weed free for the first few years will aid establishment and minimise losses. Any losses should be replaced during the following planting season. If rabbits are present in the locality, then rabbit guards will help to stop any damage to the trees. Fencing to stop livestock browsing will be necessary if planting on or near farmland. Managed correctly a mature native hedge can be a stock proof boundary, occasional pruning or even hedge laying will encourage a thick, vigorous, healthy hedge.

The beauty of a native hedgerow is that you can plant them using the same concept on a small scale in the garden or on a large scale on an estate or farm and a well cared for hedge will last for many many years.

Hedgerows define the landscape providing visual appeal from season to season. When land becomes intensively farmed opportunities for native plants and wildlife decrease. Hedgerows are a treasured asset without them we would have to endure a windswept eroded landscape devoid of trees, shrubs and wildlife.

If you need any further information regarding this article or indeed any other tree matters please get in touch with us at The Tree Company, Ballydehob, Co Cork or email us at info@thetreecompany.ie or call our office on 028 37630.

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New water charges necessitate a change in habits

Minister for the Environment, John Gormley, this month, announced that the government would be bringing in water charges for householders in order to help raise funds towards the annual government spend of €1 billion on water treatment and maintenance.

Although there will be an allowance given to each house, based on the number of occupants, some estimate an average yearly water bill could be as much as €900 if people don't change their water usage (and wastage) habits.

In light of this development, we've compiled some tips to help you get in the habit of conserving water before this new charge comes in so that hopefully you can stay within your allowance

and not pay any charges at all!

Keep a jug of water in the fridge. Instead of letting the tap run when waiting for cold water.

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Use a basin to rinse/clean your fruit and vegetables instead of a running tap and you can use the leftover water to give your potted plants a drink.

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Use a bucket of water, not a hose, which uses more water in one hour than the average family uses in a day. The car will be just as clean using a

bucket of water!

Don't flush it all away. A third of all the water used in the house is flushed down the toilet. Some larger toilet cisterns can continue to work effectively with a smaller flush. Place a displacement device such as a bottle filled with water into the cistern.

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Be leak free. Check that your home is leak free. Check for running overflows and fix any dripping taps, cisterns or pipes. If you see a leak in a public place, please report it to your Local Authority..

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Unless we change our bad habits we could be facing large water charges

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place, please report it to your Local Authority.

Only run your washing machine and dishwasher when they're full. A washing machine on full cycle uses up to 65 litres of water; dishwashers 20 litres. You'll conserve water and save money by reducing your energy bill.

A washing machine on full cycle uses up to 65 litres of water; dishwashers 20 litres. Only use your appliances when they're full. You'll conserve water and save money by reducing your energy bill.

Don't leave the tap running while brushing your teeth. Turning the tap off when brushing your teeth can save over 7,000 litres of water per year.

In the shower. Reduce the time you spend in the shower. A regular shower will use about 35 litres of water in

five mins. But beware a power shower will use over 125 litres in the same time.

Reduce the time you spend in the shower. A regular shower will use about 35 litres of water in 5 mins. But beware a power shower will use over 125 litres in the same time.

Know how to turn off your water supply. This could save thousands of litres of water and can prevent damage to your home in the event of a pipe burst.

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Hot Drinks. Fill the kettle with enough water for your needs. You will save energy too!