

## Hedgerows have Many Benefits

In England, New Zealand, Australia, and many other parts of the world hedgerows are widely planted. They provide beauty and wildness while providing wildlife habitat and wind protection on rural lands and farms. Hedgerows are long rows of mixed woody shrubs and trees that once commonly framed the rural landscape. Farmers often planted these as "shelterbelts" or "windbreaks" and birds added their own contributions to hedgerows by depositing shrub, tree and bramble seeds in their droppings. In the past few decades, many of these hedgerows have disappeared from the American countryside.



Biodiversity and beauty in the landscape have inherent value. And one way to enhance biodiversity on your property is to grow a hedgerow, as they maintain diversity and beauty in the landscape. In recent years, scientists have come to realize that diversely specied hedgerows may play an important role in fostering wildlife and plant and insect diversity. Hedgerows growing along streams and sloughs also protect water quality and provide privacy as well.

Agricultural growers and private homeowners should consider planting more hedgerows again in the landscape even though maintaining a hedgerow brings a new set of challenges including weed control, visibility and safety. Fall or spring is the best time to plant a hedgerow. Potted plants are quicker and easier to establish than bare root plants, but are more expensive.

Consider the following list of questions when planning to grow and maintain a hedgerow habitat on your property:

- Where will the hedgerow be best located? Will it be used to mark a property boundary, to accent a landscape pond or to provide shade or to block prevailing winds?
- What are the characteristics of the site – is it dry, sunny, shady or wet? Is the soil well-drained or clay?
- How tall do you want the hedgerow? Do you want to keep it less than eight to 10 feet, or do you have room for a tall hedgerow, which will cast more shade? Which way will the shadows be cast?

Then, choose a diverse array of perennial plants that will be well-suited to the site. Drip irrigation will provide for good growth while keeping irrigation costs to a minimum.

This article adapted from Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA. Please contact the Farm Advisor's office at [cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu) or 754-6477 with your agricultural questions. Talk to a certified Master Gardener every Wednesday, 10:00-12:00, 754-2880.