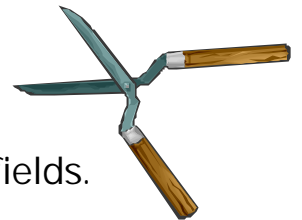


FACT FILE: HEDGES

Hedges are home to hundreds of plant and animal species. Many hedges have ditches running alongside them, dug to carry water away from the land and to mark boundaries. The ditches are good for plants and animals which like plenty of water, (eg meadowsweet and frogs). Small animals, such as voles and toads, may live in the bottom of hedgerows. Insects that live in hedges are the food of many birds. In turn, the woodland birds are food for birds of prey, such as the sparrowhawk.

Reasons for keeping hedges:

- Hedges make the countryside look varied and attractive.
- Hedges mark boundaries and keep farm animals in (or out) of fields.
- Hedges provide shelter for farm animals from the weather.
- Hedges shelter fields from the wind and help to prevent soil erosion.
- Hedges are the home for many plants, wild flowers, insects, animals and birds. Some of these eat crop pests.
- Hedges produce fruit, nuts and wood.
- Hedges last for a very long time if they are cared for.



Reasons for removing hedges:

- To make fields larger for modern machinery
- To make roads or farm tracks wider
- To save time and money cutting and caring for hedges
- They are not needed on farms that no longer keep animals
- They take up space that could be used for crops
- They shade the crops on the edge of the field
- Their roots take some soil, water and nutrients from the crop
- Weeds grow in hedges
- Pests spend winter in hedges, ready to attack the crops next year
- Some of the birds and animals that live in hedges eat the crops.



Loss of hedges:

Between 1947 and 1985, 175,000 km of hedgerows in England and Wales were removed – 2.2% of all hedgerows. These figures show the total length of hedges removed in England and Wales between 1984 and 1993 (rounded to the nearest thousand kilometres). More hedgerows have been removed since 1993. (Source: Dept of Environment 'Digest of Environmental Statistics' No 18, HMSO 1996).

	1984	1990	1993
Loss (in thousands of km)	563	432	377