

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATIONS**

**HEDGEROW PLANTING**

(ft.)

**CODE 422**

**USES**

Food, cover, and corridors for wildlife.

Hedgerows are natural wildlife attractors; therefore, wildlife enhancement should be considered during planning, even when wildlife is not the primary purpose. Targeted wildlife needs should be considered when selecting plant species.

The use of native, warm-season perennial grasses should be encouraged in all hedgerows. See the following references for planting information:

- In Ecological Sciences Reference Guide – Volume 1, NRCS, Arkansas:
  - “Conversion of Exotic Perennial Cool-Season Grass to Native Perennial Warm-Season Grass”
  - “Managing Pastures and Haylands for Wildlife” (Coop Ext. Service)
  - “Strip Mowing and Strip Disking for Wildlife”
- “Pasture and Hayland Planting,” Conservation Practice Standard 512, NRCS, Arkansas

The addition of nest boxes, particularly during the early years, can provide a needed habitat factor for cavity-nesting birds and/or mammals.

In open land, hedgerows increase edge effect, which is important to many species of wildlife. They serve as a source of food and cover for wildlife, depending upon the variety of plants that are planted.

Whenever possible the hedgerow development should join other areas of permanent wildlife cover, such as forest land, brushy or weedy, odd

areas, wooded or brushy streambanks, ditchbanks, other hedgerows, etc.

Vegetative screens. The primary purpose of the vegetative screen is to block off or to reduce the view of open areas. A combination of low and tall growing shrubs and/or trees will be more effective than a single species. Evergreens should be a major component although they can be interspersed with deciduous species.

Landscape improvement. Hedgerows may be used around homes and gardens by selecting plants that best fit the site needs. In agricultural situations, protection from grazing may be necessary, especially until seedlings become established. Use bareroot or containerized seedlings in order to establish the hedgerow in a timely manner.

**Guidelines for Establishment**

Planting dates. Plant between December 1 and March 31.

Care of seedlings. The roots of seedlings and shrubs must be kept moist and cool at all times. After lifting, seedlings should not be exposed to sun, wind, heating, drying, or freezing before they are planted. The seedling storage area should be well ventilated, cool and not be exposed to freezing temperatures or excess heat. Seedlings should be watered at least weekly if they are stored for an extended period. Balled seedlings may be kept up to three weeks if they are properly stacked, watered, and kept in a cool, shady place. When planting is delayed longer than three weeks, the roots of seedlings should be covered with moist soil (heeled in) or the seedlings should be put in cold storage. During planting, the roots of seedlings and

422-2

shrubs must be kept moist and only one seedling or shrub should be planted at a time. At the end of each day, loose seedlings or shrubs should be either repacked in wet moss or healed-in.

Site preparation. To reduce plant competition, break and harrow a strip as wide and as long as the planned hedgerow. This operation should be performed several weeks prior to planting.

Where sod-forming grasses such as fescue and bermuda are prevalent, treat the site, with herbicides before planting seedlings.

Soil amendments. Lime and fertilizer, applied according to soil test results, will improve productivity of fruit-bearing trees and shrubs.

Planting methods. Plant by hand tools or use a suitable mechanical tree planter. Areas with compacted soil or plow pans should be subsoiled or planted in a manner that would penetrate the pan or compacted soil layer.

Make plantings in multiple rows. For wildlife and landscape improvement, plant trees 12 feet apart and shrubs 6 feet apart. For screens and wildlife cover, plant trees 6 to 8 feet apart and shrubs 4 feet apart.

Plant tallest species in the center row, plant shorter species in descending height to the outermost rows of native plants.

Seedlings should be planted to the root collar (usually to where they were planted to in the nursery). Soil around the seedling should be firmly packed upon completion of planting.

Species to plant. See list below of recommended plants for hedgerows. Other plants may be used if they meet the objectives and are adapted for the site. An NRCS wildlife biologist should be consulted. Avoid the use of

species that are known to be a pest such as privet. To attain the maximum benefit for wildlife, plots within the hedgerow should meet several needs, such as food and cover. An example of how this could be accomplished would be planning a section of the hedgerow to dogwood, a plot of shrub lespedeza, a section to evergreens and then a plot of crab apple.

Plots of annuals such as Kobe lespedeza, browntop millet, small grains, or corn can be planted alongside the hedgerow if the cooperators want to provide additional wildlife plantings. These plantings should be a minimum of 20 feet wide.

## **MAINTENANCE**

Mow between rows of plantings or spot-treat certain areas with herbicide to control unwanted competition. Do not mow desirable species of native trees, shrubs and vines (see list below). They create mini-successional areas within the hedgerow, especially among the plantings. They also help create an uneven edge which adds value to the habitat for wildlife.

Some woody species lose their effectiveness for small game long before the plants die. Shrubs which once provided low, dense cover may eventually become too tall with dead branches and declining fruit production. Cutting to within a few inches above the ground may restore such plants as dogwoods, honeysuckle, sumacs, shrub lespedeza, and many other multi-stemmed shrubs. Such pruning should be done in late winter or early spring. This method may develop improved cover and fruit production within two seasons.

Do not prune over one-fourth of the width of the hedgerow in any given year. Do not prune gaps in the hedgerow.

## **SOME NATIVE PLANTS TO ENCOURAGE FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT AND LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT**

Dogwoods	Wild Cherry	Red Cedar
Greenbriers	Sumac	Wild Plum
Blackberry	Wild Grape	Japanese Honeysuckle

## **SUGGESTED PLANTINGS FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT AND LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT**

Wild Plum	Wild Cherry	Red Cedar
Elderberry	Persimmon	Crabapple
Sassafras	Flowering Dogwood	Muscadine Grape
Shrub Lespedeza	Japanese Honeysuckle	

## **SUGGESTED PLANTINGS FOR SCREENS AND WILDLIFE COVER**

Red Cedar  
Loblolly Pine

## **REFERENCES**

In Ecological sciences Reference Guide – Volume 1

NRCS, Arkansas:

- “Conversion of Exotic Perennial Cool-Season Grass to Native Perennial Warm-Season Grass”
- “Hedgerow Plantings for Wildlife”
- “Managing Pastures and Haylands for Wildlife” (Coop. Ext. Service)
- “Strip Mowing and Strip disking for Wildlife”

“Hedgerow Planting,” Conservation Practice Standard 422, NRCS, Mississippi, January 2000.

“Pasture and Hayland Planting,” Conservation Practice Standard 512, NRCS, Arkansas

Plant Materials References, NRCS, Arkansas

- “Commercial Sources of Shrub Seedlings and Rooted Cuttings”
- “Commercial Sources of Upland Hardwood Tree Seedlings”
- “Conservation Practice Seeding Rates and Dates”
- “Woody Species That Are Commercially Available for Use In All Wildlife Habitat Plantings”
- Planting Guides (various herbaceous and woody species)