



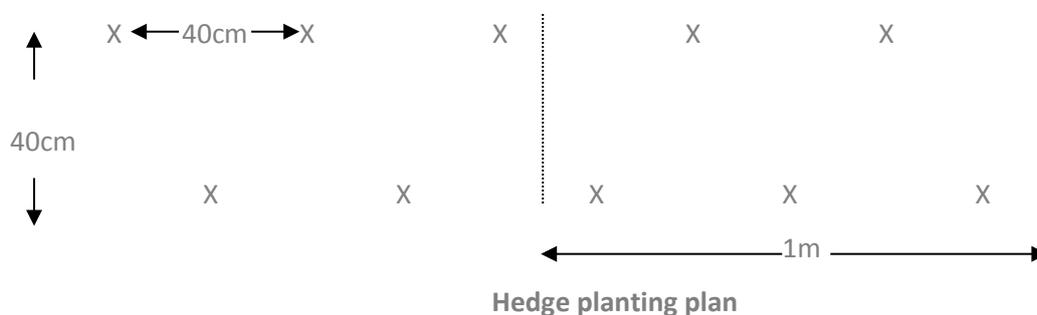
Hedge Management

Hedges are very important features in the countryside. They contribute significantly to the character of golf courses and the wider landscape, provide valuable wildlife habitat, and link habitats by providing corridors for wildlife to move through the countryside. Hedges provide nesting sites for birds and small mammals, habitat for invertebrates, and the berries in winter are a valuable food source for blackbirds, redwing, fieldfare and other thrushes.

Hedge planting

Native hedgerows planted with standard native trees are preferable in terms of biodiversity. All courses are different but in many instances, planting hedges with primarily hawthorn (75%), with other species such as holly, hazel, and dog rose would be suitable and would enhance the wildlife and act as an attractive feature on the course.

A standard hedge planting plan should be followed. This is a staggered double row with each plant 40cm apart, and the rows also 40cm apart. This gives five plants per metre. The planting pattern is illustrated below and will produce a dense, attractive hedge in a fairly short time period.



Hedge Management

Hedges all need management to ensure they are retained as features on the course and valuable wildlife habitat into the future. There are two main means of management to ensure a dense and attractive hedge.

- When carrying out cutting or flailing ensure it is done in an 'A' shape. This encourages growth from bottom to top. If possible a flail should not be used, but machinery that cuts cleanly. Flailing tends to smash the branches, giving broken, frayed ends. Not only is this unsightly, it can also allow disease into the plant. Cutting is tidier, and healthier for the hedge, although unfortunately not many contractors have the machinery to do this. It is also important to carry out any hedge management before April at the latest, in order to avoid accidental destruction of birds' nests in the hedge.
- A hedge could be layed. This is a traditional hedge management technique, more often seen in England, but becoming more used in Scotland. In summary, laying involves cutting through the main trunk of the bush, ensuring it is not cut right through, and gently pushing it over to lie flat. This is carried out along the length of the hedge, and staked to give it strength. It can appear very dramatic in the short term, but after a season of growth will result in a dense and attractive hedge forming, which will provide nesting sites for birds and habitat for invertebrates and small mammals. The technique will also extend the natural lifespan of individual trees, and the hedge. Laying only needs to be carried out every twenty five years or so, and providing regular maintenance is carried out sensitively, as discussed above, it will retain its structure and character and provide an attractive and effective feature for the course into the future.
- Hedges can also be coppiced to reduce any gaps. Mostly Hawthorn should be used in any hedge planting; some Holly and Hazel could also be added for variety and to improve the wildlife value of the hedges. Ash could also be added to provide standards.

There are not many professional hedge layers in Scotland, but The Conservation Volunteers (Scotland) <http://www.tcv.org.uk/scotland> should be able to help. They could either do the work for the club, or could train the Greenkeeping staff on site to do it. Once the skill has been learned by

the staff, hedge laying can easily be incorporated into the winter work programme. The hedges can be laid over a number of years. There is no urgency to complete the work in the near future.

The work can be carried out in sections over a number of years. This will make the project more manageable, and will also minimise the impact on wildlife. Large, mature hedges such as this are valuable for wildlife, as they provide safe nesting areas and winter food sources for small birds and mammals.

In addition wildflowers could be sown into the bottom of the hedge. The ground has already been cleared and would provide an ideal seed bed. Most seed suppliers will supply mixes suitable for hedgerows, consisting of species that are shade tolerant, but will also thrive in sunlight.

It is important that any species purchased whether trees, shrubs, plugs, seeds or bulbs come with a written guarantee of provenance to clarify they have been collected / cultivated from native Scottish species. 'Flora locale' specialises in this field and provides lists of suppliers and stockists as well as the Code of Practice these retailers comply with.

For further details please refer to: www.floralocale.org.uk

Future management of these hedges will be determined by how close to play they come. When large enough these hedges could be laid to create an attractive and effective boundary. Again, they should be trimmed to an 'A' shape.