

Glossary

A-shaped hedge: one trimmed to produce a roof-shaped ridge rather than a flat top.

Ancient hedge: one that pre-dates AD 1750 (the first of the Enclosure Acts).

Ancient tree: as a rule of thumb, one that has passed the age of maturity for its species and has a diameter at breast height (DBH) greater than the 'truly ancient' threshold for that species (see Appendix 10 to the Hedgerow Survey Handbook for details). See also veteran tree.

Ancient woodland plants: plants closely associated only with ancient woodlands (pre AD 1600) and ancient hedges. Examples include bluebell, dog's mercury and wild service tree.

Archaeophyte: species recorded as naturalised in the wild before AD 1500. (See Appendix 11 of the Hedgerow Survey Handbook for a list of native and archaeophyte woody plants.)

Assart: hedge formed by leaving a strip of ancient woodland during clearance.

Batter: the slope of a bank. See also concavity.

Casting-up: the practice of maintaining a bank by throwing up the soil from the base of the bank onto its top. This was traditionally done with a Devon shovel (which has a curved handle); today it is usually done by machine.

Climbers: plants like honeysuckle, traveller's-joy (old man's beard), bryony and ivy. Also called creepers. See also ramblers.

Coaxial field system: typically small and rectangular fields of Celtic origin forming a system in which the boundaries of adjacent fields make a series of long, roughly parallel lines.

Comb: the top edge of a bank. Where a hedge is laid as a double comb, the steepers are placed along both edges, leaving a clear area in the middle into which earth can be placed during casting-up.

Concavity: the inwards curve of the batter (slope) of a bank.

Coppicing: the practice of cutting trees and bushes almost to the ground, leaving no stems behind, and allowing the cut stumps (stools) to re-grow.

Cordwood: lengths of stems and branches 2 inches or more in diameter, with their side shoots removed, usually about 1.2 m (4 ft) long, prior to cutting up into logs for use as firewood.

Course: a row of turves or stones forming a horizontal layer along the face of a bank.

Crook: a peg-shaped piece of wood cut from a tree that is used to secure a steeper by driving it into the bank.

DBH: Diameter at Breast Height; the diameter of a tree trunk measured at 1.3 m above ground, a standard measurement of tree size.

Devon hedge: a linear earth bank, faced either with stone or turf, with trees or shrubs growing on it. Sometimes banks which do not have woody plants growing on them are still referred to as hedges in Devon.

Face: the side of a bank when viewed straight on.

Faggot: bundle of small twiggy branches used in the past to fire ovens and now occasionally for erosion control.

Fill: material used to infill the core of a bank, between the turf or stone facing.

Flail cutter: tractor-mounted adjustable trimming head commonly used to cut the sides and tops of hedges and bank vegetation.

Gapping-up: the practice of planting woody plants to fill gaps in a hedge.

Goyle: deep gully formed by water erosion, sometimes found alongside or between hedges, particularly in east Devon.

Hedder: old fashioned term for steeper.

Hedge: a row of shrubs or trees (the true hedgerow) together with associated features like banks, ditches, margins and hedgerow trees.

Hedgebank: a bank with shrub and tree species growing on it, the defining feature of a Devon hedge. Sometimes also referred to as banked hedges.

Hedgerow: a boundary line of trees and shrubs, provided that at one time the trees and shrubs were more or less continuous. Lines of trees that meet this definition are included in the term. Following the Hedgelinek definition, to qualify as a hedgerow, the feature should be over 20 m long and less than 5 m wide between major stems at the base. The terms hedge and hedgerow are often used interchangeably, but the proper term for the whole structure in Devon is a hedge.

Hedgerow tree: any tree which is either mature or which has clearly been retained to reach maturity as a standard or pollard. Such trees may be fruit or berry-producing trees like crab apple, hawthorn or holly as well as large species like oak, ash and beech. Emergent or isolated hedgerow trees are those with canopies which are clearly separated from the canopies of other trees.

Heel: the stub that projects above the hinge when a stem is laid (steeped). It is usually cut off.

Herbaceous plant (herb): one that is not woody, including grasses and ferns. Meadow and pasture flowers are mostly herbs.

Hydroseeding: spraying an aqueous mixture of seeds and mulch onto soil as a rapid cost-effective method of establishing grass and wildflower cover.

Knuckle: the swollen end of a stem with multiple small shoots formed when a hedge is repeatedly cut back to the same level.

Layering: the technique of getting a laid stem to root part way along its length to form a new plant by nicking the underside and covering the part with soil.

Laying (laid): the practice of cutting stems at the base, but not right the way through, so a hinge is left. The stems, called steepers in Devon, are then bent over close to the ground to form a living stock-proof barrier. Re-growth occurs from the base of the tree or bush and from the steepers. The Devon term for laying is steeping.

Let-up: practice of allowing a hedge to grow up to the height where it is right for laying.

Margin: the band of herbaceous growth between the hedge and the main cropping area of the field.

Medieval hedge: in Devon, typically one that dates back to the 12th to 14th centuries. Often irregular in shape and with many woody species.

Pleacher: this term is used rather than steeper in some parts of England outside Devon for laid stems.

Pollarding: the practice of cutting the main stem of a tree above the height which cattle or deer can reach, allowing multiple shoots to grow from the cut end. When sufficiently grown, these can be cropped for fodder, firewood or as poles. Repeated pollarding prolongs the life of trees.

Rambler: plant like bramble, dog-rose and field rose. See also climbers.

Reave: a long and generally straight boundary bank of earth or stone constructed during the Bronze Age.

Rejuvenate: encourage a shrub or tree to send up new growth from the base by laying or coppicing. The practice prolongs the life of some shrubs and trees.

Restoration: work necessary to repair, rather than maintain, a badly damaged hedge. See also rejuvenate.

Sap run: external flow or seepage of sap down a tree trunk, usually the result of damage. These may be of great importance for insects.

Shaping saw: a tractor-mounted cutting head consisting of one or more circular saws that can cut cleanly through thick woody stems.

Species-rich hedge: one with at least five woody species present in a 30 metre section that are native to the UK or are archaeophytes. Climbers and ramblers are not included apart from roses.

Standard: tree that has been allowed to develop its natural growth form, without pruning, pollarding or coppicing.

Steeper: see laying. See also pleacher.

Steeping: the Devon term for hedge laying.

Stone facing: reinforcing and stabilising bank sides with stones. These may be placed horizontally or vertically. Not to be confused with dry stone walling, which is the practice of building a stone wall without an inner earth bank (and without mortar - hence the word dry).

Stool: cut stump left to re-grow after coppicing.

Stretcher bond pattern: the pattern created by offsetting each course facing a bank by half the length of the turves or stones.

Strip field system/open strip fields: very large fields in which many individual farmers cultivated their own strips, a feature of farming in parts of the UK AD 700-1400.

Trimming: the practice of cutting hedges, usually with a tractor-mounted flail.

Turf/turves: a piece of grass and soil cut from the ground which is held together by matted roots.

Turf facing: reinforcing and stabilising bank sides with turves, usually taken from the adjacent field.

Up-righting: side-trimming a hedge while allowing the top to grow upwards for future laying or coppicing. See also let-up.

Veteran tree: one that has significant dead wood, loose bark, sap runs, tears, splits, scars, rot holes or hollow trunks. Such trees are likely to be of particular importance for bats and hole-nesting birds, for dead wood invertebrates and for fungi. Most veteran trees are ancient trees but some are younger with veteran tree features. See also ancient tree.

Woody plants: trees and bushes.

Further information

Defra (2007). *Hedgerow survey handbook. A standard procedure for local surveys in the UK*. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London. www.hedgeline.org.uk