

1. Soft shapes

This hedge on a boundary of my garden at Allt-y-bela used to be machine-cut. First I started cutting it by hand on my side, to a rounded, softer shape and now the farmer who owns the neighbouring plot lets me clip the whole thing so it sits comfortably with my garden and the field.



2. A natural look

In rural settings, a deciduous hedge such as hawthorn looks most at home when clipped in a free and naturalistic way with dips and curves that suit its form and emphasise its dense, twiggy texture.

3. Winter colour

Deciduous hedges are often beautiful in winter, when their shape is more clearly visible. Unclothed, the same hawthorn boundary hedge becomes warmer and richer in colour and, like all hedges, will be a haven for nesting birds.

4. Windows

Gaps cut into a hedge, like this one at Cranborne Manor in Dorset, frame the view on the other side. It's a technique that can be used in any size garden, drawing in a snippet of something special while hiding other, less picturesque bits.

5. Corridors

Yew makes wonderful internal walls as here, at Cranborne Manor, creating an axial corridor between one part of the garden and another. Clipped finials at intervals along its length slow the pace and add a note of grandeur.



Arne Maynard is a leading garden designer based in London and Monmouthshire

# Hedges

and how to use them

They can be one of the most versatile design tools in your garden. So what are the best ways to make the most of them?

WORDS ARNE MAYNARD PHOTOGRAPHS BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER



## Hedging plants

Arne Maynard chooses his favourite species for growing hedges, formal and informal

**YEW** Clipped yew has a density that lends itself to being cut into balls, cones or other shapes. To dress down, mix with hornbeam.

**BOX** Good for formal evergreen hedges or mix with hornbeam for an informal hedge: one box to every two hornbeams. Use the tall-growing box cultivar *Buxus sempervirens* 'Handsworthii'.

**BEECH** Has a formal feel that makes it best used alone or with copper beech. Worth growing for the wonderful depth of colour in autumn when the leaves turn.

**COPPER BEECH** A degree more formal than green beech, but dramatic and effective in the right situation.

**HORNBEAM** Excellent for deciduous hedges; less formal than beech and equally good mixed with other varieties.

**HAWTHORN** This makes a lovely deciduous country hedge, alone or with other native plants. With age it becomes dense and lichened and is beautiful in winter.

**FIELD MAPLE** Another lovely deciduous native plant, with autumn colour and cinnamon-coloured twigs in winter. Good alone or mixed with holly in a country hedge.

**HOLLY** Mix with yew or box for an evergreen country hedge. In formal hedges, clipped holly extending above the hedge marks an entrance.



PHOTOGRAPHY HOLLY STOCK WALES / ALAMY; COPPER BEECH/DAVE BEVAN / ALAMY; HAWTHORN/MALL BEVIEZ/PHOTOLIBRARY; FIELD MAPLE/ALLOVERPHOTOGRAPHY; LAMBY

Formal or country, precisely clipped or encouraged to bulge, hedges are among the most versatile of design tools for introducing structure and drama to a garden.

Medium to large hedges of 1.2m and higher can be put to an almost infinite number of uses, compartmentalizing, establishing axes and defining a route around the garden.

Context and choice of materials is important. Boundary hedges in particular need to sit comfortably with what adjoins them. In a country setting, hornbeam, beech or field maple work well. A mix of two species makes a tapestry hedge that breaks any sense of formality. In towns, formal

hedges often look better, and box, yew or copper beech will help you achieve this.

You can completely change the feel of a hedge by the way you clip it. A country hedge with a rounded top will look right in a rolling rural landscape. On the other hand, formal, square-cut hedges often suit city gardens.

Internal hedges are an excellent way to divide both rural and urban gardens. They can be more formal than boundary hedges. Height is important here – the hedge must be in proportion to the scale of the building and surrounding walls.

A hedge doesn't have to go from A to B; it can snake through the garden or step in and out to



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widen or narrow areas. In some places you might allow views over the hedge, in others you may want complete enclosure.

Hedges can also be a useful way to mask parts of the garden. Where a boundary wall is in poor shape, for example, a parallel hedge will hide it.

Never be afraid to experiment. The fact that you can cut and shape hedges in so many ways is what makes them such a wonderful device for adding drama to your garden. Buttresses cut into the hedge at an entrance, for example, will have the effect of drawing you in.

When I want to create a garden around an old house, I manipulate the way I plant hedges to

simulate great age. I use plants of different sizes together, planting them out of line and adding some here and there to create a bulge. Inspired by the ancient hedges at Corsham Court, I used this technique to create new hedges in an Oxfordshire garden (picture 7, opposite page). There we also transformed a hedge that had been clipped in straight lines for years, quite out of keeping with the house's age. We used chainsaws to cut great sweeps from the tops and sides of the hedges. They looked awful for a couple of years, but now they have exactly the feeling of antiquity I wanted. □

NEXT TIME Arne returns in February with design ideas for pleached trees and allées.

## 6. Living walls

The architectural qualities of hedges can benefit even small gardens. Clipped buttresses of yew in the tiniest space can enclose a seat or create a niche for a pot or sculpture.

## 7. Quirky character

Originally clipped in lines, these yew and box hedges were radically cut-into and extra plants were added in places to create an irregular shape. In less than ten years they have taken on the wonderful, misshapen look of ancient hedges.

## 8. An aged effect

Despite their well-established appearance, the layers of yew hedging in front of this church wall were newly planted in different sizes and clipped together. Swags of Cooper's Burmese rose (*R. 'Cooperi'*) intensify the effect.

## Suppliers

### RV Roger

This family-run business is excellent at packing and posting out great quality hedging plants, fruit trees and roses. RV Roger, The Nurseries, Malton Road, Pickering, North Yorkshire YO18 7JW. Tel 01751 472226, www.rvroger.co.uk

### Hopes Grove Nurseries

A good list of hedging plants available by mail order. Hopes Grove Nurseries, The Estate Office, Smallhythe Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 7LT Tel 01580 765600, www.hopesgrovenurseries.co.uk