



# Hedge Establishment

The control of weeds during the first three years after planting is essential to ensure good growth and survival of hedge plants. Weeds, in particular rank grass, can choke the hedge depriving it of light, nutrients and moisture.

These specifications aim to raise awareness of the methods available to control weeds and ensure good hedge establishment. The methods available are outlined below.

## **Mechanical Weeding**

This is the least successful method and has little impact on grass competition for moisture. However, in some cases these methods are the most appropriate and are often beneficial when used in conjunction with other methods of weed control.

### **a) Hand Weeding**

Weeding by hand is sometimes the only option on hedges close to open watercourses or in situations where other methods of weed control may damage the hedge plants. This can be done at any time of year but will be most beneficial from May onwards when the weeds begin to take a strong hold and compete with the hedge plants. Hand weeding may be required before other methods of control can be carried out if the weeds are very rank and the hedge plants are not clearly visible. This method can be very time consuming and may need to be repeated a number of times during the growing season.

### **b) Strimming**

This method can be useful where the hedge plants are clearly visible or protected by guards. Strimming can be a relatively quick method of weed control but as with hand weeding it needs repeating to be effective. Care must be taken not to damage the growing hedge plants whilst strimming. Protective clothing should be worn by the operator.

## Mulches

Natural mulches, such as straw, can be used to both retain moisture and suppress weed growth. Black polythene sheeting can also be used as a mat for continued weed control. Mulches are laid after planting and are especially effective for hedges planted on dry bank tops.

## Chemicals

There are a range of legal requirements that apply to the use and storage of pesticides. All users are required to take all reasonable precautions to protect the health of human beings, animals and plants, to safeguard the environment and in particular to avoid pollution of water.

There are a range of chemical treatments available for use on hedges – the following are two widely used examples.

Chemical users should have a Certificate of Competence and be familiar with the relevant COSHH regulations. Protective clothing should be worn by the operator and label instructions must be read and strictly adhered to.

### a) Propyzamide (e.g. Kerb granules)

Propyzamide is a residual soil acting weedkiller for the control of certain grasses and broadleaved weeds. It is not recommended during the first season after planting as this may lead to root damage. Propyzamide should not be used near open watercourses as it can be harmful to aquatic life. The action of the chemical will be reduced if the weather remains dry after use and ideal conditions are moist, cold soils but the chemical should not be applied on top of snow or in hard frosts. Application should be carried out between October and February, but ideally before the end of January. A certain amount of manual or mechanical weeding may be required before application since large amounts of organic litter can reduce the action of the chemical.

Propyzamide granules are supplied in shakers and so application is simple and can be very accurate with practice. 1 shaker pack should treat approximately 100 m of hedge.

### b) Glyphosate (e.g. Roundup)

Glyphosate is a contact acting chemical and should be used with extreme caution on new hedges. Glyphosate is only effective when applied directly to actively growing weeds (April – October). It will also damage or even kill the hedge plants if they come into direct contact with the chemical so a spray shield is essential to protect from drift. Glyphosate is very effective for clearing the ground of weeds prior to hedge planting and for spot treatment of weeds around the hedge.

## **Consultation and Advice**

For further general advice and information on the hedge establishment grant, contact the Conservation staff at the National Park Authority.

There are a range of legal requirements that apply to the use and storage of pesticides. All users are required to take all reasonable precautions to protect the health of human beings, animals and plants, to safeguard the environment and in particular to avoid pollution of water.

Further advice on the use of pesticide can be sought from a BASIS (British Agrochemical Supply Industry Scheme) Advisor. The sections on chemical use within this advice note have been developed in consultation with a BASIS registered advisor.

June 2013

**North York Moors National Park Authority, The Old Vicarage, Bondgate, Helmsley, York, YO62 5BP**

**Tel: 01439 772700**

**Email: [conservation@northyorkmoors.org.uk](mailto:conservation@northyorkmoors.org.uk)**

**Web: [www.northyorkmoors.org.uk](http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk)**