



5 Habitats in 5 Years

2017 – HEDGEROWS

Creating and managing habitats – the places where animals and plants live – is one of the most important things a park can do for the environment. When you think about it, few other businesses can give wildlife a home in the way a park can.

With this in mind, the David Bellamy Conservation Awards scheme is asking all participants to give extra attention to five specific habitats over the next five years. Starting, in 2017, with **hedgerows**.

Take part this year and receive your **hedge habitat badge**.

Over the next four years, we'll be asking you to focus on four more habitats, so by 2021 you'll be able to collect a complete set of five habitat badges – this handful of awards will show that you really are a friend to Britain's environment.

This year, we want you to do three simple things:

1. Take a look at the wildlife friendly hedges you've got on your park and work out how many metres you have in all (see next page for more details).
2. Think about how you can maximise the benefits that your hedgerows give to wildlife. You'll find some great tips and resources below. Once you've decided what to do, plan this work into your schedule for 2017 and beyond.
3. Send photos, hedge measurements and details of what you're doing to Rufus Bellamy at bellamycom1@aol.com. If you have an assessment this year, let your assessor know what you've been up to, so that they can note it in their report.

It's a win-win

The information you supply us about your hedgerow habitat will not only win you your hedge habitat badge, it'll also be really useful to the scheme, demonstrating that with metres and metres of hedgerow, the parks industry is part of the solution to the challenges facing the British countryside.



A bit more information ...

What should we measure?

We're looking for hedges that are predominantly made up of native species, such as hawthorn, blackthorn and bramble. According to Defra a hedge should be at least 20m long, but we are interested in any lengths of hedging that is of benefit to wildlife. When measuring please exclude any large gaps.

Why hedges?

Hedges make great boundaries and can break up a park, adding privacy and beauty. What's more, a thick hedge that's not over-pruned provides shelter, nest sites and food for many insects, bird and other animals. Hedges also provide vital corridors along which wildlife can move, linking up different sections of a park with each other and with the wider countryside.

What if we don't have any hedges?

Don't worry! It just means that you've spotted an opportunity to get planting. Why not find a bit of your boundary, or an area within your park, where you could put in a native hedge. A good time to plant is between November and March, so you can have the start of something wonderful in place for next year, when you'll be able to win you 'hedge habitat' badge.

What's happening next year?

To give you a heads up, the focus for next year (2018) will be wildflower areas (meadows and other grassland patches), so why not think about what you're doing in this area. If you haven't got any wildflower areas, why not plant one this year (even if it's just a small corner or roadside verge), so that you can be sure to win your **wildflower habitat badge** next time round. Information on creating wildflower habitats can be found [here](#) and the David Bellamy Award Scheme website on this [link](#), have a look in the Park Resource pages.

Any questions?

If you have any questions, please contact Rufus Bellamy at bellamycom1@aol.com



TOP TEN TIPS FOR HEALTHY HEDGE HABITATS

1. **See what you have:** It is incredibly helpful to know as much about your hedges as possible, such as the diversity of species they contain, their layout and length (Defra publish an excellent survey handbook – see next page for details).
2. **Let it grow:** Where appropriate, allow hedges to grow tall and thick – let the hedge ‘breathe’. The RSPB notes that thick dense cover at the base of a hedge helps protect nesting birds. Remember, a diversity of hedge types will help the widest range of species.
3. **Go native:** When planting new hedges choose native species such as blackthorn, hawthorn and hazel. See what’s growing in your local hedges for inspiration.
4. **Go mixed:** In general, the greater the variety of plants in hedge, the greater the variety of wildlife it will support. For a mixed hedge, the Wildlife Trusts recommend including three plants of one species per metre along with one plant each of two other species. A large hedge can include some standard trees, such as oaks.
5. **Plant up gaps:** Use native species that are appropriate to your region to fill in gaps in any existing hedges.
6. **Link things up:** When planting a new hedge or adding to an old one, try and link your hedge to other habitats on your park such as woodlands or ponds. This will provide a safe passage for animals.
7. **Manage with a light touch:** Trim in January or February to avoid damaging nests and to allow all berries to be eaten. If possible, only trim one side of a hedge each year. Trim on a two- or three-year rotation to allow thick nesting cover to develop. If necessary, use laying or coppicing to restore and maintain your hedge.
8. **Add wildlife value:** Add climbers, such as Honeysuckle, Ivy and Old Man’s Beard, to add extra thickness and wildlife value.
9. **Create a rich grass margin:** Leave a grass strip (at least 1m wide) along the base of hedges. Let leaf litter gather as this can provide habitat for insects and other animals. Encourage flowers and grasses along the bases of your hedges.
10. **Keep dead wood:** Many hedges contain dead wood. This can be a valuable habitat, so leave it in place if possible.



Advice and information

The internet is full of information on all aspects of hedge management. Good resources can be found at:

www.hedgelaying.org.uk - the National Hedgelaying Society provides training and information on traditional hedge management.

www.hedgelinek.org.uk - Hedgelinek is a partnership for everyone interested in hedgerows; its website is a cornucopia of all things hedge-related.

www.hedgerows.co.uk - the English Hedgerows Trust website has a great Good Practice Guide and species list, amongst other information.

www.rspb.org.uk - The RSPB provides lots of information about hedge management (search hedges)

www.swog.org.uk - The Small Woodland Owners' Group works to conserve British woodland and is open to anyone interested in woodland management.

www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk - download the Wildlife Trusts' *Hedges for Wildlife* leaflet

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk - lots of information on hedge planting, community involvement, woodland activity ideas, funding etc.

www.bellamyparks.co.uk

For lots of interesting advice on hedge planting and management visit the David Bellamy Award Scheme website on this [link](#), take a look at the Park Resource pages, where you'll be able to download a number of articles that deal with hedge planting on parks

Hedge surveys

Defra publish an excellent Hedgerow Survey Handbook available [here](#) to download.

Funding for hedges

Various grants are available for farmers and landowners for hedgerow planting and management. Advice and information can be obtained from gov.uk, the [Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Association](#), your local Wildlife Trust or local authority.