



Wild Seed Project

RETURNING NATIVE PLANTS TO THE MAINE LANDSCAPE

NATIVE HEDGEROWS:

LOW-MAINTENANCE WOODY PLANTINGS
FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND BIODIVERSITY

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WHAT DOES A HEDGEROW LOOK LIKE?

A hedgerow is a diverse planting of woody plants — from shrubs to small trees along with herbaceous groundcovers at their base — grouped together with similar demands of soil type, moisture and sunlight. Think layers of vegetation: an occasional large tree rising up above a mixture of shrubs, some of considerable width, others with tall, arching stems under-planted with lower shrubs, so that every available space is covered in growth. Multiples of each species are normally planted to ensure healthy cross-pollination and to provide an abundance of food for pollinators and birds. As the hedgerow matures it can provide a tremendous amount of habitat that leaves little space for opportunistic weeds to grow.

A hedgerow should be a minimum of 6 feet wide, ideally up to 15 feet. Connecting the hedgerow to other vegetation, such as woodlands, meadows, wetland, existing yard trees and neighboring landscapes, links disconnected habitats and assists plants, pollinators and birds in their movement. The larger the hedgerow, the greater the benefits. You can start small and extend your hedgerow a bit every year.

A hedgerow can be planted as a buffer along a road, as a divider between fields, on the shady edge of the forest, in low, wet areas such as in a swale or ditch (an area too wet to plant with traditional crops and often drained in agricultural systems), or in those dry, rocky or sandy areas where annual crops cannot thrive. This can include those in-between places where you now mow, or where the soil type does not support cultivated crops. There are native species that thrive in every type of growing condition — from the wet to the dry and even in deep shade. There is no need to give up your fertile fields; this is an opportunity to bring more life to those areas less desirable for your crops.

BENEFITS OF A NATIVE HEDGEROW TO A FARM

Native plants are high-value additions to a farm landscape because of the many ecosystem services they provide, including:

- Providing food and habitat for birds that are critical for maintaining a healthy balance of insect populations.
- Providing year-round food and habitat for pollinators, who need more than summer flowers for foraging. Insects also need the leaves, bark, branches, dried stems and leaf litter that perennial woody and herbaceous native plants provide throughout the year for nesting and protection from predators.
- Native trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials have deep roots that create a permanent, diverse soil community of fungi, small critters and microorganisms different from a regenerative organic farm soil where digging and harvesting disrupts many species in the soil.
- Many hedgerow plants can provide additional farm income from a harvestable crop of flowers, fruits and nuts, as well as branches for winter decorations

NATIVE HEDGEROWS ARE LOW- MAINTENANCE PLANTINGS

Native species are much less demanding in their care and nutrient needs compared to domesticated crops, and when matched to the site conditions, native plants are very low-maintenance.



Winterberry holly is stunning in the fall as the bright red berries light up the landscape. In midsummer, their numerous tiny flowers are covered with many small pollinating insects. *Photo by Lisa Looke*



Viburnums are top wildlife plants and make very durable hedgerow shrubs. Flowers attract a huge diversity of pollinators; they are host plants for many butterfly and moth species, and are also top attractors of songbirds. *Photo by Heather McCargo*

Native plants do not have the high nutrient demands of cultivated crops. With a native habitat planting, soil fertility is maintained with the annual fall of leaves and other woody debris, plus the droppings of birds and other creatures that make the hedgerow their home. The fungi and soil microorganisms break down this annual recycling of nutrients and slowly release it to the hedgerow plants. No yearly additions of composts, manures or mulches are needed — these can be saved for farm crops.

PREPARING YOUR SITE

Sheet mulching is the easiest and best way to prepare the site that has been mowed meadow or lawn. If the area has some existing native trees and shrubs, the sheet mulch won't damage them. Sheet mulching should be done for at least 3 to 12 months before planting to give the smothered vegetation time to break down and return to the soil.

1. Mow existing vegetation low to the ground.
2. Lay down overlapping layers of uncoated cardboard (the bigger the better) to cover the whole area to be planted.
3. Add a thick layer of mulch — at least 3 inches, making sure the cardboard is well covered.
4. Mulch can be leaves (best), wood chips (aged is better), a very thick layer of straw or spoiled hay, or undyed bark mulch for a neater look.
5. Wait 3 to 12 months to let the cardboard and mulch do its job of killing the existing vegetation.
6. Choose your plants while you wait.

How to Sheet Mulch:

The two best times to plant are early spring (as soon as the ground thaws before mid-May) or in the fall (September or October). You can slice right through the mulch when it is time to plant.

If you intend to make your hedgerow in an area with aggressive woody shrubs, such as buckthorn, honeysuckle, burning bush or barberry, these need to be removed first, either individually or if you have animals, fenced goats and pigs are very effective at removing woody vegetation.

CHOOSING AND FINDING NATIVE PLANTS

To choose plants that will thrive on your site, you must first assess your soil type, moisture level and sun exposure. Once you have done this, you can look at the lists below and choose your native plant species to match your specific growing conditions. In your hedgerow, plan to use at least a dozen different species with multiples of each kind.

Bare root trees and shrubs establish very well when planted in early spring. Plugs — small first-year plants — establish successfully when planted in both the spring and the fall.

You can find a directory of native plant growers and sellers at wildseedproject.net/buy-native-plants

PLANTS FOR SUNNY MEDIUM SOILS

For a mostly sunny site with mesic soil (medium moisture and fertility, moist in spring, may be dry in the summer):

- Shadbush (*Amelanchier* spp.), multi-stemmed small tree
- Chokeberry (*Aronia* spp.), multi-stemmed medium shrub
- Wild plum (*Prunus americana* and wild cherry species), suckering small tree
- Hawthorne (*Crataegus* spp.), small tree

- Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*), multi-stemmed medium shrub
- Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), small tree
- Yellow bush honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*), suckering low shrub
- Shrubby St. John's-wort (*Hypericum prolificum*), small shrub
- Quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), medium-sized tree
- Virginia rose (*Rosa virginiana*), suckering low to medium shrub
- Shrub dogwood (*Swida racemosa*, *S. sericea*), suckering large shrub
- Meadowsweet (*Spiraea alba*, *S. tomentosa*), small shrub
- Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*), medium-sized evergreen tree
- Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), medium-sized tree
- Viburnum (*Viburnum americanum*, *V. lentago*, *V. nudum*, *V. dentatum*), arching multi-stemmed large shrubs
- New England aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*), herbaceous groundcover
- Canada anemone (*Anemone canadensis*), herbaceous groundcover
- Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), herbaceous groundcover
- Mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum virginicum*), herbaceous groundcover

PLANTS FOR WET SOILS, MOSTLY SUNNY

- Pussy willow (*Salix discolor*), multi-stemmed large shrub*
- Sweetgale (*Myrica gale*), multi-stemmed low evergreen shrub
- Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *canadensis*), multi-stemmed suckering large shrub*
- Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*), suckering medium evergreen shrub*
- Silky dogwood (*Swida amomum*), suckering large shrub
- Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*), suckering medium shrub*
- Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), suckering medium shrub
- Winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*), multi-stemmed medium shrub*

- Golden groundsel (*Packer aurea*), herbaceous groundcover
- Golden alexanders (*Zizia aurea*), herbaceous groundcover
- New York aster (*Symphotrichum novi-belgii*), herbaceous groundcover
- Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), herbaceous groundcover
- Ferns (*Osmunda* spp.), herbaceous groundcover

*Note: these species are also tolerant of medium moisture soils.

PLANTS FOR SUNNY DRY SANDY OR GRAVELLY SOIL

- Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), low suckering shrub
- Dwarf shadbush (*Amelanchier spicata*), low suckering shrub
- Sweet-fern (*Comptonia peregrina*), low suckering shrub
- New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*), low shrub
- Shrubby St. John's-wort (*Hypericum prolificum*), low shrub
- Lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), low suckering shrub
- Bayberry (*Morella caroliniensis*), medium suckering shrub
- Beach plum (*Prunus maritima*), small tree or large shrub
- Bear oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*), small bushy tree
- Dwarf chinkapin oak (*Quercus prinoides*), small tree
- Pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*), medium evergreen tree
- Gray birch (*Betula populifolia*), medium multi-stemmed tree
- Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), medium evergreen tree
- Sumac (*Rhus* spp.), large shrub
- Virginia rose (*Rosa virginiana*), low to medium suckering shrub
- Pussytoes (*Antennaria* spp.), herbaceous groundcover
- Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), herbaceous groundcover
- Northeastern beardtongue (*Penstemon hirsutus*), herbaceous groundcover

Shady areas are not a problem for native plants, and witch hazel is at its peak visually in late fall with its October/November blooms.
Photo by Lisa Looke



ADD A FEW LARGE CANOPY TREES

Consider incorporating the occasional large canopy tree into these sunny hedgerows. Oaks are easy to grow from an acorn planted in the mulch — swamp white oak for wet areas, red oak for medium soils, or bur oak medium to dry soils.

HEDGEROW PLANTS FOR SHADY SITES

For part to full shady areas such as under-tree canopies or along the north or east side of a building, here are some recommended plants:

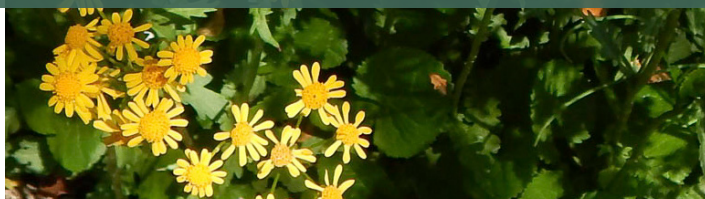
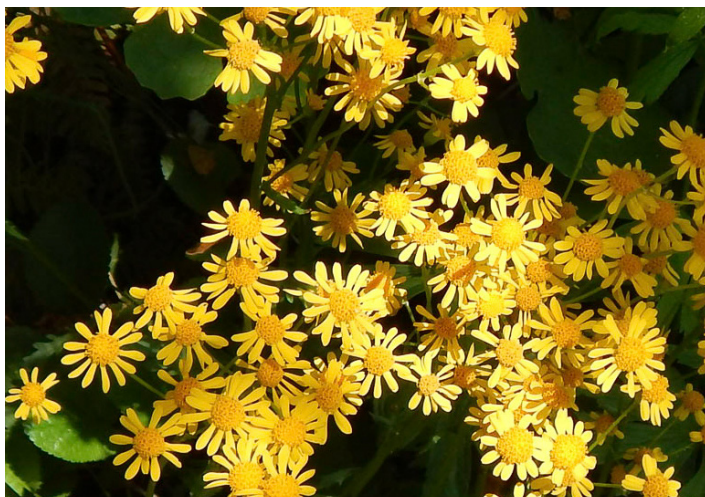
- Striped maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*), medium-sized tree
- Mountain maple (*Acer spicatum*), multi-stemmed large arching shrub
- Shadbush (*Amelanchier canadensis*, *A. laevis*), multi-stemmed small tree**
- Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), medium tree
- Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*), multi-stemmed medium shrub**
- Yellow bush honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*), suckering low shrub**
- Witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), multi-stemmed large shrub or tree
- Smooth hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*), multi-stemmed medium shrub**
- Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), multi-stemmed large shrub
- Purple-flowering raspberry (*Rubus odoratus*), suckering medium shrub **
- Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*), medium shrub
- Ironwood (*Carpinus caroliniana*), multi-stemmed small tree**
- Hophornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*), single-stemmed medium tree**

- Pagoda dogwood (*Swida alternifolia*), single- or multi-stemmed small tree
- Azalea (*Rhododendron prunifolium*, *R. viscosum*), medium shrub
- Maple-leaved viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*), low suckering shrub
- Lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), very low suckering shrub**
- Hobblebush (*Viburnum lantanooides*), multi-stemmed medium shrub
- Wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*, *E. macrophylla*), herbaceous groundcover
- Zigzag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*), herbaceous groundcover
- New York fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*), herbaceous groundcover
- Ostrich fern (*Matteuccia strethiopteris*), herbaceous groundcover
- Maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), herbaceous groundcover

**These species also grow well in full sun.

TAKE ACTION

Whether you start small or large, a hedgerow will expand habitat on your farm, create corridors for wildlife, improve your farm's ability to capture and store rainwater and carbon, and add some beauty. Imagine if all our landscapes — from the rural farms stretching into the urban areas — were connected via a network of hedgerows. This linking of habitats would be a huge boost to plant and animal diversity. It would also provide ecosystem resiliency, and enable fauna and flora populations to migrate with our warming climate.



Wild Seed Project

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Wild Seed Project builds awareness of the vital importance of native plants and provides all people with the tools to restore biodiversity in their own communities. We equip community members with the skills and resources they need to collectively repopulate landscapes with native plants that expand wildlife habitat, support biodiversity, and build climate resilience.

Learn more at wildseedproject.net