

Planting New Hedges

Specification extract · Pages 31–34

What this document is

This is an extract of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) document “ACRES Co-operation Non-Productive Investments Specification”, Version 2.2, July 2026. It contains the pages covering the Planting New Hedges action (pages 31–34 of the full specification).

Because the specification runs each action straight into the next, the first and last pages of this extract may also show the end or beginning of a neighbouring action. The section for this action starts on page 31 (the printed page number matches the page number in the full document).

Always check the current version

DAFM updates the specification from time to time. The full document is the authoritative version and should be consulted before undertaking any work. It is available from:

Full specification (PDF, opens at this action):

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/f8e2ccf8/NPI_specifications_July_2026_2.pdf#page=31

ACRES NPI page on gov.ie:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/f5a48-agri-climate-rural-environment-scheme-acres/#non-productive-investments>

About this action on the ACRES CP website

<https://acresireland.ie/action-projects/npi-planting-new-hedges/>

- Don't lay hedgerows directly down on the line of the cut base. Roll the stems back slightly from the ground cuts to allow light in which will encourage better rejuvenation at the cuts.
- Trim regrowth after 3 or 4 years if getting a lot of vertical growth but light trim the top only. **Infilling:**
- Infilling with light whips is difficult as they do not compete well with the existing root structure. It is advisable to infill with stronger plants to ensure survival.

General:

- It is recommended to avail of specialist training prior to undertaking hedge rejuvenation.
- Species selection should be guided by what is growing at similar locations on the farm or nearby sites. Use the opportunity to increase the species diversity in the hedge.
- If cutting, you should not cut all hedges on the farm in any one year. It is good practice to cut on a minimum 3-year cycle leaving at least one third of the hedgerows uncut each year.
- It is advisable to cut the hedges in an 'A' shape which allows the base and the sides to receive more light resulting in a denser structure valuable for wildlife.

Planting New Hedgerows

Objective

This measure aims to enhance the visual appearance of the countryside, support biodiversity on farms and protect water quality.

Background

Hedgerows provide an important wildlife habitat with greater benefits where they extend or link existing hedgerows or woodland habitats. A hedgerow over 1.8 metres in height that has a wide base, a mix of woody species for an extended pollen and nectar season, and has some mature trees, will have the greatest benefit for biodiversity. Hedgerows also have additional benefits for water quality when strategically positioned to help reduce soil erosion and sediment run off. **Site**

Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
- On CP parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned or submitted: Grassland, Rough Grazing, Coastal, Corncrake or Chough.
- This action cannot be selected within an archaeological monument buffer.

- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, or Annex 1 Grasslands. Allowed in Breeding Wader Hotspots but may fail screening in certain areas.
- Ensure the site is suitable for hedgerow establishment (see additional guidance).
- The new hedge must not be applied for along an existing hedgerow or stone wall or under the shade of a treeline/woodland.
- Where the Planting a New Hedgerow action is taken on a farm boundary, the applicant must have control of and access, to maintain both sides.

Note 5: Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of this ACRES NPI.

Requirements:

1. To be eligible for this action the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. Each length applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
2. The new hedge must not be placed against an existing hedgerow or stone wall or under the shade of a treeline/woodland.
3. The new hedge must consist of at least 5 plants per metre planted in a double staggered row from the list of hedgerow species listed in Table 4 below.
4. Plants must be of Irish Origin or Irish Provenance excluding Whitethorn *Crataegus monogyna*, as outlined in ACRES Circular No. 27 of 2023 and purchased from DAFM registered professional operators.
5. All plants purchased for this action must have an accompanying plant passport and participants must ensure that they retain the plant passport(s) and receipts(s).
6. All newly planted hedgerows must be protected from livestock with an appropriate permanent fence.
7. Grass and other competing vegetation must be controlled around the plants annually to aid establishment.
8. Plant Protection Products are not permitted after planting within 1.5m of the hedge. Spot treatment of noxious weeds is allowed.
9. Failed or dead plants must be replaced in the following planting season.
10. The hedge and fence must be maintained for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
11. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan. This action can only be claimed for payment once delivered in accordance with NPI Specification.

Additional guidance

- Apply for Hedgerow Rejuvenation if there is an existing gappy hedgerow that needs improvement. NPI Planting New Hedgerow should not be applied for along an existing hedgerow.

- It is recommended to plant a mix of at least 3 species from the Hedgerow species outlined in Table 4. below. No one species should make up more than 85% of the total. If hedgerow species other than Whitethorn cannot be sourced, then plant one tree at least every 30m from the Tree Species (Table 5 below) and let mature without cutting and protect with a tree guard or shelter. Plant native species that already grow in the local area.
- November to March is the recommended time for planting bare root hedgerow plants.
- Prepare the ground along a 1.5m wide strip to provide good soil conditions and as little competition from other vegetation as possible.
- Take care of roots before planting by keeping them always covered, especially when it is sunny or windy avoiding opening more than one bag of plants at a time and water regularly until planted.
- Where a hedge is being planted to intercept the flow of water along a pathway between a critical source area and a watercourse you should create a bund/ berm/ bank at least 1 m wide and 30 cm high. Plant the hedge on the downslope side of the new bank.
- If you want a hedgerow with a wide base that will always be managed by topping, prune thorn species (except Holly) down to 3 to 5 cm with a sloping cut to leave a sharp point. In subsequent years, carry out a second pruning after the first growing season. This should be done when the plants are dormant during the winter period. Repeat the process again after the second growing season by cutting each of the stems (except Holly) back down approximately 3 cm above the previous cut. This will help achieve a dense bushy growth at the base. Compostable film or plastic will be essential for controlling competing vegetation in nutrient rich areas.
- Whitethorn and Holly do not tolerate very wet soils and whitethorn will not thrive at high elevations. Blackthorn is more suited to heavy soils and for coastal exposed sites. Take note of what hedge and tree species are thriving in hedgerows in the locality. If planting a hedgerow to help reduce overland flow, ensure the hedgerow will not be flooded or become overwhelmed in heavy rain events. Planting further up a slope or on a slightly raised bund may be an option to consider.
- Take great care using a strimmer to control competing vegetation as the young hedge can be seriously damaged.
- The fence may need to be moved out further as the hedgerow grows and expands.
- Where a new hedgerow is being planted alongside a drain or watercourse, a minimum distance of 2.5m should be maintained from the top of the bank.

Table 4. Hedgerow species for planting

Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>)
Dog Rose (<i>Rosa canina</i>)
Guelder Rose (<i>Viburnum opulus</i>)
Hawthorn/Whitethorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)
Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)
Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)

Spindle (<i>Euonymous europaeus</i>)
Alder Buckthorn (<i>Frangula alnus</i>)

Table 5. Tree Species (0.6 -0.9 metres high)

Bird Cherry (<i>Prunus padus</i>)
Crab Apple (<i>Malus sylvestris</i>) If possible, Mc Griggors (Crab) Cavan Sweet (Crab) Lough Key (Crab)
Goat Willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>)
Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)
Grey Willow (<i>Salix cinerea</i>)
Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)
Wild Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>)
Hawthorn/Whitethorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)
Irish Whitebeam (<i>Sorbus Hibernia</i>)
Sessile oak (<i>Quercus petraea</i>)
Pedunculate oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)

Planting Traditional Orchards

Objective:

To support biodiversity and help ensure the survival of traditional Irish apple varieties.

Background:

While apple trees have been grown in Ireland for many centuries, the native genetic pool has been significantly altered to incorporate a number of modern varieties. This measure endeavours to conserve the authenticity of traditional apple tree varieties while also sustaining their heritage, by only growing trees that were once common to Irish soils.

Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
- On CP Parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned or submitted: Grassland and Rough Grazing.
- This action cannot be selected within an archaeological monument buffer.