

GARDENS

More Than Just a Hedge

DEFINING YOUR LANDSCAPE



A once-common sight, it turns out that less than half of us have now seen a wild hedgehog – but, thankfully, there's one local company trying to change that

Cheshire based Big Hedge Co. is passionate about growing and installing hedges to create more natural habitats. They also hope to educate people further on what can be done to help encourage wildlife back into our gardens. Founded by Gold Medal Winners at the Royal Horticultural

Society (RHS) Chelsea Flower Show (2015) and RHS Tatton Park (2011 – 2013), Big Hedge Co. specialises in beautiful, ready-grown hedges and topiary. Fully mature and instantly satisfying, these natural elements do more than act as boundaries – they define your whole landscape. Big Hedge Co. aims to inspire clients about the use of hedging to create a range of instant habitats which, in turn, will enhance the bio-diversity around them, for the benefit of all.

The Cheshire Wildlife Trust
According to the Wildlife Trust, there are now only thought to be about 450,000km of hedgerow left and only 190,000km are thought to be ancient or species-rich.

Martin Varley, Director of Conservation at Cheshire Wildlife Trust, adds: "Hedgerows provide wonderful sources of food and shelter for everything from insects through to mammals and birds – from nectar for bees and butterflies, through to winter berries for birds when food is harder to find. They also act as wildlife corridors, providing a safe route for mammals such as hedgehogs, and amphibians to move across areas, and their branches and dense foliage act as the perfect nesting sites for many of the UK's favourite small birds. Hedgerows are so important that 130 UK priority

species are associated with them – that is why we actively manage hedgerows on our nature reserves to conserve this important habitat."

Hedges are Habitats, Fences are Boundaries

David T. Binks, managing director of Big Hedge Co., is passionate about the brand, the quality of the product and the supporting environmental message: "As a new business, we have been proud to supply such recognisable brands as RHS Chelsea Flower Show and Cholmondeley Castle's RHS Tatton Park Flower Show Garden, as well as Bolesworth International Horse Show, already this year."



As part of a wider environmental message, David is also delighted with the opportunity to showcase the product as well as spread the word about the need for further habitat creation. He adds: "Big Hedge Co. firmly believes that these ancient habitats should be cherished, and more sustainable habitats created for future generations to enjoy. We are unique in being able to provide a full-service proposition which can include an initial consultation and accompanying soil analysis as well as installation, irrigation and supporting maintenance. The new transactional website provides easy access to a range of hedging species so you can create an instant habitat!" bighedgeco.com

TOP TIPS FOR AUTUMN

Big Hedge Co also collaborates with a number of exclusive partners, one of which is landscape architect and garden designer Carolyn Willitts, founder of the Manchester-based CW Studio. Here, she shares tips for an autumn garden. (cwstudio.co.uk)

#1. Enjoy the golden haze of ornamental grasses in the autumn sunshine. Helenium 'Moerheim Beauty' looks stunning weaving through the upright grass Calamagrostis × acutiflora 'Karl Foerster' in the evening sunshine.

#2. Of course, you need more plants! Look back over the year; were there any months where you

needed some extra colour or wow-factor? Any gaps? Now is the time to go shopping and move or divide plants in your borders.

#3. Time for a good tidy up, then mulch with compost or last year's leaf mould to keep the moisture in.

#4. Make leaf mould for next year. Create a simple bin of wire netting with timber stakes and pile in the leaves.

#5. Collect seeds from your garden and store them to dry in a named and dated envelope (the odds are that you won't remember what they are in the spring otherwise).

#6. Have plants that you really look forward to as the seasons change: Anemone × hybrida 'Honorine Jobert' really glows in the autumn border.

#7. Plant a hedge! For a fantastic way of creating a backdrop to your garden, plant a mature hedge for immediate impact and a wildlife habitat for winter.



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