



## **How to manage hedges, verges and sod banks for the benefit of wildlife?**

Good management practices include:

- Planning ahead and not cutting hedges in the bird nesting season (March – August) wherever possible.
- Giving known, fast growing and problematic hedges a cut in late February, just before nesting season, to help stop hedges sticking out into roads.
- Giving any protruding bits of vegetation (such as bramble limbs) a small trim with hand shears during the nesting season, rather than cutting the whole hedge.
- Cutting hedges in winter on a 2/3 year rotational basis – leaving sections uncut each year to flower and produce berries and seeds, which are an important food source for birds in the cold winter months.
- Planting up gappy hedges with native hedging species in the planting season (autumn/winter)
- Leaving an uncultivated/uncut strip at the base of sod banks and hedgerows of at least 1m, though 2-3m is recommended if possible.
- Avoiding cutting flower rich verges and grass-topped sod banks between March – August and instead, cutting these annually from September onwards, once the seeds have set, to maintain the diversity of flowers for future years.
- Not using herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, slug pellets, or any other such substances.
- Leaving some standing dead wood habitat where it will not be a hazard and as long as it is not elm.
- Checking for invasive non-native (INNS) plant species prior to cutting to ensure that these are not spread via the works, which would be an offence under the Wildlife Act 1990. For more information see [www.gov.im/invasive-non-native-species](http://www.gov.im/invasive-non-native-species).
- Hand cutting or pulling Himalayan balsam throughout the spring and early summer (avoiding native vegetation) to assist in its management and eradication.
- Not cutting Japanese knotweed as this will aid its spread. Instead, Japanese knotweed infected areas should be marked out for avoidance and responsible control measures put in place. See [www.gov.im/japanese-knotweed](http://www.gov.im/japanese-knotweed) for more information.
- Not treating all your hedges the same – though in general, larger, denser and infrequently cut hedges are better for wildlife, a varied hedge will provide a variety of conditions and features to suit a greater diversity of wildlife.

We all can, and should, do our bit to maintain and increase the natural health of our island. Good hedge, bank and verge management is just a small but very important piece of the puzzle.