

## Protecting Hedgerow Trees

Tagging hedgerow trees is a new initiative in Britain which aims to encourage young trees which are already growing in hedgerows, and protect them from the annual 'short top and sides' which most hedges receive in the spring or autumn. Most trimming of hedgerows is now done with a flail cutter mounted onto the back of a tractor, and these indiscriminately slash back everything in their path. The aim of tagging young hedgerow trees is to warn the operator of the tractor as to when he is approaching a tree masked within the hedge, so that he can cut around it and not trim the tree back to the same height or width as the rest of the hedge.

The estimated number of hedgerow trees in Britain is 1.8 million, and around one third of these are over 100 years old. Many of these will be lost over the next 50 years as old trees die. The [Tree Council of Great Britain](#) has therefore launched a countrywide campaign to increase awareness of hedge trees, to reverse their decline, and make people aware of the importance of hedgerow trees for landscape and biodiversity.



Photo: Mature hedgerow trees in an English hedgerow.

So, to re-establish trees in the UK's hedgerows, approximately 8,000 volunteer tree wardens (supported by over 180 member organisations,

including Local Authorities), intend to walk Britain's hedges every year with the land owner's permission, and to tag any young trees that they might find so that the next time that those hedges are trimmed, the young tree can be allowed to grow on.

The [Isle of Man Woodland Trust](#) would like to establish this scheme on the Island, and work with any farmer who is willing to allow trees that are already growing in his hedges to be marked. The Island is noticeably lacking in hedgerow trees in some areas, and we could well do with a scheme that allows these trees to come through and not be cut back every year. Thousands of trees have already self-seeded or spread via bird and animal droppings and are growing in the hedges around the Island. What they need now is a chance to become established and show themselves above the rest of the hedge, and then after a couple of years they will be so obvious that the hedge trimmer will spot them in time and so be able to trim around them.

Anyone who feels that they could lend a few hours of their time to walk hedgerows in their locality or who know a farmer who might join this initiative, please get in touch with the Trust. Contact can be made through the secretary on 842647 or via our website which can be opened using the link on this website.

Links:

- [Hedge Tree Campaign](#)
- [Hedgerow Harvest](#)
- [Tree Council](#)

Richard Crowhurst, February 2012