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**Hedgerows**

**Hedgerows**

*by Nancy Wilson, U. C. Master Gardener*

If you want to draw more wildlife to your garden, consider planting a hedgerow. You may have noticed hedgerows in pictures of the English countryside or in travels through rural England, where ancient hedging often borders roads and divides fields.

The word "habitat" may bring to mind a wild and unruly area of native plantings. Until well into the 20th century, such habitat areas were common in the United States. But as our farms grew in size and our cities and suburbs expanded, these wildlife sanctuaries gradually disappeared.

Today, many groups, including the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, are working to reestablish native plant hedgerows as a habitat for butterflies, beneficial insects, pollinators and birds, and even mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

A hedgerow is a line or grouping of trees, shrubs, perennials, herbs, annuals, grasses and vines planted along fence lines, property lines or water areas. Using a diversity of plant materials lures insects, which in turn bring beneficial predators such as other insects, birds, toads, frogs and lizards.

With some forethought, you can create an enticing habitat and support the natural life cycle in your area. Choose plants with long and successive bloom periods to provide nectar, pollen, seeds, fruit and nesting material virtually year round. Don't prune during nesting season or clean up fallen debris in the winter. Provide shelter from the wind and a safe place to raise young. Add fresh water for drinking and bathing and a muddy place for butterflies.

In return, you will observe wildlife that will entertain you, eat pests in your garden, fertilize your plants and increase your yield without chemical pesticides or fertilizers. If you plant California natives or other regionally appropriate plants from local sources, your hedgerow will be a success throughout our dry summers, and you will be respecting the ecological integrity of the area.

Native-habitat hedgerows are not necessarily tidy and well trimmed. They are working gardens that support wildlife and require very little care once established.

Fall is a perfect time to begin planning, preparing or planting a habitat hedgerow. If you are just beginning to plan, visit established habitat gardens over the coming year to see what their plantings look like from season to season. Gardens to visit include Harvest for the Hungry Garden in Santa Rosa; Sonoma State University's Native Plant and Habitat Garden in Cotati; Fetzer Vineyards in Hopland; Hallberg Butterfly Garden in Sebastopol, East Bay Regional Park Botanic Garden at Tilden Park in Berkeley; and the Native Plant Garden at Strybing Arboretum in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.

To prepare an area for planting, first you need to suppress the weeds. Cut weeds low, add several layers of newspaper and cover with four to six inches of mulch. By the time you are ready to plant, the layered mulches will have controlled the weeds and started microbial action in the soil.

Plant your hedgerow in the fall, if possible, to take advantage of coming rain. Construct berms for native plants to improve drainage. Choose young plants over more mature plants; the young roots will settle deeply in place. Water if necessary the first summer to get plants established.

For good advice and suitable native and non-native habitat plants, visit the California Flora Nursery in Fulton; Wayward Gardens in Sebastopol; and all the native plant society and botanical garden fall plant sales.

To encourage caterpillars, choose plants in the mallow, snapdragon or parsley families, as well as milkweed, willows, oaks and grasses. To draw butterflies, plant California buckeye, strawberry tree, butterfly bush, California coffeeberry, chaste tree, flowering currants, asters, goldenrod, hollyhock, milkweed, scabiosa, purple coneflower, red

valerian, sages, verbena, yarrow, zinnia, hops and Dutchman's pipe. For birds, plant: California bay laurel, oak, toyon, willow, blue elderberry, coyote bush, dogwood, manzanita, bee balm, California fuchsia, columbine, evening primrose, penstemon, coreopsis, rosemary, sages, California wild rose, wild grape, native clematis and wildflowers. Beneficial insects are drawn to oaks, plants in the sunflower family, native buckwheat and culinary and medicinal herbs.

For more information, consult *The Habitat Garden Book* by Nancy Bauer (available from Coyote Ridge Press in Sebastopol or by email from [nbauer@earthlink.net](mailto:nbauer@earthlink.net)). On October 9 and October 19, Leana Beeman-Sims, owner of Wayward Gardens, will lecture on "Sharing Your Garden with Wildlife" at Strybing Arboretum ([www.sfbotanicalgarden.org](http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org)).

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