

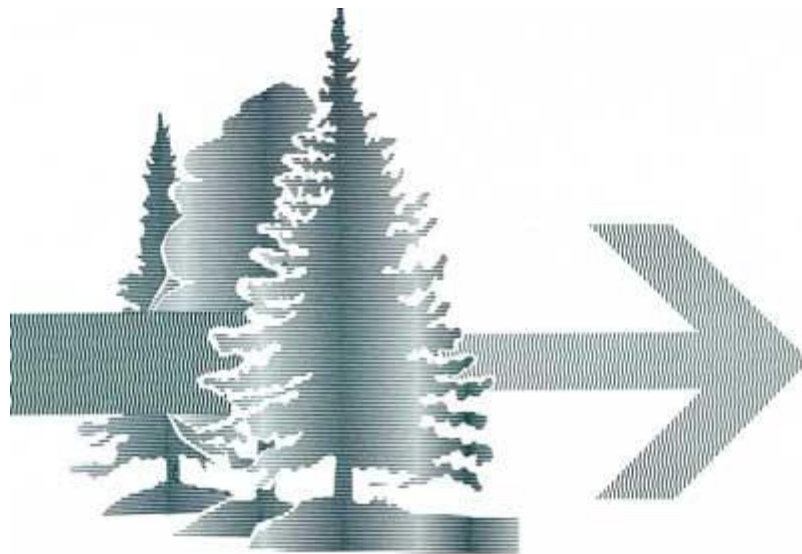
# HEDGEROWS . . . can help

- Soil Conservation
- Crop Protection
- Wildlife Habitat
- Landscape Beauty

Written by Ian MacQuarrie/ Design by Ken Shelton and P. John Burden

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Hedgerows are an important but often neglected part of the Prince Edward Island landscape. They are quite variable in height, thickness, age and condition. Some have many kinds of trees, others are just a single line of gnarled white spruce. Some are planned — deliberately planted by man. Still others may have grown up accidentally, and are composed of "volunteer" trees, the kinds that readily seed into any bit of uncultivated land. Whatever their status or origin, hedgerows help divide the Island landscape into its familiar checker-board, a pattern that says "home" to many of us. These boundaries may seem permanent, yet we know that they come and go. In past decades, many have been removed to enlarge fields for modern agriculture. Now many are being replanted, as their beneficial effects become clear. To understand the reasons for hedgerow removal or replacement, it is useful to look at these benefits, and to weigh them against potential drawbacks.



## HEDGEROW BENEFITS

### - SHELTER

Anyone who has walked along the lee side of a hedge on a windy day appreciates how good it is

at breaking the wind! Such shelter is important in protecting the soil from wind erosion; the hedge itself breaks up streams of running water from heavy rains or snow-melt — for this reason a hedge helps protect soils from water erosion. Hedgerows thus are quite important in the fight to protect Island farmlands.

The amount of shelter provided by a hedge depends upon its height and density, but effects can be measured for a surprising distance out into the field. Marked effects can be seen out as far as ten-times the hedge height, and measurable effects at least twenty-times the height. A ten-meter-high hedge thus affects at least two hundred meters of land!

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#### **- CROP PROTECTION**

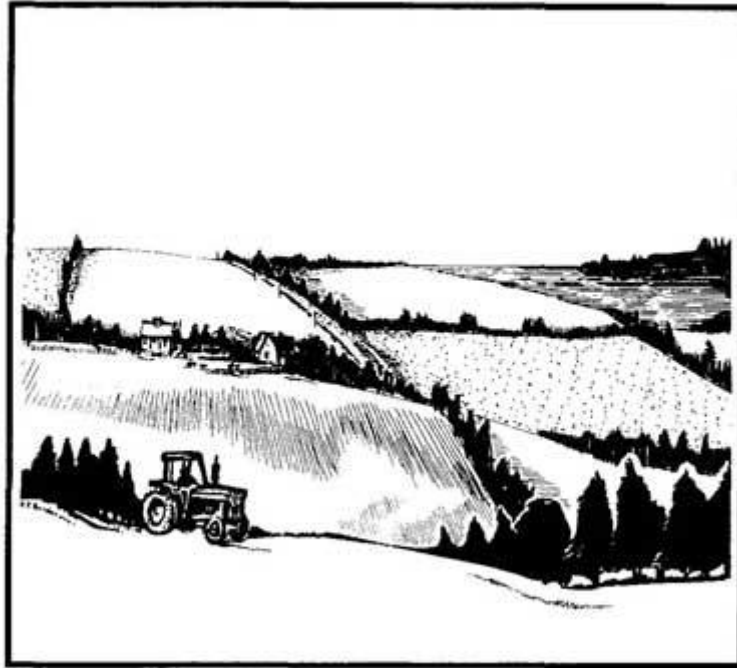
Many studies have shown some improvement in crop yields from the sheltering effects of a hedge. The amount of improvement varies widely, depending on type of hedge, crop, wind direction and other factors, but yield increases of 5-40 are commonly reported. The yield immediately beside the hedge is usually decreased due to tree shading and competition for nutrients.

#### **- WILDLIFE PROTECTION**

A good, thick hedge provides food and protection for many of our common wildlife species. Partridge, pheasant, grouse, rabbit, fox and others find homes, nesting sites, or hunting grounds in and along hedges. One of the simplest and best ways of encouraging these animals is to plant a hedge!

#### **- LANDSCAPE BEAUTY**

Beauty, they say, is in the eye of the beholder — yet many will agree that the kind of geometric patchwork into which hedges divide the countryside is an important part of our Island landscape. Returning Islanders as well as visitors often comment on the colours and forms that make the land so attractive.



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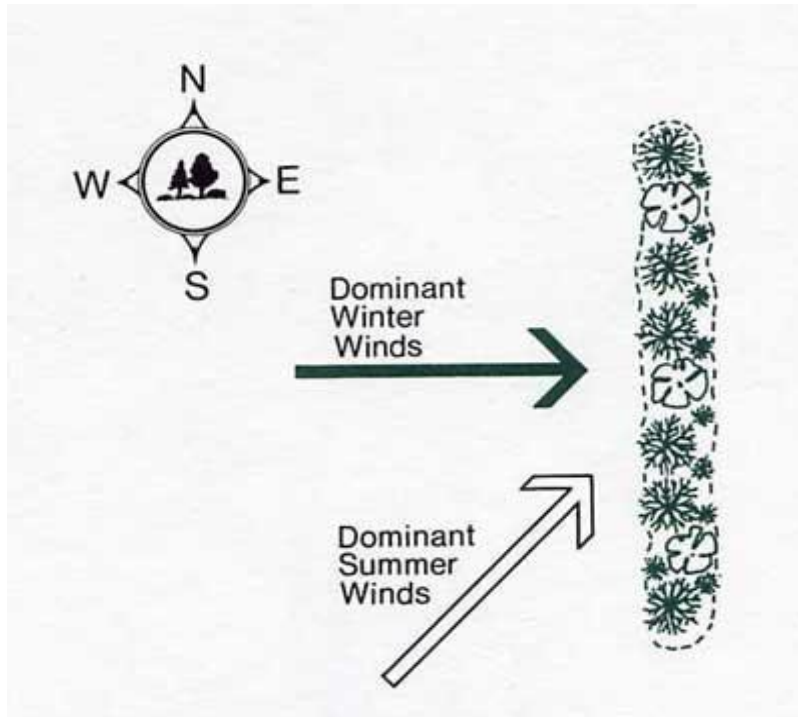
## **HEDGEROW PROBLEMS**

### **- FIELD SIZE**

Many old Island fields were too small to be worked efficiently with modern machinery, so they were enlarged and their hedgerows removed. However, it is possible to plant hedges along the boundaries of these new, larger fields. Field enlargement thus does not have to mean destruction of all hedges in the area; perhaps all that is needed is reorganization.

### **- SNOW-TRAPPING**

Hedges hold snow, and delay run-off and drying in spring. An impatient farmer may not get on the land alongside as early as he would like, and may react by having the hedge removed. Yet snow-trapping depends not only on hedge location, but also on hedge thickness. This problem can thus be lessened by thinning the hedge, and keeping such factors in mind when planting new ones.



### **PLANTING OR RENOVATING HEDGES**

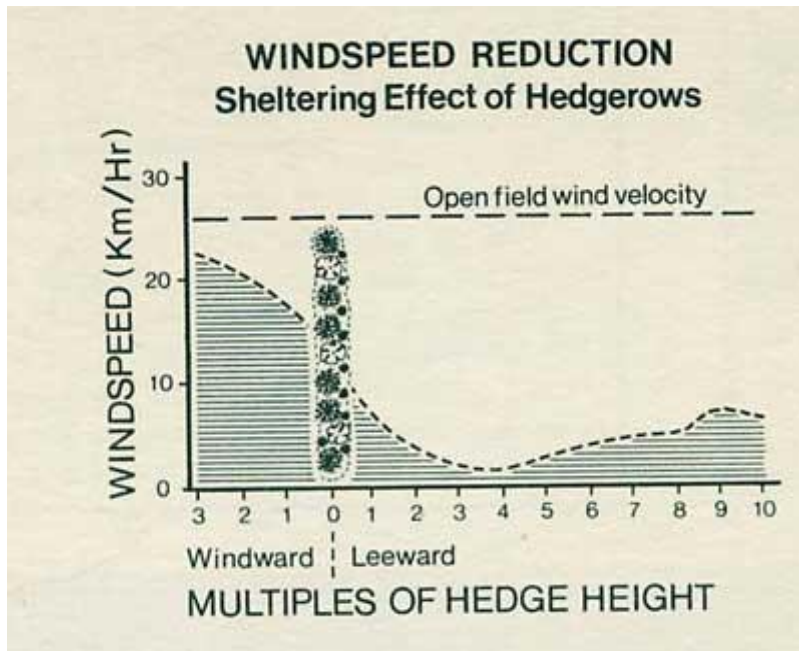
Many questions should be answered before a tree goes in the ground. How many rows of trees can be planted? (One row is a help, two are better.) But how much land can the farmer afford to give to the hedge?

What about prevailing winds, in winter and summer? Will snow-trapping be a problem? Can livestock be fenced out of the growing hedge? They will trample and spoil a new hedge, but will benefit from its shade later on.

Perhaps the problem is an old hedge, grazed out underneath and full of gaps. What is the best way to renovate this? Can it be fixed by interplanting new tree seedlings? Can it be pruned?

These and many other questions can be answered in consultation with the Forestry Branch, Dept. of Energy and Forestry. Forestry personnel will be pleased to discuss present or planned hedges with you, and will also outline their assistance programs.

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