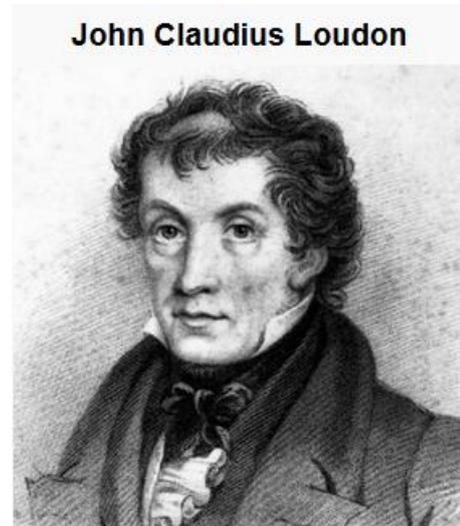


# The Benefits of A Well Planted and Maintained Hedge

A Letter to The Gentlemen's Magazine  
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J. C. Loudon

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By SYLVANUS URBAN, *Gent.*

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Mr. Urban, 4, Chapel, St., Dec. 15.

IF you please, you may insert the following hints in your useful Magazine. They appear to me of great importance to those of your readers who possess landed property.

Hints on Hedges, and Hedge-row Timber.

A hedge is used for shelter, and as a fence for cattle; and it is the best hedge that possesses these properties in the least space of ground. Now the hedges in most counties of England, and particularly in the neighbourhood of London, occupy six and often twelve times more ground than is necessary for its purpose, and, notwithstanding, they are very incomplete fences. Any traveller might observe this by comparing them with the hedges in Berwickshire, and inner Northern counties.

I consider these observations as a sufficient reason for offering the following outline of my ideas upon this subject, which I shall arrange under two general heads, viz.

## **Planting, and Training of Hedges**

**1ST. PLANTING,** in a dry soil, a hedge is improperly planted, if the plants are railed above the level of the general surface of the field.

In a wet soil, it is equally improper to plant the hedge without either raising the surface, draining, planting by what is called ditch and hedge, or using aquatic plants.

In whatever kind of foil, or situation, a hedge is planted, the ground should be previously cleansed and pulverised, either by fallowing, trench-plowing, or digging.

In planting, whatever is the direction of the hedge-row, none of the plants should deviate from that line of direction.

A single row of thorns, (only) is sufficient to raise a complete hedge on any soil; the plants from six to eighteen inches asunder, according to its nature.

The birch, the hornbeam, the alder, the elder, &c. will be found preferable to thorns; the two former in poor dry, and the two latter in wet soils.

**2ND TRAINING.** Every species of training is improper, which does not rear the hedge to a living wall, of a pyramidal form; and for the general purposes of hedges, four or five feet high, twenty inches broad below, and eight at top, is sufficient. This is easily accomplished by keeping the plants free from weeds, and pruning their lateral shoots pretty close to the stem. A light hedge knife is the proper instrument for pruning hedges; no hedge-shears should be used on any account.

By training a hedge in a tapering or pyramidal form, every inch of its surface enjoys the full benefit of the sun, air, and rain; hence it is uniformly clothed with verdure from the roots to the top; and this makes a more complete and durable fence than any other mode of training.

Let anyone contrast the above directions for planting and rearing hedges, which are put in practice in several of the counties in the Northern division of this island, with the mode followed in England, and particularly in the vicinity of London. Every intelligent person, who reflects upon the subject for one moment, will allow, that **it is a mode much less expensive** (and if we only consider the wide space which hedges in general occupy, it will appear), and that many gentlemen, by adopting it, might add a considerable number of acres to their estate, and have much better fences, at one half the expense.

**Hedge-row Timber.** Hedges trained in the way I have described must be much more favourable for the growth of timber-trees, than the common method. All that I propose to observe here, however, is to recommend the ash for planting in hedge-rows, in preference to the English Elm.

I object to the English elm in hedgerows, first, because an elm-tree, to become good timber, should not be pruned; and Secondly, because the English elm is of little value, as timber, at any rate.

I recommend the ash for hedgerows in England; **First**, because its timber is next in line to the oak, and is always scarce, being too much neglected by planters. **Secondly**, it will prosper, and produce excellent timber, where neither oak nor elm can. **Thirdly**, it produces the greatest quantity, and the best quality of timber, when trained to a single stem; this being precisely the mode of treatment that trees in hedge-rows require, in order to savour the growth of the hedge under them, and the crop on each side.

In some counties, naturally unfavourable to the growth of the oak, it is there cultivated to the great advantage of the land-holder, who, besides the annual rents of the lands, draw an immense sum from the hedge-rows alone.

If the hedges in England were reared in the manner I have described, and if the common ash was planted in place of the English elm, the pasture, or arable lands, would be greatly increased, and a vast quantity of valuable wood acquired; which would be an incalculable advantage to individuals, and a great benefit to the nation.

Being lately employed in laying out a gentleman's grounds in Surrey, I was led to make the above remarks from their efficacy on his estate; to which I added one tenth part, in acres, more than it used to be farmed for; and some time ago, at another place, in the same county, a field, of 8 1/4 acres, surrounded some cumbersome hedges, I converted into 12 acres of excellent pasture, the hedges much better than before, and kept in order at a much less expense.

I hope these hints may stimulate many to do likewise; and profit in a similar manner. J. Loudon.