

PROBLEM HEDGES

Hedges and trees are well known for causing disputes between neighbours and the cypress is no exception.



The quickest and easiest way to deal with a problem hedge is often through diplomacy and courtesy.

The hedge owner may be happy to prune or remove the hedge if you have a friendly chat with them, letting them know of your concerns.

Sometimes offering to contribute to the cost of the work can help smooth the way too.

Whilst you may begrudge paying for work to a neighbour's hedge, do bear in mind that in the long run this is likely to be a lot cheaper and a lot less stressful than entering into a legal battle.

Unfortunately, there is no easy remedy for dealing with a hedge owner who is unwilling to co-operate.

If diplomacy fails do not take the law into your own hands, consider mediation.

A tall hedge isn't always a danger simply because of its height and it may actually be giving privacy and shelter to your garden and home.

Regular pruning will help keep it green and under control to provide you with a hardy, visual screen to your garden.

HEDGES AND THE LAW

- ❖ *Landowners have the right to plant and keep trees and hedges.*
- ❖ *Permission isn't required to plant trees or hedges, except in rare cases.*
- ❖ *There is no specific "right to light" that can force someone to*

- reduce or remove a tree or hedge.*
- ❖ *The law says a boundary extends both below and above the ground.*
- ❖ *If parts of a hedge or tree cross a boundary, a trespass is said to have occurred.*

❖ *An adjoining landowner has the right to prune branches or roots back to the boundary, unless the tree or hedge is subject to planning controls. Contravention of Planning Controls may result in prosecution and a fine. (Ask your Local Council's Tree Officer for advice.)*

❖ *If you prune back a neighbour's tree or hedge which extends onto your property,*

you could be held liable if you do something that makes it unsafe and damage is caused as a consequence (e.g. a tree may fall over if you sever roots on your side of the boundary.)

❖ *By law any part of a neighbour's tree that you cut, remains their property. Consult your neighbour before you do any work and check that they don't mind you disposing of the trimmings.*

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 AAIS Tree Advice Trust: 090 65 161147 (£1.50/min)

THE FOLLOWING LEAFLETS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE:

- Tree Work & Employing a Tree Contractor (LTOA)**
- Evergreen Hedges (Arboricultural Association)**
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LONDON TREE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

CYPRESS HEDGES: POTENTIAL PROBLEMS & SUITABLE SOLUTIONS



CARING FOR THE CAPITAL'S TREES

INTRODUCTION

Cypress trees such as the Leyland and Lawson are members of the Conifer family as is the Western Red Cedar - all known for growing very fast into very big trees.

It is this fast growth that makes the cypress tree popular for creating a robust hedge that establishes very quickly.

But that same rapid growth can also lead to problems. Lack of regular maintenance can very quickly lead to a giant unruly hedge which may well be seen as a 'blot on the landscape' and isn't likely to be welcome in an urban environment.

The Leyland cypress in particular has been central to several neighbour disputes reported by the media.

Often we are impatient and want quick results. By allowing a little more time and planting a slower growing species, much time and expense in maintenance can be saved in the long run.

Use this leaflet to guide you if you have a cypress hedge in your garden or are thinking of planting one. It tells you about their pro's and con's, their planting and maintenance and suggests some alternatives.

CHOOSING A CYPRESS HEDGE

Considering all the bad publicity, it isn't surprising to find that cypress hedges (particularly Leyland cypress) do have several drawbacks:

Frequent maintenance is needed - this can be expensive.

Problems of excessive shading and loss of views could arise if the hedge gets too big.

Not just for you, but your neighbours too.

It's difficult to bring overgrown hedges back under control

without making them unsightly.

Vigorous growth needs a large water uptake which could cause damage to nearby structures on shrinkable clay soils.

The reason Leyland and other cypress hedges remain popular is that they do have some very good points:

Fast growth - they can double their size in their first year.

Cheap, reliable, hardy and readily available.

Dense foliage creates a visual barrier and can absorb noise and air pollution.

Larger hedges can make very good nesting sites for birds and other wildlife.

NOT SURE ABOUT A CYPRESS HEDGE?

Try one of these alternatives instead:

NATIVE EVERGREENS - Box, Holly, Yew, Common Privet;

NON-NATIVE EVERGREENS - Berberis darwinii, Euonymus japonica, Escallonia, Griselinia, Oval Leaf Privet, Cherry Laurel, Portugal Laurel, Pittosporum;

DECIDUOUS - Beech, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Hornbeam, Field Maple, Spindle Bush.

Species	Growth rate (mm/year)	Final height (m)
Leylandii (X Cupressocyparis leylandii)	1000	30
Lawsons Cypress (Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)	600	20
Western Red Cedar (Thuja plicata)	750	25
Privet (Ligustrum ovalifolium)	600	7
Yew (Taxus baccata)	200	13
Holly (Ilex aquifolium)	300	10

Average Annual Growth Rates

PLANNING A NEW CYPRESS HEDGE

If you are really sure you want a cypress hedge, try using the following information:

Before planting, think about the ultimate height, length and width you want your hedge to be.

The height of the hedge is important as if it is to be over 2.5 metres tall, you will probably have to regularly employ a professional tree surgeon.

Individual plants should be spaced about 1 metre apart to create a pleasing attractive hedge.



In positioning your hedge, you should also consider where shadows cast by the hedge will lie and if they will block your light or that of any surrounding properties.

If your hedge is close to buildings, there may be a risk of subsidence and possibly damage to nearby paths, driveways or small walls.

Also bear in mind that a large hedge may exhaust the soil around it making it difficult to grow grass and other plants.

Remember to think ahead and try to imagine the impact your hedge will have on nearby buildings

PRUNING A CYPRESS HEDGE

The key to a successful cypress hedge is regular maintenance. Aim to prune your hedge at least twice a year.

If you choose to attempt the job yourself, use your common sense (and the right tools) to ensure you do the job safely.

Working at height can be hazardous, particularly when using power tools. It is best left to a trained professional who has appropriate protective equipment for working in trees safely.

As a general rule, when your hedge reaches about 1 metre less than the final height you want it to be, trim back the leading shoots and side branches.

If your hedge has grown too tall, cut it back around half a metre below the height you require.

When it comes to the width of your hedge, it's best to try and control this from early on as a severe reduction in width can leave unattractive brown

areas that won't regrow.

Hedges that have grown too tall and too wide can, unfortunately, be very difficult to manage.

Cypresses will generally tolerate their height being reduced by up to a third but the results may not be particularly attractive.



GIVING THE HEDGE AN "A" SHAPED PROFILE ALLOWS LIGHT TO THE BOTTOM AND HELPS KEEP IT GREEN.

If you cut your hedge back too severely, it could end up dying. Sometimes the only practical solution for a wayward hedge is to remove it and start again.

Correct and timely maintenance can pay dividends in giving you trouble-free and stress-free gardening.