



Landscaping

for new rural houses in Westmeath

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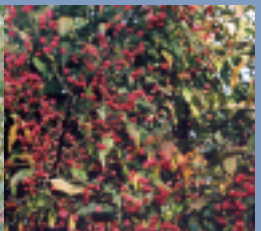
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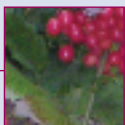




THIS GUIDE

This publication has been prepared by the Forward Planning Section of Westmeath Co. Council and offers guidance to new home owners on the choice and suitability of tree and shrub stock for their gardens and grounds. It promotes the use of native species in a rural setting.





THE VALUE OF TREES AND SHRUBS

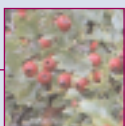
New homes often benefit from landscaping with trees and shrubs.

Trees and shrubs help to make gardens more attractive by adding colour, texture and structure. They add a sense of maturity to new developments and can increase property values by anything from 5-20%. Effective planting can screen unattractive views, absorb road noise and provide privacy. It can also considerably reduce heating costs by sheltering buildings.



Trees and shrubs help blend new houses and buildings into the landscape. They greatly enhance the amenity and wildlife value of rural developments.

Why not consider using native species as part of your landscaping plan and source plants from local nurseries where possible? Native species of plant or animal are considered to be those that managed to arrive in Ireland naturally, without the assistance of people. Native trees and shrubs are adapted to environmental conditions in Ireland and for that reason grow best here. They provide food and shelter for a vast range of wildlife as they have been present in the Irish landscape for thousands of years.



WESTMEATH'S LANDSCAPE

The landscapes of Westmeath are rich and diverse. They include the northern hills and midland lakes, peatland areas, low-lying pasture land, the Royal Canal corridor, Lough Ree and the River Shannon, and the esker ridges of South Westmeath. Cultural landscapes are also of great significance, and the main road landscape corridors, which are the face of the county for passing travellers.



The range of different landscapes found in Westmeath all have varying visual and amenity values, topography, exposure levels, and contain a variety of habitats. They all have varying capacity to absorb new housing in the rural landscape. See Westmeath Rural Design Guidelines for more information.



RURAL HOUSING AND THE LANDSCAPE

Rural housing that fits into the landscape will enhance an area rather than take away from it. Native trees and shrubs help to link houses into the surrounding countryside, especially in a rural setting. Housing should sit within the local landscape rather than be imposing and obtrusive.



House design, location and building materials greatly influence the impact of new developments. Appropriate design and composition of landscaping can help integrate new buildings into the landscape, as well as providing shelter and privacy, and improving the overall appearance of the development.

Appropriate planting can also have enormous benefits for wildlife and the environment.

POLICY CONTEXT

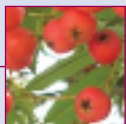
Landscaping conditions for rural housing are directed by policies in the County Development Plan (2002-2008), the Rural Housing Guidelines, and the Westmeath Rural Design Guidelines. The **County Development Plan** includes the following **Objectives** for trees and hedgerows:

Section 2.9.2.7

The Council recognises the particular role that these habitats have as wildlife areas. It will ensure that these environments are not threatened by development and where possible will seek to enhance their biodiversity capacities.

Section 5.3.7.9

In visually sensitive areas, the provision of tree planting/screening will be required using native deciduous species



WHAT TO PLANT?

Two things to consider: what species or type of plant to choose, and what kind of nursery stock.

1. Choice of species

There are a wide range of trees and shrubs that will grow in Ireland. Native species should be considered because of the enormous benefits for wildlife that they bring and because many of them are highly attractive and suitable for gardens or boundary planting in hedges.

The following native hedgerow and tree species are recommended for planting in Co. Westmeath. Plants of local provenance (i.e. grown from seed from plants growing locally) are preferable if available because they will be best adapted to growing in Westmeath.

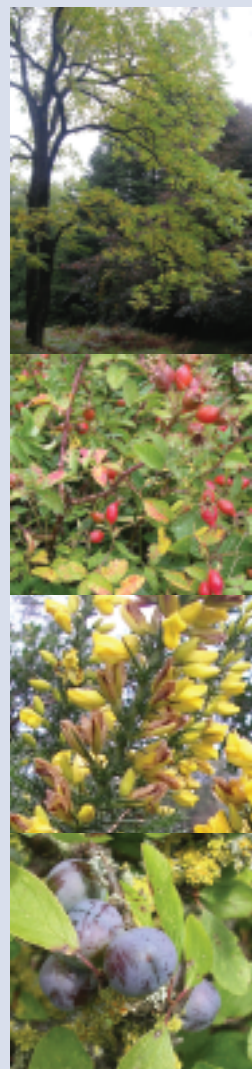
Common name	Scientific name	Suitable for hedges	Site Suitability (see key below)
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>		ADP
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>		ADIPS
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>		DPV Not close to buildings or services
Birch, silver	<i>Betula pendula</i>		AIP
Birch, downy	<i>Betula pubescens</i>		ADIP
Blackthorn/ sloe	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Yes	APV
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Yes	AIP
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Yes	AV
Gorse, common	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Yes	V
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Yes	DIS
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Yes	AIPS
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Yes	AS
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Yes	AIPS
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Yes	AC
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>		AIP
Oak, sessile	<i>Quercus petraea</i>		AI Only large sites
Oak, pedunculate	<i>Quercus robur</i>		AI Only large sites
Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i> *		AI
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>	Yes	S
Cherry, wild	<i>Prunus avium</i>	Yes	AI
Willow/Sally	<i>Salix spp.</i>	Yes	AD
Elm, wych	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>		PS
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>		AIPS

A - Grows in a wide variety of soils
 I - Suitable as an individual tree
 D – Tolerates or prefers damp conditions
 V - Invasive

C - Climber
 S – Tolerates shade
 P – Tolerates smoke or pollution

* Not strictly speaking native; Scot's pine was present in Ireland until medieval times

Adapted from the Heritage Council leaflet 'Conserving and Enhancing Wildlife in Towns and Villages'



Trees such as Horse Chestnut, Beech and Lime are large, majestic trees, which though not native obviously can add great amenity value to the landscape and have some wildlife value (although less than native species like Oak). Privet and Snowberry are commonly found in Westmeath hedges but are of less benefit to wildlife than native species such as Hawthorn, Blackthorn or Holly.

2. What kind of nursery stock to choose?

People often don't realise that there is a range of sizes and types of planting stock available for trees and shrubs. The right choice for you depends on the scale of planting (i.e. a large area to be planted or a small garden), whether the site is exposed or sheltered, and your budget.

Trees and shrubs can be sourced from a tree nursery, garden centre, or even by mail order. They can be bought as:



Bare-rooted whips in winter



Cell grown (plug) trees



Pot or container grown



Root-balled trees

Bare-rooted whips are generally the cheapest option available. These small trees often have faster growth rates than larger trees. Bare-rooted trees (i.e. the roots have little or no soil around them when sold) can only be planted in winter (i.e. early December until late March). The best size of young tree for most situations is the 'whip' that is about 45cm to 100cm high. Taller specimens can be considered if planting in sheltered locations. Small trees are particularly suited to exposed sites. Whips don't usually need to be staked but weed control is important for small or young trees until they are well established.

Trees are also available as **cell-grown plants or plug trees**. Plug trees are grown in a cell of compost and usually come in bundles of 15-30 in a plastic tray. They are usually quite small (<50cm). These trees are more expensive than the bare-rooted option but have the advantage of being able to be planted at most times of the year. It is advisable, however, to avoid planting them immediately after the young leaves have fully opened in early summer.



Medium and large trees, also referred to as ‘standards’, come in a variety of girths and heights. Larger trees are appropriate if an immediate impact is required. A larger stem girth makes the trees less vulnerable to vandalism. It is possible to get larger trees with bare-roots but as the size of tree increases they are usually **pot-grown or root-balled**. Pot grown and root-balled trees are more expensive and can be much larger than the previous two options. These trees can be planted any time of the year but it is also advisable to avoid planting immediately after the young leaves have opened. Taller trees (>2m in height) will probably need to be staked for 2 to 3 years until they are well established.

Root-balled trees tend to be large trees (often >2.5m) that a tree nursery regularly lifts and root prunes to encourage the development of a network of fibrous roots surrounding a ball of soil.



Some examples of bad practice

(clockwise above) Lack of landscaping
Replacement of native hedge with fencing
Removal of hedgerows



FINAL TIP

Efforts to retain existing trees, shrubs and hedgerows present on the site will save money that might be spent on landscaping, add a sense of maturity to the new development, and have huge benefits for wildlife. The single most important thing to remember when trying to retain existing trees and shrubs on a site is to protect them during development works by avoiding any activity, including storing materials, in and around the crown of the tree or the rooting zone. Mature trees and shrubs can be complemented by additional planting of appropriate species to add colour and interest to your garden.



If you want to create a beautiful garden with huge benefits for wildlife and landscape value, remember to think trees and think native when landscaping your garden!

There are many publications available to guide you in planting the right trees in the right place. Professional horticultural advice can also be sought on planting trees safely in proximity to your home.

Further information

Available from Westmeath Co. Council

www.westmeath.ie or tel. 044 32000

Biodiversity & Development in Co. Westmeath: Good Practice Guidelines, Westmeath Co. Council 2004.

Westmeath Rural Design Guidelines, Westmeath Co. Council 2005.

Available from Crann

www.crann.ie or tel. 01 6275075

Fuller, J. 2005. The ABC of trees, hedgerows and development, Crann.

Meyen, S. 2005. The ABC of Planting Trees, Crann.

Available from the Tree Council

www.treecouncil.ie or tel. 01 2849211

People's Millennium Forests. 2000.

Our Trees: A guide to growing Ireland's native trees in celebration of a new Millennium. The People's Millennium Forests Project.