TOOLBOX TALK

47. HEDGELAYING

What?

- **Hedgelaying is a traditional country skill that has been practised for centuries. The original aim was to create a fence to stop sheep, cattle and other stock from straying.**
- **It is the process of bending and partially cutting (pleaching) through the stems of a line of shrubs or small trees near ground level and arching the stems without breaking them, so they can grow horizontally and be intertwined.**
- **Hedgelaying is carried out between October and March when trees and shrubs are dormant, and birds have finished nesting.**

Why?

- Hedgelaying preserves a historic tradition.
- Hedgerows are important for wildlife as a refuge, a source of food, and as corridors along which they can move through the landscape.
- The correct management of hedgerows is therefore vital if they are to survive and be healthy enough to provide a good habitat. By laying a hedge you help to encourage new growth, making it an excellent way of regenerating an old, overgrown hedge without replacing it.

Do ✔

- ☑ Check the site for any dangers
- ☑ Always wear gloves on the non-tool hand when using a bow saw
- ☑ Use appropriate lifting and handling techniques
- ☑ Wear a hard hat
- ☑ Use signage to warn members of the public that work is happening
- ☑ Ensure laid hedges are supported with stakes during the process
- ☑ Tidy off the hinge when the tree has been laid to prevent water accumulating and aiding rot in the tree
- ☑ After the activity ensure tools are cleaned and stored away safely

Don't ✗

- ☒ Don't forget to take regular breaks
- ☒ Don't use loppers for anything bigger than 1 inch or thumb size
- ☒ Don't lose sight of who is in your team; be aware of what everyone is doing, where they are standing and what equipment they are using, don't let members use saws or billhooks unsupervised

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