



# THE HEDGE (& WALL) IMPORTANCE TEST

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The Hedge (& Wall) Importance Test (HIT) was devised by Robin Menneer FRICS MSc in response to the need for a simple, economical, accurate and non-invasive method of assessing hedges, hedgerows, hedgebanks and walls on a national basis. Its innovative scoring concept provides data compatible with the Hedgerows Regulations criteria and covers every type of hedge or wall while also taking into account regional, county and local distinctiveness. The HIT is available free at [www.cornishhedges.co.uk](http://www.cornishhedges.co.uk) and is easy to use by the general public. For some years it was hosted by the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS) where it could be accessed in an automatic online version, before returning to the Cornish Hedges Library website.

## TEST FOR ALL HEDGES AND WALLS.

The HIT has many advantages over conventional hedgerow surveys in ease, safety and accuracy of application, and in the gathering of compatible and comprehensive nation-wide data and statistics. It can be applied at any season of the year, anywhere in Britain, to any kind of hedge, hedgerow or wall. It contains all the Hedgerows Regulations criteria except for the rare species list which typically requires more than one seasonal visit by an expert, and the HIT usefully indicates those hedges most likely to contain interesting species and be worth this further investigation. It requires no special knowledge to apply the HIT. It is non-invasive to the wildlife and safe for the surveyor, being carried out simply by walking the length of the hedge and answering the questions.



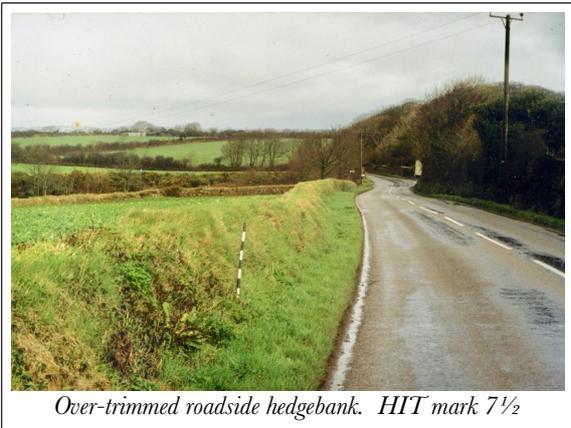
*Average stone hedge. HIT mark 7½*



*Ordinary field hedge. HIT mark 6*

## THE HIT METHOD.

The unique scoring system takes into account 15 main factors and over 60 sub-factors, and is equally divided between history, landscape and wildlife.



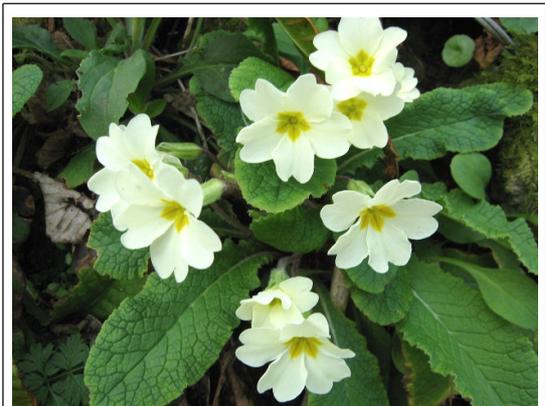
The survey form containing 24 simple questions produces the HIT mark for the overall importance of the hedge on a scale of 1 to 10. Outstanding hedges score 10\*.

Separate HIT marks for the three principal values of history, landscape and wildlife are also provided, further clarifying the character and particular value of the hedge. With the online version (if this is available) a full description of the hedge, its associated features and habitat potential is automatically printed out.

## HOW TO USE THE HIT.

Access the HIT at [www.cornishhedges.co.uk](http://www.cornishhedges.co.uk) and read the introduction, then print out the survey form, which includes simple instructions with each question. Using these help-notes to answer correctly ensures that the HIT mark and description will be accurate. To help with identifying the short list of plant species at any time there is a photo gallery showing each of the HIT plants at the four seasons of the year, and a chart of these images can be printed out to take out with you. With this and the survey form walk along your hedge and fill in the answers, which consist of a single letter or a number entered in the box provided with each question on the form.

Back at home, print out the points forms and score sheets and enter your answers to obtain the overall HIT mark and the three separate HIT marks for History, Landscape and Wildlife. If available online, simply enter the answers on the computer to obtain automatic scoring and the printed description of the hedge. You can also use the Search and Analyse facility to view other HITs or analyse different aspects of the data stored in the HIT database.



*Primrose: one of the easily-recognised indicator plants named in the HIT to score the hedge for habitat potential.*



*Hedge along ancient hollow lane. HIT mark 10*



*Roadside hedge, single tree species. HIT mark 8½*

## THE PURPOSE AND USES OF THE HIT.

Hedge surveys are required for various reasons and need to be carried out cost-effectively and without interference to wildlife, damage to the hedge structure and growth, or danger to the surveyor. The Hedge (& Wall) Importance Test is designed to provide this service for all types of hedge and wall, even a mortared wall of stone or brick. The HIT can be used for definitive purposes or as an economical initial screening test, the results pin-pointing those hedges worth further survey by the relevant expert. It facilitates schemes such as biodiversity action plans, and assists in making assessments for environmental schemes of all kinds.



The HIT is of value in assessing hedges that are involved in site developments, planning applications, enquiries and decisions. It is intended for use also by the general public, for instance in personal interests and research, in school or local environmental group projects, or for the citizen who wishes to object to a hedge's removal. For this purpose the HIT, in producing an un-biased, broad-based and strictly factual assessment, provides impartial evidence of the hedge's value and the importance of its retention.

The HIT is not only of interest to the wildlife or history enthusiast and the landscape architect. Anyone who owns a hedge, perhaps around their garden or on their farm, can find out how it rates for importance, and, if not highly, how it may be improved. The HIT is easy to apply, uses only a few sheets of A4 paper, and takes little outlay of time.

Please see The Hedge (& Wall) Importance Test, accessed from the home page of the Cornish Hedges Library website at [www.cornishhedges.co.uk](http://www.cornishhedges.co.uk)

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