

Multifunctional Hedgerows to Fit Your Operation

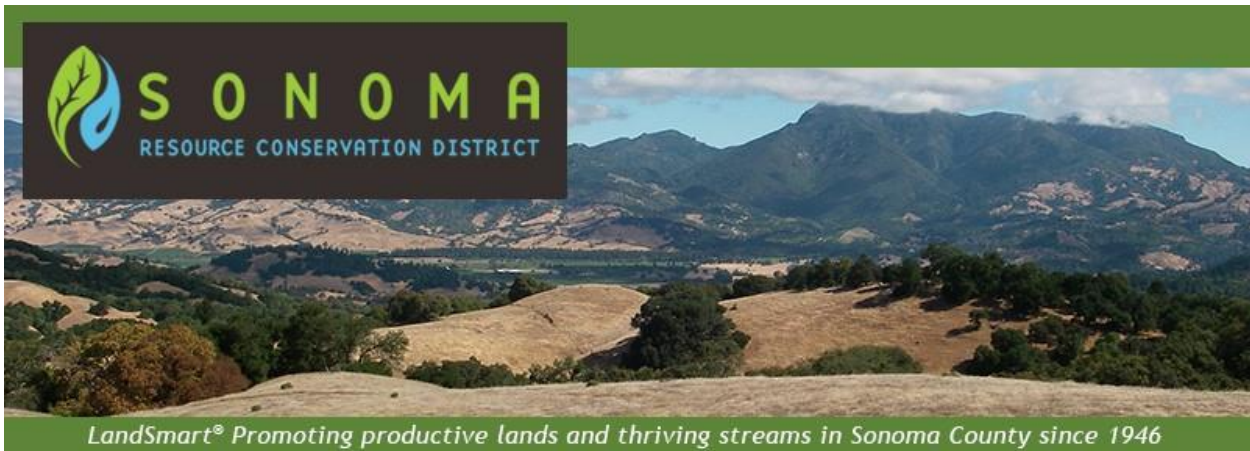
Whether you're a ranch owner, dairy producer, winegrape grower or have a small scale orchard or row crop farm, property edges are *everywhere*. Boundaries between crops or property lines should not be undervalued or underutilized, but rather seen as an opportunity to support pollination, biodiversity, or increase soil health. Bringing these edges back to life can greatly benefit your operation from a natural resource perspective as well as increase beneficial habitat.

Hedgerows are considered rows of trees, shrubs, forbs and perennial grasses and can have multifunctional purposes including: improving water quality, attracting beneficial insects such as pollinators, stabilizing the soil and providing ground cover, they can act as windbreaks, suppress weeds, offer habitat to wildlife, can reduce the need to use pesticides, and are easy to get established when utilizing drought tolerant California natives.

Planting hedgerows for pollinators couldn't be timelier after celebrating National Pollinator Week in June, an annual week-long educational tribute to pollinators hosted by the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service. Hedgerows provide multiple benefits to both farmers and wildlife. Installing a diverse assemblage of vegetation in your hedgerow that blooms year-round offers important pollinators like bees, hummingbirds, bats, beetles, butterflies and flies with a continuous food source of nectar and pollen. These vital contributors to our ecological system help pollinate over 75% of our flowering plants, and nearly 75% of our food crops.

Creating multifunctional hedgerow habitat which incorporates food sources for pollinators year-round is a win-win situation. "In the United States pollination by honey bees directly or indirectly (e.g., pollination required to produce seeds for the crop) contributed to over \$19 billion of crops in 2010. Pollination by other insect pollinators contributed to nearly \$10 billion of crops in 2010," (U.S Fish & Wildlife Service, 2016). A few local crops that depend on pollination include apples, pears, squash, and blueberries. Since grapes are self-pollinating plants, vineyard owners may be less concerned about attracting pollinators; however, these individuals can support healthy cover crop production or other crops if a mixed use property. Without the presence of pollinators, most plants cannot produce fruits and seeds which ensure their future lifespan.

Sites to consider planting a hedgerow may include non-cropped areas along roads, drainage ways, fences, or field borders, and in some cases possibly even within the rows of your crops, depending on your goal. Always design hedgerows to fit the site-specific needs.



Some things to consider before installing a hedgerow on your property:

What is the goal of the hedgerow?

Windbreak, pollinator habitat, erosion control, water quality, aesthetics

Structure

Hedgerows can range in size from short single plantings within crop rows or tall dynamic multi-height plantings for windbreaks or erosion control. Your goal will drive the structure of your hedgerow.

Disease Potential

Some plants may host diseases like Pierce's Disease or Sudden Oak Death - meaning if your crops are susceptible to such diseases, select hedgerow plants which are not hosts.

Other Possible Pests

Birds, rodents and deer may be attracted to the planting, so if your crops are vulnerable to such species select and install plants that are not food for wildlife.

If you are interested in hearing more about hedgerows or other natural resource best management practices for your farm or ranch please contact your local RCD.





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