

And now for something completely different

Twining Valley Nurseries, New Zealand

Andrew Bowman wasn't hedging his bets when he created the instant hedgerow.

"We found our landscaping customers were considering hedges," explains Andrew Bowman of Twining Valley Nurseries in New Zealand, "but their clients wanted them for privacy now, not in three years time. They wanted hedges of a good height instantly.

"That's where the idea came from to create instant hedgerows."

Twining Valley Nursery in Mangatawhiri, just south of Auckland, has done something completely different. Andrew and his team grow containerised hedges in standard one metre lengths of varying heights.

"I have been quietly surprised that no one ever got round to doing it," says Andrew, "because hedges have made a comeback around Auckland and even more so in the South Island."

How it's done

Seeds are planted in one metre long fabric planter bags in troughs. The bags are in three different sizes, the size employed based on the final size of the hedge. There are carry handles either side of the bags for easy transport.

Sales are predominantly to landscapers who have the choice of three sizes in metre lengths for their clients: Living Edge (250mm high), Living Boundary (900mm high) and Living Screen (1800mm high).

Species used include Pittosporum, Buxus, Camellia, Griselinia and Lonicera.

Andrew has five kilometres of hedges ready to go and he is happy with the early reaction from his customers.



Scotts helps Andrew's business grow

Andrew uses Osmoform and is trialing Osmocote for comparison. "I've given Nicola (Rochester, Scott NZ Regional Sales Manager) the chance to come up with the perfect blend for us," says Andrew. "She is confident we can get our product to market sooner.

"It costs us about \$4 per hedge per month to look after and maintain. If we can get to market quicker using Osmocote, we will have easily covered the extra cost of the fertiliser."

The mother of invention

As Andrew had created a first in instant hedgerows, through necessity he now needed to create an efficient way to maintain them.

Introducing the world's (or at least Mangatawhiri's) first fleet of automatic, multi hedge trimmers, designed and built by Andrew and his team.

"I was a bit of an engineer in a past life," he explains. "We had to do everything differently, including irrigation and how we move things around the nursery. We said how the heck do we do it? So we had to devise it ourselves."

Twining Valley Nurseries doesn't depend entirely on its hedges. It also produces Calla pots, a colourful perennial, flowers and tubers for winter sales.

The nursery has plans for expansion, perhaps to the South Island, but Andrew says all that will come in time.

However, when you see Andrew at the end of the day looking out over the nursery from his 120 year old native timber home, you get the feeling he is already planning his next invention.