

Farm Practice and Management

Contributed by Officers of the Fields Division

Escallonia As A Shelter Hedge By The Roadside

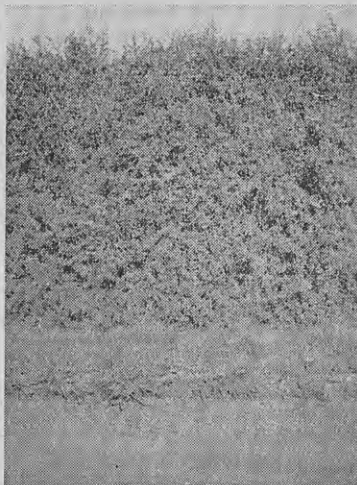
ONE of the continuous jobs on the farm is keeping the roadside free from noxious weeds. Every farmer is responsible for the eradication of gorse, blackberry, and other weeds on the roadside frontage of his farm from the boundary fence to the centre of the road.

As a rule the traffic keeps the roadway free, but the strip alongside the roadway is generally an ideal place for the propagation and growth of weeds. This area cannot be stocked efficiently so that a good sole of grass can be maintained. Hence, there is nothing to deter the spread of gorse and blackberry, which consequently get out of hand.

Unproductive Work

The farmer, who can keep these weeds in check only by constant attention to cutting, grubbing, spraying, and burning, has a considerable amount of his time taken up with this unproductive work. Unless he obtains permission to fence the area, he cannot destroy the weeds permanently by grassing and stocking or by planting trees.

The accompanying photograph illustrates a method by which the results can be obtained, and which also adds to the efficiency of shelter planted along the roadside. The tall shelter in the photograph is barberry. Growing at the foot of it, climbing almost to the top, and spreading over the ground between it and the metalled road is *escallonia exoniensis* (listed by nurserymen as *escallonia Ingramii*) which



is effectively blocking ground draught and spreading by overground rooting stems towards the metalled road.

By occupying the roadside area, this plant is preventing the establishment of weeds and, if established where gorse and blackberry are present, would tend to eliminate these plants.

Ground Draughts

Barberry hedges are liable to thin out at the bottom, causing ground draughts. When this occurs the barberry hedge is usually cut short, so that leaves and branches form at the bottom of the hedge. As time goes on the hedge grows up, and the bottom again develops gaps. The planting of *escallonia* will save the recurring trouble of cutting down the barberry. Thus, a hedge develops which gives both high and low shelter.

Escallonia exoniensis does not appear to be a very vigorous plant. I believe that it is eaten by stock, and if this is the case it could not be used where stock have much access to it. Before planting, consideration should be given to its effect in giving shelter to vermin. In districts where rabbits are plentiful it should not be used for the purpose I have outlined. It will withstand a considerable amount of frost, and is used to a considerable extent as a hedge plant around homes and gardens.

—J. E. BELL, Instructor in
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