

Hedge Trimmer Buying Guide

Things to Consider When Buying a Hedge Trimmer

- ▶ **Blade length** - is a long reach or short reach required?
- ▶ **Blade spacing** - how wide are the stems that need to be cut?
- ▶ **Power source** - petrol, electric or cordless options
- ▶ **Portability** - how heavy is the hedge trimmer and is it easy to carry?
- ▶ **Safety features** - safety lock and hand guard fitted as standard

Hedge Trimmers: Keeping It All In Trim

Types of hedge trimmers

- **Shrub Trimmers:** are ideal for keeping most shrubs in a tip top, tidy condition all year round. They are much smaller than the standard hedge trimmer and therefore much lighter too, allowing for easy one-handed operation. The convenient battery powered motor means no cumbersome cords or cables to worry about, giving you the freedom to roam through your shrubbery unheeded. Some models come with interchangeable blades of varying sizes.
- **Hedge Trimmers:** are available with a selection of blade lengths up to 75cm, with 50cm being the average. There can also be variations in the teeth spacing. Those with wider spacing being able to cut through thicker, woody stems. Power sources include direct 240v electric (400w - 900w) or rechargeable battery, which are typically in the 18v to 36v range and have less power. Hedge trimmers with 2-stroke petrol engines between the range of 20cc and 40cc are much more powerful.
- **Pole Hedge Trimmer:** There are times when you might need something with just a little more reach than a standard hedge trimmer, and that's when the pole hedge trimmer comes into its own. For hedges above 2 metres in height or where using a step ladder is not a safe or preferred option, this is the perfect tool for reaching the parts other trimmers cannot reach. They are available in 240v and 18v rechargeable.

Key Considerations When Buying A Hedge Trimmer

Scope of work: How big is the job? For example, how much hedge trimming work needs to be done and how often will it need trimming? If you are considering purchasing a standard hedge trimmer to keep your hedges tidy at home, then a lighter model might be a better option, especially if you have a small to medium amount of hedge trimming to do. Working with a large or heavy trimmer over a long period of time can be tiresome. However, if you need a professional tool for industrial use, and one which can handle a lot of work fast, then bigger is going to be better.

Blade length: The length of the trimmer's blade should be considered when purchasing a hedge trimmer, together with your own comfortable reach. For example, if your hedge is under 90cm wide then you should select a trimmer with a blade length over 50cm. As a general guide, the total working length is the length of blade plus 30cm of reach. Therefore if the hedge is more than 90cm wide then a blade length of 60cm or more should make light work of it.

Blade sizes increase by 5cm increments so you will always find a blade length at just the right size for your needs. In some cases, where the hedge width is more than 100cm in width, the top of the hedge might have to be cut from both sides, in which case you can adjust the blade width requirements accordingly.

Blade spacing: The distance between the teeth on the blade will determine what thickness of stem can be cut by the trimmer. In general, tooth spacings will typically range from 16mm to 30mm or more. A 22mm gap is standard. When considering blade spacing, take into account the thickest branches you are likely to encounter, otherwise be prepared to use loppers or a saw for the very thickest stems.

Power source: For smaller jobs requiring less power, the rechargeable battery option might be best. Consider also, whether the operating time for a fully charged battery will be long enough to get the job done. For most other jobs around the garden a 240v electric hedge trimmer should suffice. You might want to consider the wattage of the motor with options ranging from 400w to 900w. The higher the wattage, the more powerful the motor, so if your hedge is particularly woody and tough then a higher wattage machine would be best suited.

Most trimmers will come with between 8 metres and 12 metres of cable attached and you can generally use an extension lead up to 45 metres. For safety reasons it is recommended you always use a RCD (circuit breaker) at the power source. A 2-stroke petrol engine hedge trimmer is much more powerful and more portable than the electric models but you will have to mix up the 2-stroke oil and petrol in the correct quantities.

Portability: The lightest models of hedge trimmers will obviously be those with shorter blade lengths. The pole hedge trimmer will be heavier due to the long handle. The 240v electric and rechargeable trimmers will be much lighter than those with a petrol engine. However, the 240v will be tethered by its cable, causing some restrictions on movement, whereas the cordless and petrol engine models can be used anywhere in the garden without hindrance.

Hedge Trimmer Safety Tips

Protective wear: Always wear safety goggles or glasses for eye protection, and wear leather gloves when using both electric and petrol engine hedge trimmers. Petrol engine trimmers can be quite loud so consider wearing ear protectors.

Circuit breaker: Before use, inspect any electric cables for signs of damage. Always use a circuit breaker when operating a corded electric hedge trimmer in the garden.

Regular inspection: Before use, check the hedge trimmer for any signs of damage to the teeth, making sure the two moveable blades slide back and forth unhindered. Ensure you wear gloves when checking this, and only check when the equipment is not plugged in or does not have the engine running. Also, check electric cables for signs of wear and damage and inspect pull starter cords on petrol models for signs of fraying.