

Guidelines for illustrating hedgerows in pencil or ink

A Tangled challenge

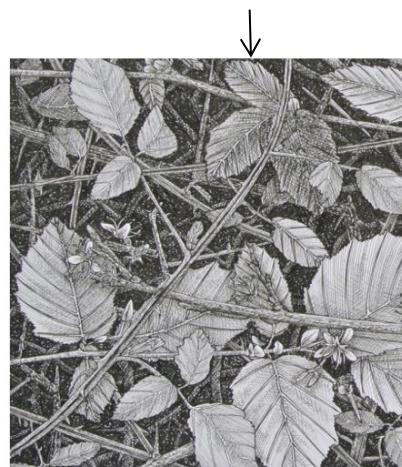
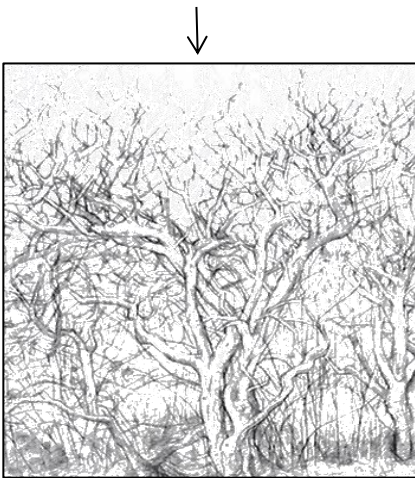
What I love most about hedgerows - apart from how vital they are to wildlife - is that they are full of interconnected patterns, tangled lines and organic twists. This makes them quite challenging, but wonderful to draw. You can also have fun with dark shadows and lighter tones.



Where to start?

It helps to focus in on one small area of hedge, rather than trying to draw a whole hedgerow including every leaf, twig, berry, flower, insect or bird.

For example, here is a complex drawing of a hedgerow, and here is a small detailed scene



I usually select a few typical patterns and repeat them organically and playfully, rather than trying to draw a botanical photo-like illustration (which takes years to perfect and personally leaves me cold.)

Here are 2 pages from a cheap lined A4 notebook that I use for practising patterns, experimenting with ideas or writing notes.



What basic materials do you need? Keep it simple to start with:

- pencils: an HB (for well-defined and light-coloured strokes) and maybe a 4B (for soft and darker tones), rubber, sharpener, a biro or Micron 02 ink pen (my favourite).
- An ordinary piece of A5 or A4 copy paper will do, but you may prefer a pad of better quality smooth cartridge paper. It's not necessary, but you may just prefer the surface.
- You may prefer to use a cheap exercise book for experiments and a better quality A5 or A4 sketchbook, if you want to work directly outdoors or keep your drawings in one place.
- It helps to photograph details of a hedgerow to work on later when you get indoors.

I have also put some sources of ready-made photos and information about hedgerows on page 3.

Where to start?



Here is a photo of a hazel and hebe hedge in late November that I suggest we start working from. Of course, you can use a different subject if you prefer, but I will walk you through illustrating this subject in stages that you can follow.

You can still see a some leaves hanging on revealing the structure of the bare bones of the bush. It's easy to panic at this point as this is a very complex tangle of shapes, but we can deconstruct and simplify the design. We are not going to count every twig or leaf!

7 step procedure

1. Use a pencil to draw a rectangle of more or less 7in high by 5in wide on your page. Your hedgerow will be placed within this space.

2. Now we need to think in layers.

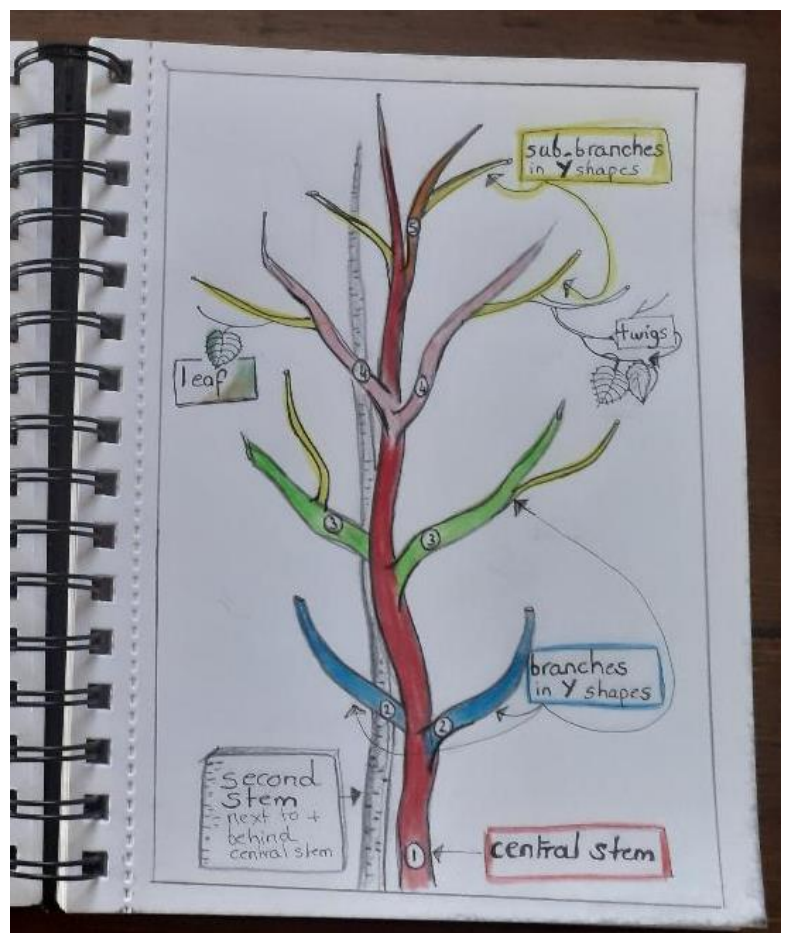
Layer 1 is one stem of several (you will see about 5 in the photo) growing from the roots at ground level.

The exact number of stems you draw doesn't matter, but you will need to draw more than 1, otherwise you will have a very thin short hedge! If you draw too many the drawing may look congested – it's up to you to judge what you like the look of.

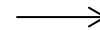
Let's draw layer 1 in pencil, paying very careful attention to the structure. By sitting very close to the hedge and trying to follow the lines of the branches, sub-branches and twigs very carefully (not easy) I found a beautiful basic **Y** shape that keeps repeating in a beautiful organic pattern.

3. Now let's draw in another layer (main stem, branches and twigs) behind this one, remembering that the structure will be similar, but the actual shapes are totally different as each branch is unique in the direction and shape it bends, and the position of sub-branches and twigs will be unique.

You decide if you want to add more stems.



4. Draw in some leaf shapes. Hazel leaves have all the same structure and general shape but each leaf will be unique in its size, markings, volume etc.



- ← 5. Now draw in some hebe shapes behind the branches in the spaces that haven't been filled.

6. I like to fill in the negative white spaces in black between shapes to give some depth, shadow and mood to drawings, but you can leave the background as it is if you prefer.
7. Finishing touches: add a little pencil shading to branches and leaves, some markings on the bark, some flowers, berries, ivy or some wildlife etc.



Please send photos of your drawings to cmckissock@aol.com – I can't wait to see them.



Sources of free photos and reference material about hedgerows

<https://unsplash.com/s/photos/hedgerow> or <https://pixabay.com/>

[https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/hedgerows/#:~:text=What%20is%20a%20hedgerow%3F,ancient%20and%20or%20species%20rich.)

[wildlife/habitats/hedgerows/#:~:text=What%20is%20a%20hedgerow%3F,ancient%20and%20or%20species%20rich.](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/hedgerows/#:~:text=What%20is%20a%20hedgerow%3F,ancient%20and%20or%20species%20rich.)

<https://www.buglife.org.uk/resources/habitat-management/ancient-and-species-rich-hedgerows/>

<https://www.countryfile.com/wildlife/trees-plants/hedgerow-plants-flowers-guide>