



**Nature around us ...**



# Our territory

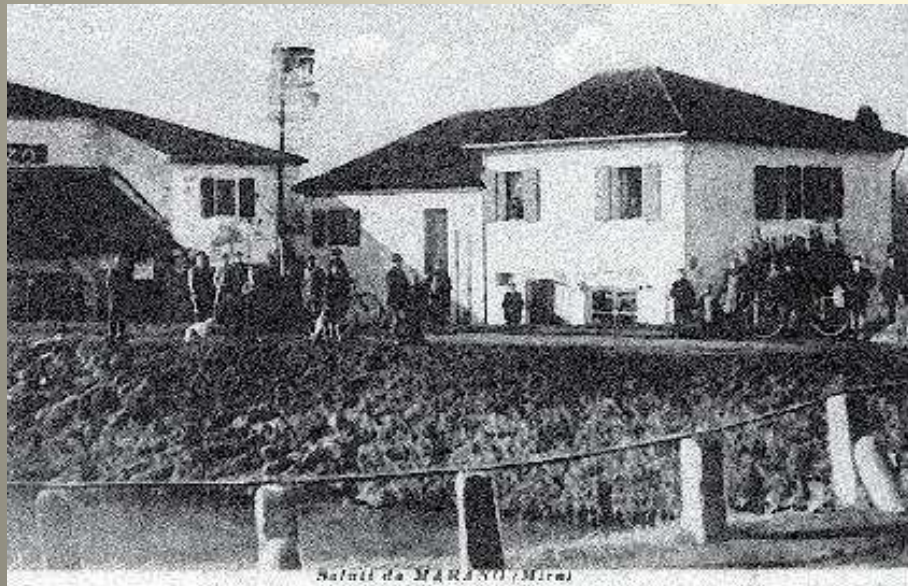


Our territory belongs to the municipal district of Mira in the province of Venice. One third of it is covered by sandbanks; the typical features of the agricultural landscape of the country in Veneto are ditches, fields and hedges.





In the past in our territory there were marshes and large forests of oaks, hazelnut trees, hornbeams and elms. This is testified by the names of some of our villages or towns: *Olmo* (= elm); *Oriago* (= mouth of the lake); *Borbiago* (= place of waters); *Marano* (= land rising from the marshes).



# Cultivated fields





In our territory farmers cultivate predominantly maize and soya beans.





# Maize





**Maize** (*formenton* in our dialect).  
It's a plant of American origin. It's used as food and in the past it was used to fill mattresses and to make toys.



A typical dish in Veneto is *polenta* (thick maize porridge served with meat, cheese, etc.)



## **Polenta (Recipe)**

### **Ingredients for 4 people**

- 2 l of water
- 1 spoon of salt
- 400 g of maize flour

### **Preparation**

- Put the water into a pot and add the salt.
- Boil the water.
- Pour the maize flour and stir.
- Cook for 30-40 minutes, stirring from time to time.
- Pour onto a plate and serve hot.

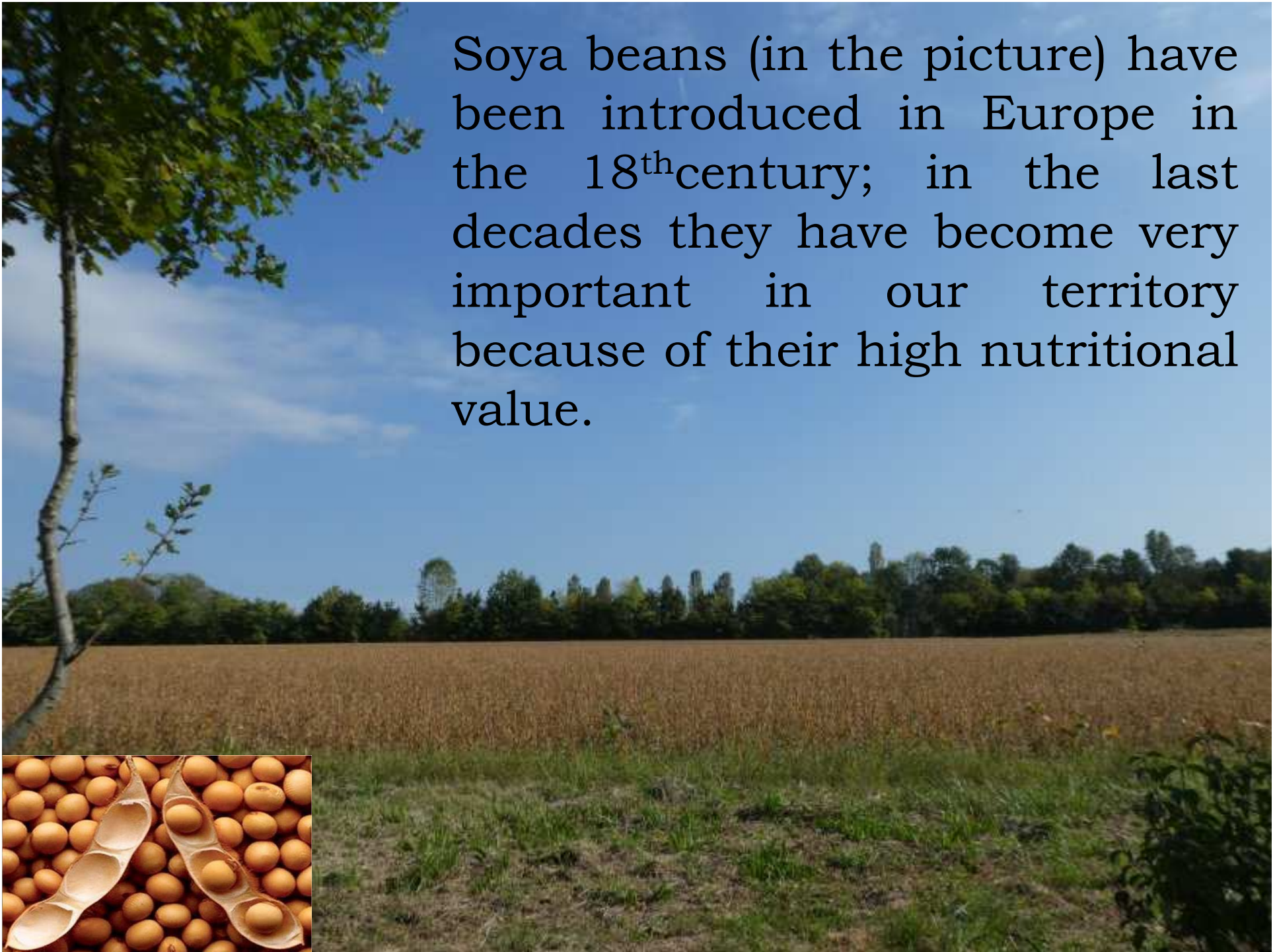
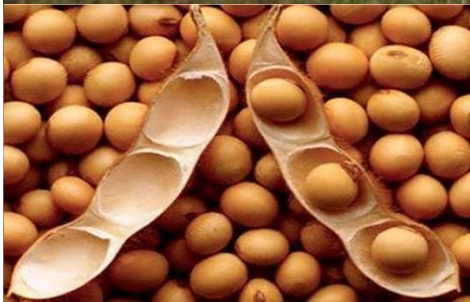


# **Soya beans**





Soya beans (in the picture) have been introduced in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; in the last decades they have become very important in our territory because of their high nutritional value.







**Ditches**





Ditches are narrow channels of varying depth which gather rainwater.

The first ones were dug in the ground in our territory to collect the water of rivers which periodically overflowed their banks.



**Common Reedmace**  
**(*Typha Latifolia*)**







It's a distinctive and common plant of wet places like ditches. It's got brown cylindrical spikes about 30 cm long.



When the spikes are ripe, they break up and send small cotton tufts into the wind.

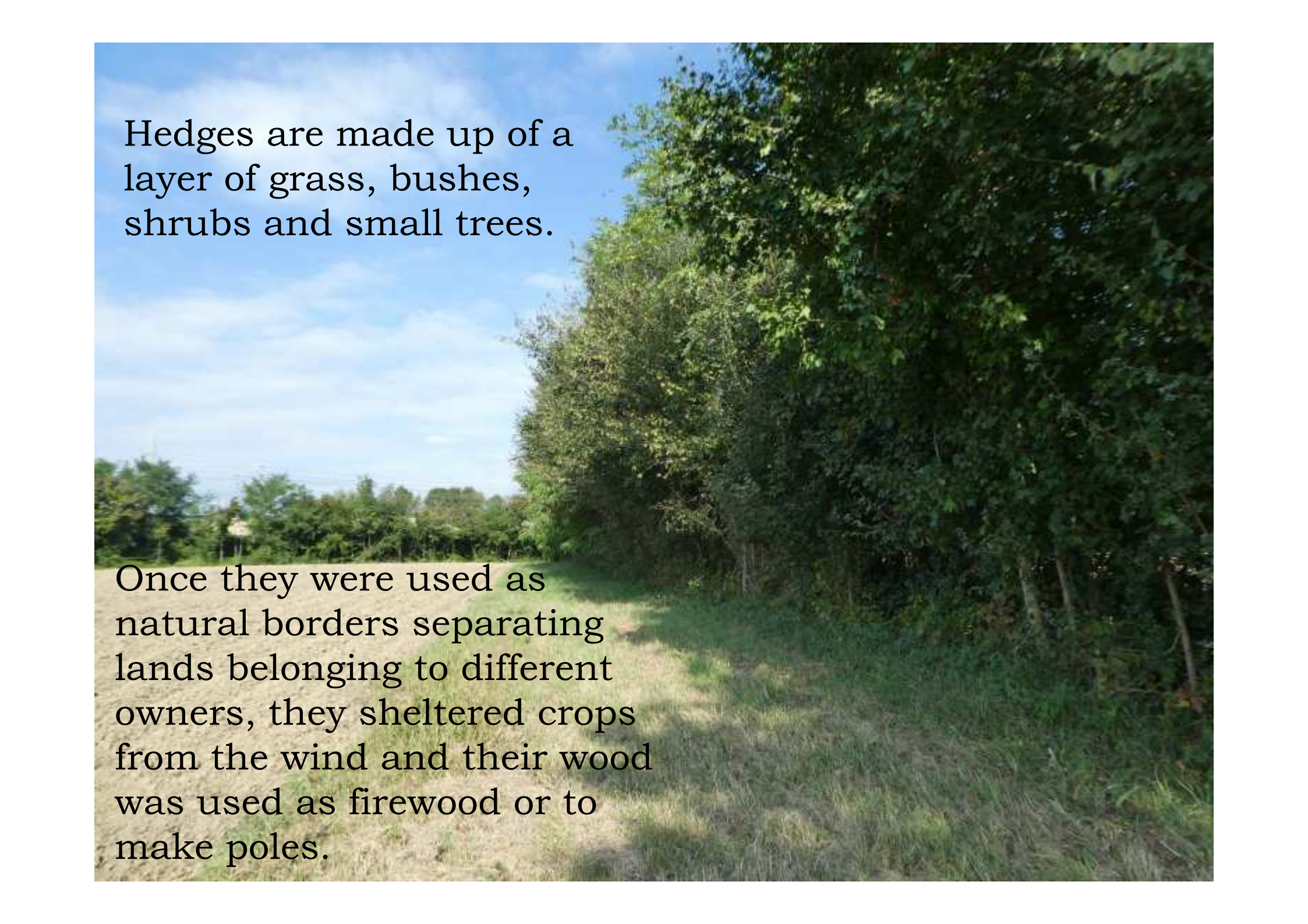




# Hedges



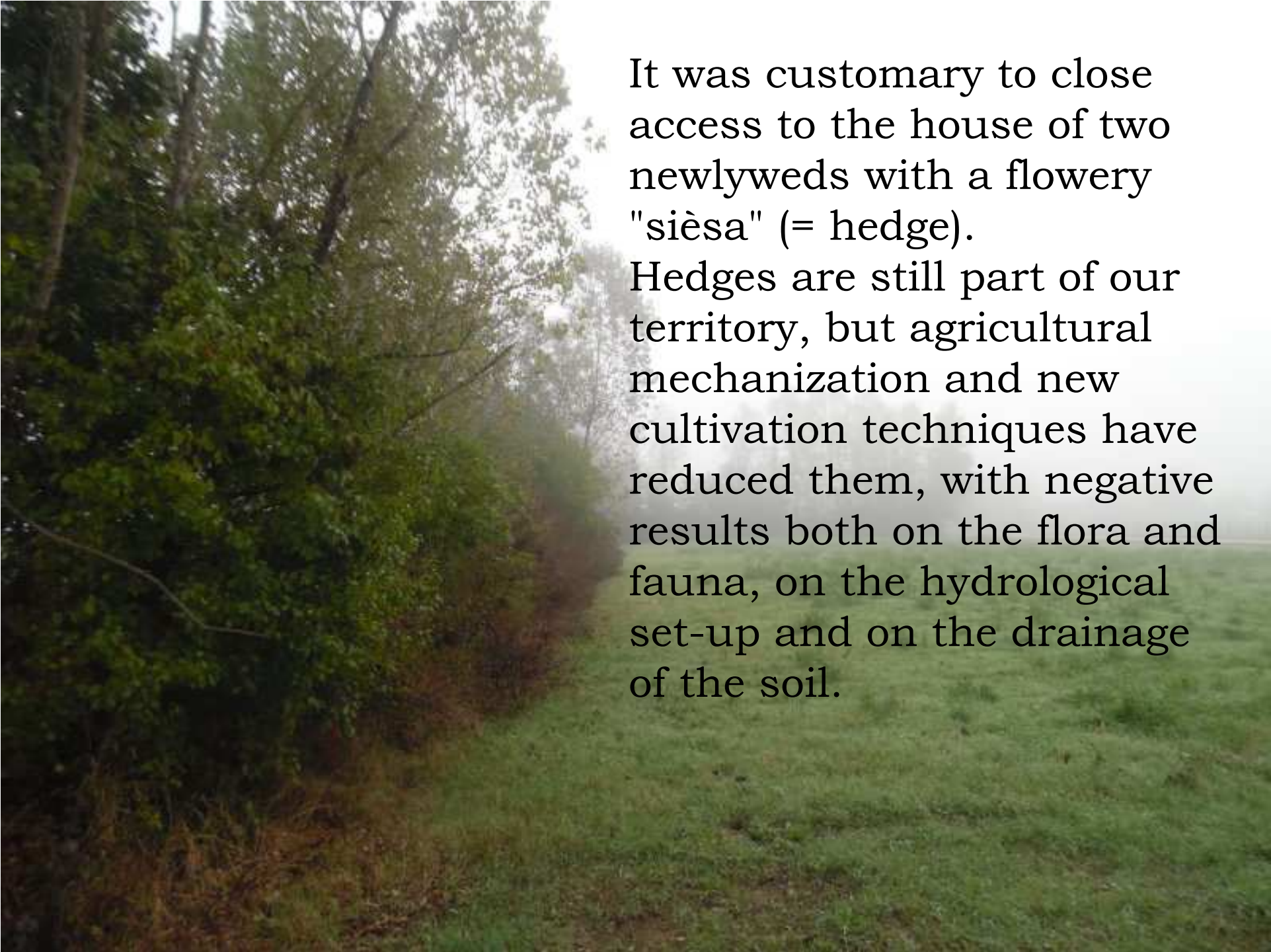




Hedges are made up of a layer of grass, bushes, shrubs and small trees.

Once they were used as natural borders separating lands belonging to different owners, they sheltered crops from the wind and their wood was used as firewood or to make poles.





It was customary to close access to the house of two newlyweds with a flowery "sièsa" (= hedge).

Hedges are still part of our territory, but agricultural mechanization and new cultivation techniques have reduced them, with negative results both on the flora and fauna, on the hydrological set-up and on the drainage of the soil.





In hedges you can find shrubs and small trees such as hawthorns, brambles, bloody dogwoods, bullaces, spindle-trees, elders, dog-roses, field maples and robinias.





The hedge is a very important habitat for wild animals since it offers food, shelter and burrows to a lot of small mammals, amphibians, reptiles and insects.



# The Hawthorn





The hawthorn is the first shrub to blossom in the hedge in spring. It's got long thorns, very hard wood and white flowers. Its red fruits contain a lot of vitamin C.





# The Spindle-tree





The spindle-tree grows to 3-8 m tall, it's got small white flowers and poisonous red fruits.

The shape of its fruits is similar to that of a hat used by catholic priests and that's why it's also called *cappel di prete* (= priest's hat).





# The dog rose







The dog rose has got flowers with big pale pink petals and sharp hooked prickles. Its fruits contain a lot of vitamin C and they are used to make jam and herbal tea.



# **The White Willow (*Salix Alba*)**





The white willow is a very common tree in the countryside of our territory.





The name *salix* may come from the celtic expression *sal-lis* which means “next to the water”. This particular kind of willow is called *white willow* because the undersides of its leaves are white.





**Uses:** in the countryside of our territory the branches of white willows were used to tie vine-shoots or bundles of firewood.







The branches of white willows were also used to make baskets and to cover flasks and demijohns.





A photograph of a foggy landscape. The foreground is a dark, textured field, possibly a plowed field or a field of low-lying vegetation. The middle ground is obscured by a thick layer of fog, and the horizon is a flat, distant line. The sky is a pale, overcast grey.

In our territory there is fog in autumn.

**Year 2C students**

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