

Plants for Hedge & Screen

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Contemporary residences built on ever shrinking lots present their owners with visual challenges. Ideally most homeowners would like their home to appear as if it were built in a clearing in a forest. To accomplish this you must be able to screen the roofs and chimneys of the surrounding homes, or at least block your neighbors view into your garden from their 2nd story windows and balconies. We would also like to hide or at least soften the perimeter and house walls. All of the above without consuming too much valuable garden space.

First we need to determine the heights of objects we are trying to hide. Assume a contemporary 2-story home. The rooftop and chimney are a bit less than 30' tall. The upper story eaves are less than 20'. The eye-level of a neighbor looking out their upstairs window is less than 16'. Perimeter walls are 6' or less.

Consider that from ground level a 10' tall screen may be adequate to hide a 25' tall building from your own viewpoint.

Generally the final result is better if the plants are set close together rather than too far apart. If working with a set budget it is better to purchase a greater number of smaller plants than a smaller number of more mature plants.

On the following lists note that some plants appear more than once and many can be trained for several different uses.

Borders (below the knee)

Abelia grandiflora 'Kaleidoscope' The small variegated leaves show rose, pink, yellow and green. Average water.

Berberis thunbergii Japanese Barberry Beautiful, but deciduous. Nearly invisible spines make a great barrier. Average water.

Buxus japonica 'Green Beauty' Japanese Boxwood This classic can be difficult in heavy soils. Average water.

Carissa grandiflora 'Boxwood Beauty' Dwarf Natal Plum Thrives with heat and tolerates drought.

Euonymus japonica 'Microphylla', E. j. 'Microphylla Variegata' and E. j. 'Butterscotch' Boxleaf Euonymus Highly recommended and easy-to-grow. The green version is the lowest maintenance. Average water.

Ligustrum 'Texanum' Wax-leaf Privet Very common generic bush that is bullet-proof. Average water.

Myrtus communis 'Compacta' Dwarf Myrtle Classic Mediterranean hedge with fine textured foliage grows best in well-drained soils. Tolerates some drought.

Nandina domestica 'Nana Purpurea' Dwarf Heavenly Bamboo Best in part shade to nearly full shade. Beautiful range of foliage colors. Average water.

Pittosporum tobira 'Wheeler's Dwarf' & P. t. 'Crème de Menthe' Very tight foliage looks good in full sun, but fabulous in light shade. Average water.

Punica granatum 'Nana' Dwarf Pomegranate Unlike the species this dwarf variety is often evergreen and makes plenty of beautiful orange flowers followed by small fruit. Average water.

Raphiolepis indica 'Ballerina' India Hawthorn Common greenbelt bush blooms pink in spring. Average water.

Raphiolepis umbellata 'Minor' Dwarf Yeddo Hawthorn Beautiful dense, dark green foliage sprinkled with white flowers. Average water.

Rosemary officinalis 'Tuscan Blue' Upright variety with small, narrow green leaves and blue flowers. Tolerates some drought.

Low Hedge (knee to waist-high)

Azalea (Rhododendron) Shade and sun tolerant varieties available. Most bloom heavily in winter or early spring. A few bloom nearly constantly. Easy to grow if planted in LHN Acid Mix. Average water.

Berberis thunbergii Japanese Barberry Beautiful, but deciduous. Nearly invisible spines make a great barrier. Average water.

Buxus japonica 'Green Beauty' Japanese Boxwood This classic can be difficult in heavy soils. Average water.

Carissa grandiflora Natal Plum Thrives with heat and tolerates drought.

Escallonia 'Newport Dwarf' Small glossy leaves with small rose flowers. Brittle.

Euonymus j. 'Aurea Marginata' Easy-to-grow with bright yellow-edged leaves. Average water.

Ligustrum 'Texanum' Wax-leaf Privet Very common generic bush that is bullet-proof. Average water.

Nandina domestica 'Moonbay' Moonbay Heavenly Bamboo Sun or shade. Striking chartreuse bamboo-like foliage turns red in winter. Average water.

Pittosporum tobira 'Wheeler's Dwarf' & P. t. 'Crème de Menthe' Very tight foliage looks good in full sun, but fabulous in light shade. Average water.

Prunus carolina 'Compacta' Easy bush with waxy light green leaves. Tolerates some drought.

Punica granatum 'Nana' Dwarf Pomegranate Unlike the species this dwarf variety is often evergreen and makes plenty of beautiful orange flowers followed by small fruit.

Raphiolepis indica 'Ballerina' India Hawthorn Common greenbelt bush blooms pink in spring. Average water.

Raphiolepis umbellate 'Minor' Dwarf Yeddo Hawthorn Beautiful dense, dark green foliage sprinkled with white flowers. Average water.

Rosemary officinalis 'Barbeque', 'Tuscan Blue' Upright variety with small, narrow green leaves and blue flowers. Tolerates some drought.

Syzygium paniculatum 'Monterey Bay' Eugenia Nice bronze foliage, sturdy but makes small fruit and gets bugs some winter. Average water.

Xylosma congestum Full, waxy leaves, yet light textured. Tolerates some drought.

Medium Hedges (waist to chest-high)

Abelia 'Edward Goucher' Very easy. Bronzy foliage with pink bell flowers from spring-fall. Average water.

Azalea (Rhododendron) Shade and sun tolerant varieties available. Most bloom heavily in winter or early spring. A few bloom nearly constantly. Easy to grow if planted in LHN Acid Mix.

Camellia sasanqua Sun tolerant species with medium foliage and fall-winter bloom. Average water.

Carissa grandiflora Natal Plum Thrives with heat and tolerates drought.

Citrus These evergreen fruit trees make functional wall covers and screens. Average water.

Coprosma Mirror Plant Beautiful waxy foliage in many color variations. Best along coast. Pruning during hot weather may cause underlying foliage to burn. Average water.

Dodonea viscosa Purple Hopseed Fast, somewhat open growth has olive green leaves that change to purple-bronze during winter. Tolerates some drought.

Euonymus j. 'Aurea Marginata' Easy-to-grow with bright yellow-edged leaves. Average water.

Euonymus japonica 'Green Spires' Small, densely set deep green leaves on upright branches. Average water.

Hibiscus rosa-sinensis Chinese Hibiscus Large colorful flowers bloom most of the year nestled among the large leaves. Average water.

Laurus nobilis Grecian Laurel Stiff upright branches with stiff, leathery gray-green leaves. The classic Mediterranean hedge. Tolerates some drought.

Lavatera maritima Tree Mallow Mediterranean relative of Hibiscus. Blooms lightly but constantly with blush-mauve flowers. Tolerates some drought.

Ligustrum 'Texanum' Wax-leaf Privet Very common generic bush that is bullet-proof. Average water.

Myrica californica Pacific Wax Myrtle This native with glossy light green leaves needs little irrigation once established.

Nandina domestica 'Gulf Stream' Heavenly Bamboo The new growth is always reddish copper. Mature leaves are lime green deepening to deep red during the winter. Average water.

Photinia x fraseri Sturdy bush with brilliant red new foliage that matures to medium green. Average water.

Podocarpus gracilior Fern Pine Small, narrow light green leaves creates a ferny wall. Average water.

Prunus carolina 'Compacta' Easy bush with waxy light green leaves. Tolerates some drought.

Punica granatum Pomegranate This deciduous fruit tree makes a beautiful wall with orange flowers and fruit. Tolerates some drought.

Raphiolepis indica 'Clara' India Hawthorn Common greenbelt bush blooms white in spring. Average water.

Rosemary officinalis 'Tuscan Blue' Upright variety with small, narrow green leaves and blue flowers. Tolerates some drought

Syzygium paniculatum 'Monterey Bay' Eugenia Nice bronze foliage, sturdy but makes small fruit and gets bugs some winter. Average water.

Taxus Yew These slow growing evergreens make one of the finest clipped hedges possible. Average water.

Xylosma congestum Full, waxy leaves, yet light textured. Tolerates some drought.

High Hedges & Screens

(6-8')

Calliandra haematocephala Pink Powder Puff Full green foliage has a soft tropical look. Rose pink puffs bloom fall-spring. Average water.

Camellia japonica Best in part sun. Big flowers combined with large deep green leaves. Average water.

Camellia sasanqua Sun tolerant species with medium foliage and fall-winter bloom. Average water.

Carissa grandiflora Natal Plum Thrives with heat and tolerates drought.

Citrus These evergreen fruit trees make functional wall covers and screens. Average water.

Crassula argentea Jade Plant A bit slow, but this succulent with silver dollar-size leaves will make an essentially maintenance-free screen. Tolerates some drought.

Duranta repens Sky Flower Arching clusters of purple-blue flowers cover this plant from late spring-fall. Average water.

Euonymus japonica 'Green Spires' Small, densely set deep green leaves on upright branches. Average water.

Hibiscus rosa-sinensis Chinese Hibiscus Large colorful flowers bloom most of the year nestled among the large leaves. Average water.

Ilex species Holly Easy to grow, but slow. Wilson holly is relatively fast. English holly is a classic. Most have spiny leaves. Many have colorful berries. Average water.

Juniperus 'Blue Point' Sturdy bush with blue-green foliage. Tolerates drought.

Lavatera maritima Tree Mallow Mediterranean relative of Hibiscus. Blooms constantly with blush-mauve flowers. Tolerates some drought.

Ligustrum 'Texanum' Wax-leaf Privet Very common generic bush that is bullet-proof. Average water.

Nandina domestica Heavenly Bamboo Upright bush with bamboo-like foliage turns red in winter. Average water.

Pittosporum 'Marjorie Channon' Kohuhu Graceful bush with waxy, nearly white variegated leaves and black stems. Average water.

Prunus carolina 'Compacta' Easy bush with waxy light green leaves. Tolerates some drought.

Punica granatum Pomegranate This deciduous fruit tree makes a beautiful wall with orange flowers and fruit. Tolerates some drought.

Rosemary officinalis 'Tuscan Blue' Upright variety with small, narrow green leaves and blue flowers. Tolerates some drought.

Syzygium paniculatum 'Monterey Bay' Eugenia Nice bronze foliage, sturdy but makes small purple fruit and gets bugs some winter. Average water.

Xylosma congestum Full, waxy leaves, yet light textured. Tolerates some drought.

Very Tall Hedges & Screens (8-40')

Bambusa, Chusquea & Otatea Clumping Bamboo varieties that can be controlled from 8' to 20' with minimal work. Average water.

Calocedrus decurrens California Incense Cedar Slow growing, drought resistant conifer with arborvitae-like foliage.

Calliandra haematocephala Pink Powder Puff Full green foliage has a soft tropical look. Rose pink puffs bloom fall-spring. Average water.

Camellia japonica Best in part sun. Big flowers combined with large deep green leaves. Average water.

Camellia sasanqua Sun tolerant species with medium foliage and fall-winter bloom. Average water.

Citrus These evergreen fruit trees make functional wall covers and screens. Average water.

Cupressus glabra Arizona Cypress Extreme heat and drought tolerance with powder blue foliage.

Cupressus sempervirens Italian Cypress Easy wall of gray-green spires. Tolerates some drought.

Dodonea viscosa Purple Hopseed Fast, somewhat open growth has olive green leaves that change to purple-bronze during winter. Tolerates some drought.

Eriobotrya japonica Loquat This fruiting bush has very large, deep green leaves. Established plants tolerate some drought.

Heteromeles arbutifolia Toyon Native bush with interesting flowers and fruit that is quite suitable for screen. Tolerates drought.

Ilex species Holly Easy to grow, but slow. Wilson holly is relatively fast. English holly is a classic. Most have spiny leaves. Many have colorful berries. Average water.

Juniperus 'Spartan' & 'Skyrocket' These varieties grow to about 15' tall and less than 3' wide. Tolerates some drought.

Laurus nobilis Grecian Laurel Stiff upright branches with stiff, leathery gray-green leaves. The classic Mediterranean hedge. Tolerates some drought.

Myrica californica Pacific Wax Myrtle This native with glossy light green leaves needs little irrigation once established.

Photinia x fraseri Sturdy bush with brilliant red new foliage that matures to medium green. Average water.

Pittosporum crassifolium Karo Upright branching with wooly gray foliage. Tolerates some drought.

Pittosporum tenuifolium Kohuhu Graceful bush with waxy green leaves and black stems. Average water.

Podocarpus gracilior Fern Pine Small, narrow light green leaves creates a ferny wall. Average water.

Podocarpus henkelii Conical form with horizontal branches densely clothed with hanging long green leaves. Average water.

Prunus carolina 'Compacta' Easy bush with waxy light green leaves. Tolerates some drought.

Rhamnus alaternus Italian buckthorn Upright shrub with small, dark green leaves. Tolerates some drought.

Sequoia sempervirens Coast Redwood Beautiful foliage but requires ample irrigation.

Taxus Yew These slow growing evergreens make one of the finest clipped hedges possible.

Thuja plicata 'Green Giant' Relatively fast conifer with Arborvitae-like foliage. Average water.

Xylosma congestum Full, waxy leaves, yet light textured. Tolerates some drought.

Plants to Avoid

Cupressocyparis leylandii Cypress This conifer grows quickly but often suffers from *Cypress Canker* Disease that is often fatal. This Cypress is more successful when planted on the coast or in a well irrigated lawn.

Nerium Oleander This beautiful, tropical blooming bush has been succumbing to *Oleander Scorch* an incurable disease.

Spacing

Compared to screens, the plants in a hedge should be close together, closer for short hedges. Recommended spacing is roughly as follows:

1-foot high hedge place plants 6" on center (O.C.)

2-foot high hedge place plants 12" O.C.

4-foot high hedge place plants 18" O.C.

6-foot high hedge place plants 24" O.C.

Initial Care after Planting

First Year Keep plants well irrigated and fertilized. (Irrigation can be restricted after plants reach desired size and form.) Make certain that the foliage is wider toward the bottom of the plant so that all parts receive good light. If bottom branches are shaded they may become bare.

Second Year Trim plants severely in late winter, cutting off about half of last year's growth, before spring growth begins. This will encourage more side branches. Shear sides and top monthly or when required to maintain form. Screens typically require trimming only once or twice per year.

Third Year Continue shearing at regular intervals to maintain form.

Later Years Eventually shearing to the same size will create knots of small branches. Every so many years the hedge will require a slightly more severe pruning to eliminate the knots.

Renovation If the hedge is damaged or large gaps become a problem the plants often respond well to renovation. This involves cutting the plants to within a few inches of the ground either in late winter or early summer and retraining the vigorous new growth.