Hedge Plants and Privacy Screens

A hedge can be any row of shrubs or trees used as a “living fence” to define a boundary or to separate areas. A hedge can be planted as a windbreak, to protect from hot sun, to provide privacy, or simply as a backdrop for ornamentals. A densely planted hedge can even act as a barrier against humans, dogs, and other larger animals.

Some hedge plants can be pruned and shaped to create a very formal look. For a looser informal screen, plants might be planted slightly staggered and pruned only slightly. An extremely informal hedge might be composed of a mixture of plants. In the list below, the plants that take well to being sheared as a formal hedge are starred.

The plants in the lists below are all evergreen or semi-evergreen. A separate list at the end includes deciduous shrubs and trees suitable for hedges or informal privacy screens.

LOW (12” to 30”):

**Andromeda polifolia (Bog Rosemary).** Partial shade to full sun (but not hot reflected sun). White to pink flowers, narrow leathery foliage. Likes acid soil, tolerates poor drainage. 12-18” tall.

**Azalea.** Sun exposure, height, flowers vary; see Sky's evergreen azalea list for variety information.

* **Berberis x stenophylla ‘Corallina Compacta’ (Coral Barberry).** Full sun to partial shade. Bright orange flowers followed by black fruit. Narrow needlelike foliage. 18” tall.

* **Buxus sempervirens ‘Suffuticosa’ (True Dwarf Boxwood) Sun to shade. Small leaves and dense texture; classic hedge plant. Unpruned, will eventually grow to 5’, but can be maintained at any height.**

**Pinus mugo (Mugo Pine).** Full sun, well-drained soil. Slow growing; eventually can reach 4-8’.

**Sarcococca humilis (Dwarf Sweet Box)** Partial shade to full shade. Glossy dark foliage; very fragrant white flowers in winter. Likes acid soil. 12-18” tall.

* **Taxus cuspidata ‘Monloo’ (Emerald Spreader Japanese Yew).** Sun to part shade. Flat green needles. Very low-growing form; 1-3’ tall by 8-10’ wide.

MEDIUM (3’ -6’):

**Abelia x grandiflora (Glossy Abelia).** Full sun to partial shade. Glossy foliage is evergreen in mildest winters. Bronze new growth, profuse fragrant white to pink flowers. 2-8’ depending on variety.

**Aucuba japonica ‘Rozannie’.** Partial shade to full shade. Glossy dark foliage; red berries. 3’ tall.

* **Berberis darwinii (Darwin Barberry).** Full sun to partial shade. Bright orange flowers followed by black fruit. Dark green holly like leaves. 5-8’ tall.
hedge and privacy plants

*Buxus sempervirens (English Boxwood)  Sun to shade. Small leaves and dense texture; classic hedge plant. Unpruned, will eventually grow to 15’, but can be maintained at any height.

Choisya ternata ‘Sundance’ (Gold Leaf Mexican Orange). Sun to part shade.  Glossy chartreuse to golden new foliage, very fragrant white flowers. To 3-6’ tall.


*Escallonia ‘Newport Dwarf’. Sun to part shade.  Glossy dark foliage, clusters of pink flowers. 3-4’ tall.

*Euonymus fortunei. Sun to shade.  ‘Emerald Gaiety’ has deep green leaves edged white, ‘Emerald ‘n’ Gold’ is gold-edged. 4-5’ tall.

Ilex glabra ‘Shamrock’ (Inkberry). Sun to part shade. Thick dark green leaves and black berries; brighter new foliage. 3-6’ tall.

Kalmia (Mountain Laurel). Partial shade. Glossy oval foliage. Showy pink, white, or red flowers are often pinwheel-marked. 3’ to 8’ tall, depending on variety.

Mahonia aquifolium (Oregon Grape). Sun to shade. Glossy holly-like foliage. Spikes of yellow flowers in late winter attract hummingbirds; blue berries in summer. To 6’ tall; shorter in full sun.

Nandina domestica (Heavenly Bamboo). Sun to shade. Makes a light airy-looking screen or hedge. 2’ to 8’ tall, depending on variety.

Osmanthus species. Sun to part shade. Glossy foliage, very fragrant flowers.  O. burkwoodii has bright green foliage and grows 6-10’.  O. delavayi has dark foliage and grows 4-6’.  O. heterophyllus ‘Goshiki’ has variegated holly-like foliage and grows 3-4’.

Pieris japonica (Lily of the Valley Shrub). Partial shade. Glossy dark foliage, bronze to red new growth in spring. Some variegated forms available. Showy sprays of white, pink, or red flowers in early spring. 3’ to 8’ tall, depending on variety.

Rhaphiolepis ‘Southern Moon’ (Southern Moon Yedda Hawthorn). Sun to part shade. Glossy dark foliage, profusion of white flowers in spring. To 5-6’ tall.

Rhododendron. Sun exposure, height, flowers vary; see Sky’s rhododendron list for variety information.

Sarcococca (S. confusa or S. ruscifolia- Sweet Box) Partial shade to full shade. Glossy dark foliage; very fragrant white flowers in winter. Likes acid soil. Slow growing to 4-6’ tall.

Skimmia japonica. Partial shade. Glossy oval foliage. Clusters of red/pink buds open to small white flowers. Females will produce bright red berries if a male plant is nearby. Slow growing to 5’ tall.

Vaccinium ovatum (Evergreen Huckleberry). Sun to shade. Glossy dark small foliage; small bell-shaped white to pink flowers followed by tart black berries. 3-10’ tall; shorter in full sun

Viburnum davidii (David Viburnum). Partial shade. Glossy dark green, deeply veined foliage. Showy clusters of metallic blue berries in fall. To 3-4’ tall.

TALL (6’ +):
**Arbutus unedo (Strawberry Tree).** Full sun. White flowers, red “strawberry-like” fruit; the plant can both flower and fruit nearly year-round. 8-35’ tall depending on variety.

**Aucuba japonica.** Partial shade to full shade. Glossy dark foliage; most varieties offered are variegated, spotted with yellow or streaked with white or gold. 6-10’ tall.

**Bamboo (assorted species).** See Sky’s bamboo list for variety information. Note that running bamboo species will need a bamboo barrier for containment; clumping/fountain bamboos will not.

**Camellia.** Partial shade, rich soil. Height, flower time, and flower colors & forms vary; see Sky’s camellia list for variety information. 3’ to 12’ depending on variety.

**Cephalotaxus harringtonia ‘Fastigiata’ (Columnar Japanese Plum Yew).** Full sun to partial shade. Glossy dark needles. To 8-10’ tall.

**Choisya ternata (Mexican Orange).** Sun to part shade. Glossy rich green foliage, very fragrant white flowers. To 6-8’ tall.

**Cotoneaster lacteus (Parney’s Cotoneaster).** Full sun to part shade. Leathery foliage. Clusters of white flowers in spring. Red berries hold well in winter. To 8-10’ tall.

**Distylium ‘Linebacker’.** Sun to part shade. Glossy foliage, small red flowers in winter. Upright; 8-10’ tall.

* **Escallonia.** Sun to part shade. Glossy dark foliage, clusters of white or pink flowers. 5-15’ tall depending on variety.

* **Ilex crenata (Japanese Holly).** Sun to part shade. Foliage and form similar to boxwood but it tolerates colder winters. 6-12’ tall; can be kept sheared at desired height.

* **Ligustrum japonicum (Wax-Leaf Privet) Sun** to part shade. Glossy oval foliage is dark green above, whitish underneath. 5-12’ tall.

**Myrica californica (California Wax Myrtle).** Full sun. Dense foliage is dark green above, pale underneath, pleasantly aromatic. To 10-30’ tall


* **Prunus laurocerasus (English Laurel), P. lusitanica (Portuguese Laurel).** Sun to part shade. Glossy dark green leaves, spikes of small but sweetly scented white flowers. To 10-30’ tall depending on variety.

* **Pyracantha koidzumii ‘Victory’.** Full sun. Thorny bush is good barrier plant. Oval glossy leaves, dark red berries hold well in winter. Can be sheared, but you’ll lose some berries. To 8-10’ tall.

**Viburnum tinus (Laurustinus).** Sun to part shade. Glossy dark foliage. Showy clusters of scented white flowers in spring followed by metallic blue berries. 3-12’ tall depending on variety.

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**VERY TALL (15’ and up):**
**Chamaecyparis obtusa (Hinoki Cypress).**  Sun to filtered shade.  Lacy foliage and nice structure.  Golden and variegated forms available.  6’ to 30’ tall.

* * X Cupresso-cyparis leylandii (Leyland Cypress).  Full sun.  Gray-green foliage; cultivars can be bluish, golden, or bright green.  Fastest growing plant for privacy.  20’ to 70’ tall.

* * Cupressus sempervirens (Italian Cypress).  Full sun.  Dark green foliage; cultivars can be bluish, golden, or bright green.  8’ to 60’ tall.

**Pseudotsuga menziesii (Douglas Fir).**  Sun to partial shade.  Hardy to -30°F.  One of our native conifers, Doug fir has bright green to blue green foliage and pendant cones.  To 100+ feet.

* * Taxus species (Yew).  Sun to nearly full shade.  Yews are characterized by flat green needles and a “cone” consisting of a single seeded berrylike (usually red) structure produced only on female plants.  Yews take pruning extremely well and make a great hedge.  6’ to 50’ tall, depending on variety.

* * Thuja species (Arborvitae, Western Red Cedar).  Sun to moderate shade.  Foliage is flat and scale like.  Color varies from bright yellow green to dark lustrous green.  There are many variegated forms.  Takes pruning well.  Makes a great hedge.  ‘Emerald Green’ (growing to 10-15’) is probably the most popular hedge plant in the Northwest.  6’ to 100’, depending on variety.

**Tsuga canadensis—CANADIAN HEMLOCK.**  Sun to partial shade.  Dark green foliage; many varieties have striking new growth.  6’ to 40’ tall, depending on variety.

**DECIDUOUS PLANTS USED AS HEDGES/SCREENS:**

If you want privacy, shade, or wind protection in the summer but don’t want to block winter sunlight, an informal screen of deciduous plants can be an ideal solution.  Low hedges of deciduous shrubs are sometimes also planted to give a strong seasonal color effect (for example, forsythia for spring bloom or burning bush for fall color).  A few deciduous trees (hornbeam, beech) are also used for formal hedges.  Popular deciduous hedge/screen plants include:

**Azalea.**  Sun to light shade.  A border of bright orange or pink deciduous azaleas in full bloom can be a traffic-stopper!  See Sky’s deciduous azalea list for variety information.  3-10’, depending on variety.

**Blueberries.**  Full sun to part shade; best fruit production in full sun.  Some varieties are evergreen or semi-evergreen; others have attractive winter bark.  Nice edible hedge; see Sky’s blueberry list for variety information.  2- 8’, depending on variety.

* * Carpinus betulus (European Hornbeam).  Full sun to light shade.  Traditional plant for formal hedge.  Deciduous, but leaves tend to persist in fall after turning color.  Dense.  To 40’ tall.

**Chaenomeles (Flowering Quince).**  Full sun.  Very early spring bloomer in shades of bright red, peach, coral pink, or white.  4-10’ depending on variety.
Crataegus (Hawthorn). Full sun. Thorny; traditional English hedge plant, especially as part of mixed hedgerows used as livestock barriers. Covered with white (sometimes pink or red) flowers in mid-spring, small red fruit in fall. To 18-25’ tall.

Euonymus alatus (Burning Bush). Full sun to part shade. Brilliant red fall color (best in full sun). 4-15’ depending on variety.

*Fagus sylvatica (European Beech). Full sun to light shade. Traditional plant for formal hedge. Foliage can be dark green, gold, purple, or green variegated with white and pink, depending on variety. To 60’ tall.

Forsythia. Full sun. Sunny yellow flowers in early spring. 3-10’ depending on variety.

Fruit Trees, particularly columnar apples or espaliered apples, pears, or Asian pears. Full sun. See Sky’s fruit tree list for variety information. Columnar apples grow to 6-10’; espaliers are usually maintained at about 6’ tall.

Hydrangea. Full sun to part shade. Some varieties will rebloom summer into fall. See Sky’s hydrangea list for variety information. 3-10’ depending on variety.

Philadelphus (Mock Orange). Full sun. Extremely fragrant white flowers in summer. 5-10’ depending on variety.

Rhamnus frangula ‘Ron Williams’ (Fine Line Buckthorn). Fine, lacy foliage on well-behaved plant. 5-7’.

Rose. Full sun. See Sky’s rose list for variety information; shrub varieties usually do best for hedges. 3-7’ depending on variety.

Syringa (Lilac). Full sun. Late spring bloomers, usually fragrant. See Sky’s lilac list for variety information. 5-12’ depending on variety.

Viburnum species. Sun to part shade. Dark green leaves turning red, burgundy, or yellow in fall. Viburnum x burkwoodii has clusters of white flowers with a gardenia-like fragrance and grows 6-12’ tall. Korean Spice Viburnum (V. carlesii) has clusters of spicily fragrant waxy pink to white flowers and grows 4-8’ tall. European Cranberry (V. opulus) has “lacecap” white flowers followed by showy red berries and grows to 8-15’ tall (dwarf varieties available 2-4’ tall). Snowball Bush (V. opulus ‘Roseum’) has showy snowball-like flowers, no fruit, and grows to 12’ tall.

Weigela. Full sun to light shade. White, pink, or red flowers in spring. Foliage may be green, purple, chartreuse, or variegated with cream, white, or pink, depending on variety. To 2-7’ tall.