Utah State University
DigitalCommons@USU

All Archived Publications | Archived USU Extension Publications

2002

Grow a Fence: Plant a Hedge

Dennis Hinkamp
Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall

Part of the Horticulture Commons

Warning: The information in this series may be obsolete. It is presented here for historical purposes only. For the most up to date information please visit The Utah State University Cooperative Extension Office

Recommended Citation
Hinkamp, Dennis, "Grow a Fence: Plant a Hedge" (2002). *All Archived Publications.* Paper 958.
http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall/958

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Archived USU Extension Publications at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Archived Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact becky.thoms@usu.edu.

Utah State University Extension
electronic publishing

GARDEN NOTES

GROW A FENCE: PLANT A HEDGE

By Dennis Hinkamp

August 2002 Fall - 45

A hedge is defined as a "fence of bushes." However, we use them for a variety of purposes, most commonly for privacy.

Tall hedges range in height from five to ten feet tall, and can be informal or formal, which does not refer to their command of etiquette, quips Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. Informal hedges are easier to maintain, and are the softest, least rigid in appearance. Most only require annual pruning to remove the older canes.

"A few of my favorite shrubs for informal hedges include red and gold twig dogwoods, lilacs, privets and honeysuckle," he says. "These deciduous plants make a great screen for most of the year. They are also attractive and relatively quick-growing."

For those looking for an evergreen hedge, yews, arborvitae, mugo pines or even upright junipers provide year-round cover, but also come with some inherent problems, Goodspeed says. They are more difficult to prune and maintain and do not easily relinquish stray balls and Frisbees that enter their grasp.

"Formal hedges require regular haircuts to keep them looking good, and they grab anything that meanders too close," he explains. "The most important thing to remember when pruning or shearing a formal hedge is the shape. Keep the top surface smaller than the bottom so it almost resembles a flat-topped pyramid. Cutting the sides straight or forming the top wider than the bottom provides too much shade for the lower part of the plant. This causes thinning and even lower branches will die out. And, who wants a hedge that looks like a poodle with shaved legs?"

Medium or low hedges are grown between two and five feet tall, Goodspeed says. They are normally used to define space and direct traffic, but do not completely shield one location from another. View them like a fence low enough so that you can still talk to the neighbors. Spirea, some cotoneaster and juniper, Euonymus, laurel and currants work best for this type of hedge, he says. Most of these hedges are informal. Once in a while these same plants are pruned into small, formal hedges. For most people, however, it's too much work.

"Any hedge you can trip over is probably more of a border," Goodspeed says. "Anything smaller than about two feet high can be used to define space and shapes, but obviously will not provide privacy. Anything the neighbor kids can hop over without using a pole vault is not a true

hedge."

Normally borders are high maintenance items, he says. Plants that must be sheered or kept this small are usually fussy and they are generally only used to keep people out of flower areas and define the shape of beds. Some plants that work well as borders include abelia, boxwood, dwarf barberry and such perennials as lavender and santolina. If perennials are used, replant them every three or four years to keep them attractive and maintain their size.

The last type of hedge is an "intimidation" hedge, Goodspeed says. It almost dares you to try entering its territory. There are a few plants with enough attitude for this type of hedge such as pyracantha, barberry, mahonia and quince. These plants' thorns or sharp leaves can tear off the bark of even large quaking aspens.

"The only reason for using these plants as a hedge or in any other part of the landscape is to keep everyone out of an area," he says. "They can be a real pain to trim, and even a bigger pain to remove. If you are contemplating using these plants for a privacy hedge, consider substituting a length of barbed wire as another option. That would be easier to remove."

Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran's status. USU's policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions.

Utah State University employees and students cannot, because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran's status, refuse to hire; discharge; promote; demote; terminate; discriminate in compensation; or discriminate regarding terms, privileges, or conditions of employment, against any person other wise qualified. Employees and students also cannot discriminate in the classroom, residence halls, or in on/off campus, USU-sponsored events and activities.

This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work. Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Jack M. Payne, Vice President and Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Utah State University. (EP/08/2002/DF)