

HEDGE INFORMATION

Farmington Gardens 21815 SW Farmington Rd, Beaverton 503.649.4568 www.farmingtongardens.com

So you've got an area that you want to screen out. Your neighbor's junk pile, or those neighbors who have their windows at just the perfect level to look at you at all times of the day... Whether for screening or privacy, hedges are a good choice for any homeowner. Plant hedges are often better looking than a fence or wall, can have some sort of interest during the year, and will grow to suit your needs.

What should I look for in a hedge?

Ask yourself these questions to determine your needs-

How much room can I spare? Often the limiting factor when it comes to hedge choice, this is really important. Sometimes you may only have a few feet to work with before the hedge is residing in your living room. Keep this in mind, as you can only fit so much in a certain space.

What am I trying to block? Do you want a dense screen that blocks everything, or simply something to act as a boundary line? Are you trying to block a view, or just keep people or animals out/in? Is there a sound issue? One note on sound blockage: Larger leaved plants are more efficient at blocking sound than smaller leaved plants. Use these questions to determine your needs so that you can find a functional plant.

How long of an area do I have to cover? If it's a really long area, and you have the width capacity, you may want to consider going with a plant that spreads a bit more, as this will require fewer plants to cover the same length. For example, it will usually take more arborvitae to cover an area than any other plant. A Leyland cypress would cut the number of plants needed down to about a fifth of the number of arbs needed. Also, if it's a long area, do you want to look at a long expanse of the same thing? You may want to consider mixing the plants in your hedge to make it more interesting.

Am I looking for a simply functional plant, or does it have to be pretty? Back fence hedges, or fences way out where no one notices them simply need to be functional. But when you get into a more prominent place, like a front yard or high traffic area, you may want to consider a blooming plant, or something with some sort of interest.

What kinds of plants will work as hedges?

Really, just about anything can be used as a hedge. People have used everything from Douglas Fir to Fuchsias, and they generally work fine. Your choice should be based on your needs and experience. If you are a first time gardener, or someone with limited knowledge or time, you will probably want to just use a plant from the list or ask for advice on a commonly used hedge plant. These plants have been proven successful over the years, and should work fine for you also. For those of you with a bit more practice and confidence in your green thumb, go ahead and use your imagination. Just because it's not widely used doesn't mean it doesn't work.

How do I plant a hedge?

For small areas, planting will be the same as with a normal shrub. For long areas/more plants, you may want to dig a trench wide enough for planting, and then set the plants in and backfill easier. Be sure to find out about the plants' growth habit and size, and find a recommended spacing to use. Planting the plants too close will result in poor health down the road, so don't fret if it looks sparse to begin with, it'll fill in. Water your hedge in well, and keep the water on it for the first few years.

What care will maximize the health and lifespan of my hedge?

Water is usually a key issue, especially with longer hedgerows. It is recommended that you run drip irrigation lines the length of your hedge, so all plants get adequate water. Often times sprinklers will miss some plants, and you won't notice problems until one plant starts to die. Pruning is also very important. Keep on top of it! Too often people will let a hedge go for years with no pruning, and then experience poor results when they decide to finally cut that overgrowth off. This often results in a row of stumps. The trick is to mold your hedge as it grows by yearly pruning. If you even shear a little off a year, your hedge will respond by branching, and become denser and greener (Unless it's Photinia, then it'll be more red). When your hedge gets to be the ultimate size you want, keep it there! Yearly shearing will result in a more uniform, denser, healthier, and longer lasting hedge.