



# SELECTING PLANTS FOR SCREENS AND HEDGES

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## Abstract

This publication discusses the many benefits of installing screens and hedges in the home landscape. It also provides information on how to plan layouts, including spacing issues, types of design, and the best plant choices for creating healthy and effective screens and hedges.

## Part 1: Planning a Living Screen or Hedge

“Screens and hedges are [closely spaced] linear strips of vegetation that perform a variety of valuable functions in urban environments” (McPherson 1988).

### Benefits of Live Screens and Hedges

In designing a landscape, consider the need for privacy or blocking the view of an undesirable vista (Figure 1). As an alternative to a wall built with wood, plastic lumber, or brick, one can utilize a range of different plants to build a living screen or hedge that will provide years of service. Using trees and shrubs for screens and hedges can provide additional benefits, such as reducing noise, blocking wind or dust, conserving energy, and improving water and air quality. They can also define a space, create habitat for beneficial wildlife, and beautify the landscape (Vaughan 2013).

To design a screen for **noise** control from moderate speed traffic (<40 mph) in neighborhoods, plant a row of trees or shrubs with the near edge of the buffer within 20 to 50 ft of the center of the nearest traffic lane (Bassuk 2009). The height will be determined by line-of-sight safety issues for vehicle and pedestrian traffic, overhead utility lines, and local ordinances. Strive for a minimum density of 60 percent at plant maturity. Density is the solid area presented by foliage and woody parts of the plant. The width of the row should be 20 ft, minimum, to effectively reduce noise levels, and twice as long as the distance from the noise source (NRCS 2011). When choosing plant material, consider tolerance to dust particle deposition, salt spray, and vehicle emissions (Bassuk 2009).

Tree and shrub plantings for **wind or dust buffers** should be oriented as close to perpendicular to the prevailing wind as possible for the time of year protection is most



Figure 1. Emerald Green arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* ‘Smaragd’) grows to 15 ft in height and 3 ft in width, making it a very popular hedge plant for screening. Photo by Charles Brun, WSU

desired. For example, if the objective is to buffer cold winter winds, an evergreen windbreak would be at a 90-degree angle to the prevailing winter wind.

Windbreaks work by building up large quantities of air on the windward side of a windbreak, causing the air to rise up and over or around the ends. The greatest protection is provided within 2–10 times the height of the tallest tree or shrub and over an uninterrupted distance of 10 times the height (Wright and Stuhr 2002). The density of the row at maturity should be at least 60 percent. Density can be estimated by the proportion of solid area to open area (Straight and Brandle 2007).

Living screens and hedges can **conserve energy and improve water and air quality**. With proper planting of trees and shrubs, home energy costs can be significantly reduced, with actual savings between 15 and 25 percent (Dwyer et al. 1992; Kuhns 2012; Strine 2004). Provide summer shade by placing deciduous trees on the south, southwest, and west side of the house for maximum cooling effects. When leaves fall in winter, the trees will let the winter sun in. In winter, an evergreen buffer planted perpendicular to the wind will provide protection from cold winter winds. Locate the planting row at a distance 2 to 4 times the height of the tallest tree upwind from the building for effective draft protection (Bassuk

### Benefits of Living Screens & Hedges

- Provide privacy
- Screen unsightly elements
- Buffer against wind
- Noise and odor abatement
- Dust reduction
- Improve water and air quality
- Energy conservation
- Wildlife habitat
- Increase species diversity
- Beautify the landscape

*NRCS Conservation Practice Standards, 2010*

2009). For example, if the tallest plant in the row is 10 ft, the planting row should be placed 20 to 40 ft from the structure, at a right angle to the prevailing winter wind.

**Water and air quality** are improved through natural plant filtering systems that screens and hedges provide. Plant leaves exchange atmospheric gases and trap particulate matter, thereby appreciably reducing the amount of air pollutants. Tree and shrub canopies intercept rainfall by catching and slowing rain before it hits the ground. This reduces soil erosion and runoff volume flowing into waterways (Nowak 2006).

Living screens and hedges can provide

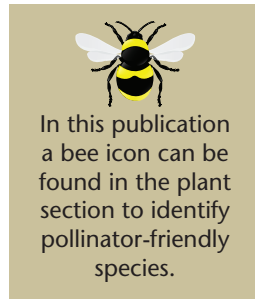
habitat for **pollinators and other beneficial wildlife**. All wildlife needs food, water, and shelter to survive. Screens and hedges can provide one or more of these basic needs.

Choose trees and shrubs that will provide year-round nectar, pollen, or fruit resources for food. Pollinators include birds, butterflies, bees, and beetles (Webb 2011), so planting flowers in a variety of sizes, shapes, and colors is important. Use at least three different plant species, each with consecutive bloom times throughout the season.

Additional pollinator-friendly flowers can be planted in the landscape to supplement habitat needs (Figure 2). Many of our native bee pollinators are ground nesting, so part of the soil should be accessible and undisturbed. For other wildlife, such as birds, consider branch density, thorns, and evergreens for shelter, nesting, and overwintering sites (Vaughan et al. 2013).

## Planning, Design, and Development

It is important to plan the layout of a screen or hedge before installation. Once trees or shrubs are planted and begin growing, it can be difficult to make changes. Factors to consider include the available space on the property; whether it will be a formal



wildfire, the need for defensible space.

## Space Requirements

During the planning and design phase, it is important to know the square footage of the planting area. Measurements of the planting site should be considered not only to ensure adequate plant root soil volume, but also to ensure enough available width and height for mature plant clearance. Be aware of overhead utility lines, street visibility, sidewalk clearance, and property line boundaries. This information will guide plant selection, the number of plants needed, and their spacing. One of the biggest design mistakes made is planting species that are too large for the designated area (Mason 2013). Select plant material based on mature size, with consideration of formal or informal hedge type.

The height, width, form, and salient characteristics of 80 different species that could be used for screens and hedges are described in Part 2 of this

or informal design; the need for deciduous or evergreen plants; the aesthetics of plant texture; and, in areas prone to

publication, which focuses on plant choices. The mature height and width listed reflect the generally recognized size of plants grown in the northern temperate zone of the United States. These data came from university references (Bassuk 2009; Breen 2015; Brun 2015; Brand 2015; Detweiler 2006; Kuhns 2015; and Love 2009).

## Formal or Informal

Choosing a formal or informal hedge or screen depends on the site characteristics and personal choice. Consider the maintenance level, space available (which allows plants to take their natural form) and the overall aesthetics desired. An informal hedge can be left to grow naturally or it can be selectively pruned using thinning and heading cuts to maintain desired height and width (Figure 3). With formal hedges, start with a young plant to build the structure of the hedge and continue to prune on a regular basis. When building the structure, prune the top of the hedge narrower than the base to ensure good light penetration. Otherwise, the lower limbs will de-foliate, thus reducing the desired privacy. Flowering hedges should be pruned after the blooms have dropped. Frequent shearing of flowering hedges often results in a reduction of flower bud formation over time (Gilman 2005). There are many pictorial guides to pruning formal hedges available (Gilman 2010).



Figure 2. European honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) is a key pollinator for the landscape. Photo by Charles Brun, WSU



Figure 3. With its fine texture and numerous sharp thorns, William Penn barberry (*Berberis gladwynensis*) can be left to grow naturally or sheared to form an impregnable hedge. It grows to 5 ft in height and width; hardy to Zone 5. Photo by Charles Brun, WSU



Figure 4. On larger parcels, a row of Hogan cedars (*Thuja plicata* 'Hogan') will provide year-round screening and noise reduction. This western red cedar cultivar grows to 40 ft in height, 20 ft in width, and is hardy to Zone 5. Photo by Charles Brun, WSU

### Deciduous or Evergreen

For a screen or hedge to be effective, it must be designed around the specific function it is to perform. If the objective is to provide privacy or block an intrusive view, year-round screening is necessary. Broadleaf Evergreen or conifer plants (Figure 4) should be used in this case, selecting species for site tolerance. For example, a broadleaf evergreen species may have sufficient cold hardiness, but suffer from winter leaf burn in regions with cold winter temperatures. In winter when the ground freezes, roots cannot take up water. On sunny or windy winter days, plants lose water through their leaves and if the water cannot be replaced as quickly as it is lost, leaf burn can result (Maleike 2014). An evergreen conifer species tolerant to winter desiccation may be more appropriate. Deciduous plants may be more effective when only seasonal performance is needed, such as acting as privacy screens or reducing summer solar heat. A combination of evergreen and deciduous plants can be effective, if space allows.

### Plant Texture

Plant texture is the visual perception of the size, shape, spacing, and color of leaves and twigs. Texture can be fine to coarse, heavy to light, and dense to thin. Coarse textures tend to be bold, with large leaves that

attract attention from the play of light and dark contrasts, such as oak leaf hydrangea. Medium textures have a smooth, simple leaf shape, and moderately spaced branching, such as viburnum. Fine textures have small leaves and thin, intricately branched twigs such as arborvitae. From an aesthetic perspective, a landscape can appear larger if fine-textured plants are used as background hedge or screen material and medium- and coarse-textured plants are placed in front (Hansen 2013).

### Wildfire Defensible Space

In many areas of the Pacific Northwest, wildfire is a natural component of our landscape. In many cases homes can be protected

by creating a defensible space. The term defensible space refers to the area between homes and other structures where fuel sources, such as woody vegetation, has been cleared or modified to reduce the spread of a fire or, at least, slow it down. For more information, refer to *Fire-Resistant Plants for Home Landscapes* (Detweiler 2006) at <http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/20921/%2apnw590.pdf>.

Living screens and hedges can be considered a green fence (Figure 5) when suitable plant material is used and properly located in the landscape. In areas prone to wildfire, a screen or hedge should be placed at least 30 ft away from the home, and it should not be connected to any flammable attachments near the house, such as wooden fences or decks. The screen or hedge should be surrounded by fuel breaks in the form of lawns, driveways, sidewalks, or retaining walls (Firewise Communities Program 2014).

### Winter Hardiness Zones

Plant hardiness zones help define the optimum growing climates for all ornamentals. One can use their postal zip code to look up hardiness zones (Hardiness Zones 2014). There are six winter hardiness zones in Washington State (Table 1). Refer to Figure 6 for a pictorial guide to the plant hardiness zones in Washington State.



Figure 5. A solid row of David viburnum (*Viburnum davidii*) will grow to 5 ft in height and width and is hardy to Zone 7. Its thick leathery leaves make it drought tolerant. Photo by Charles Brun, WSU

Zone 4	-30 °F to -20 °F
Zone 5	-20 °F to -10 °F
Zone 6	-10 °F to 0 °F
Zone 7	0 °F to 10 °F
Zone 8	10 °F to 20 °F
Zone 9	20 °F to 30 °F

**Avoid Invasive Plants**

This publication does not include plants from any portion of the United States that are found in the USDA's Introduced, Invasive, or Noxious Plants Floristic Area database (NRCS 2014). Introduced plants may become invasive as they lack co-evolved competitors and natural enemies to control their populations.

**Native plants**

This publication does note native plants that could be considered as screens or hedges. A native plant is defined as one that occurred naturally in a particular region at the time when the first European settlers arrived in North America, and which was not a result of direct or indirect human influence. Oregon grape (Figure 7) is a native plant that can be used as a screen throughout the state, though it has a ragged habit and generally is not sheared. It is hardy to Zone 5. The cultivar *Compacta* matures at 3 ft in height and has a finer texture than the native species (Rhodus 2015). Because of its dense habit, it can be sheared into a hedge.

Native plants are generally adaptable because they evolved with competing species, predators, and diseases over many thousands of years. Thus they are considered to be in ecological balance in the region where they were first found. There are guides to the use of native plants for areas west of the Cascades Mountains (McMahan 2008; Leigh 2005), as well as the arid regions on the east side of the state (Detweiler 2008). Refer to other publications on native plants under Further Reading.



Figure 6. USDA Plant hardiness zones. (Hardiness Zones 2014).



Figure 7. Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*) can serve as a native screen, growing 3–10 ft tall.

**Part 2: Plant Choices for Screens and Hedges**

**Dwarf Conifers as Hedges**

The smaller dwarf conifers can be effectively used in the contemporary residential landscapes as they add interesting texture, diversity of form, and coloration to the garden (Relf 2015). There are a number of different genera to choose from (Table 2). Within each genus, note the diverse number of cultivars. In the genus *Chamaecyparis* (false cypress), look for cultivars with predominately yellow-colored

foliage, which is very effective at providing visual interest during the winter months when herbaceous perennials have gone dormant. In the genus *Picea* (spruce), look for a wide selection of globe-shaped dwarfs that feature extremely dense foliage arranged in trim shapes. In the genus *Tsuga* (hemlock), look for shade-loving selections.

In general, dwarf conifers are considered free from disease pests (Pscheidt 2015), and they do not require any annual pruning. In areas west of the Cascades, they will all grow very well and fill out their

allotted space, while in areas east of the Cascades, high temperatures can affect their growth. West of the Cascades they are all considered drought tolerant, winter hardy, and insensitive to soil fertility levels. In eastern Washington, variegated and golden foliage may burn in hot, sunny areas.

With their lower heights, dwarf conifers could be used to line a walkway leading up to a home's entrance (Russ and Polomski 1999).

Avoid using them as foundation shrubs in areas prone to wildfires. While many of the dwarf conifers may not be readily available at local garden centers, they can be mail-ordered as small plants (one gallon containers). A web search using a plant's genus will yield a plethora of cultivars. Landscape contractors should be able to provide the dwarf conifers as well, as they have access to wholesale grower suppliers, who do not sell directly to retail customers.

**Medium Height Conifers for Use as Screens and Hedges**

Conifers that mature to heights of less than 10 ft are very functional as a screen or hedge; many mature at shoulder height (Fare 2009). They are especially useful in urban areas as they do not overwhelm the yard, or block the view of distant landscapes.

All of the selections shown in Table 3 have dense canopies that extend to the ground. They could be used

**Table 2. Conifers Under 4 ft in Height at Maturity**



Figure 8. *Abies balsamea* 'Nana'

**Dwarf balsam fir**

Zone 3 Width: 3 ft

Dense globose form; light green new growth contrasts with dark green older foliage; can take shade.



Figure 9. *Abies nordmanniana* 'Golden Spreader'

**Golden Spreader Nordmann fir**

Zone 4 Width: 5 ft  
Dwarf spreader to 4 ft; soft, bright yellow winter foliage; greener in summer; best in full sun; best not sheared.



Figure 10. *Abies procera* 'Glauca'

**Blue Prostrate noble fir**

Zone 5 Width: 4 ft  
Prostrate version of native Noble fir; steely-blue foliage; soft textured needles; shear any upright shoots to maintain form.



Figure 11. *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Golden Mop'

**Golden Mop threadleaf false cypress**

Zone 4 Width: 4–5 ft  
A ground-hugging mounder; mop-like stringy foliage stays golden yellow; best in full sun.



Figure 12. *Picea pungens* 'Glauca Globosa'

**Globe blue spruce**

Zone 2 Width: 6 ft  
Beautiful silver blue prickly needles; needs full sun; widely adaptable, very drought tolerant.

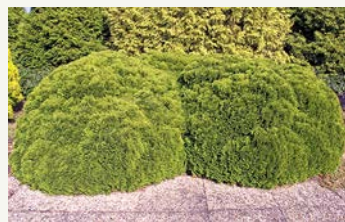


Figure 13. *Thuja occidentalis* 'Danica'

**Danica arborvitae**

Zone 3 Width: 4 ft  
A slow-growing, dense, globular foundation shrub; bright green foliage in vertical sprays; shear as desired.



Figure 14. *Thujopsis dolobrata* 'Nana'

**False Hiba cedar**

Zone 6 Width: 5 ft  
Spreading bun shape; green and white needles; tolerates light summer shade and dry sites; best unshaped.



Figure 15. *Tsuga heterophylla* 'Thorsens Weeping'

**Thorsens Weeping hemlock**

Zone 6 Width: 3 ft  
Mounding habit if staked, otherwise, forming a prostrate groundcover; soft green foliage; can take shade if needed in hot climates.

Photos 8-15 by Charles Brun, WSU

as alternatives to the conventional 6-ft-tall fence that is often used between adjacent yards. The selections listed in this category are hardy for areas east of the Cascades and are considered drought tolerant.

The Montgomery blue spruce would be especially useful with its sharp, prickly foliage that could serve to keep intruders out. When a very narrow screen is desired, consider columnar conifers, such as *Compressa* or Gold Cone junipers. While columnar

conifers are especially well suited to formal gardens, serving as specimen or focal plants (Walton 2008), they can be arranged in rows for screening. Both of the junipers listed will grow well without any maintenance pruning and have been found to shed snow better than the taller arborvitae in western Washington.

Where there is more space, the dwarf *Aurea Nana* oriental arborvitae would be highly appropriate as it forms a very dense wall of soft yellow-green

foliage, and does not grow to the mature height of the more commonly planted Emerald Green arborvitae. Both of the pines listed here are winter hardy for all of Washington. For a bright winter accent plant, look for Louie eastern white pine, which features soft, feathery needles. For shady yards, consider Moon Frost hemlock whose white spring growth sets it apart from other shade-tolerant species. Keep in mind that in eastern Washington variegated and golden foliage may burn in hot, sunny areas.

**Table 3. Conifers Under 5 ft to 10 ft in Height at Maturity**



Figure 16. *Juniperus communis* 'Compressa'

**Compressa juniper**

Zone 2 Width: 1 ft  
Tapered candle form; blue-green, awl-shaped needles, accent specimen plant; could be set close in rows.



Figure 17. *Juniperus communis* 'Gold Cone'

**Gold Cone juniper**

Zone 2 Width: 3 ft  
Barrel-shaped habit; soft, golden foliage; set multiple plants in a row for screening.



Figure 18. *Picea glauca* 'Sander's Blue'

**Sander's Blue spruce**

Zone 3 Width: 5 ft  
Pyramidal form; dense foliage with slate-blue to green coloration; best not sheared.



Figure 19. *Picea pungens* 'Montgomery'

**Montgomery blue spruce**

Zone 3 Width: 8 ft  
Conic wedge shape to 10 ft; silvery-blue, sharp needles; drought tolerant; do not shear.



Figure 20. *Pinus strobus* 'Louie'

**Louie Eastern white pine**

Zone 3 Width: 7 ft  
Upright, dense form to 10 ft; bright yellow fall foliage; best in acidic sites, best not sheared.



Figure 21. *Pinus parviflora* 'Ogon Janome'

**Dragon's Eye white pine**

Zone 5 Width: 6 ft  
Compact form; blue-green needles with bands of yellow; needs partial shade in hot areas.



Figure 22. *Thuja orientalis* 'Aurea Nana'

**Dwarf Oriental arborvitae**

Zone 5 Width: 5 ft  
Tidy pointed globe shape; bright golden foliage; set plants 3 ft apart for a hedge; often not sheared.



Figure 23. *Tsuga canadensis* 'Moon Frost'

**Moon Frost hemlock**

Zone 3 Width: 3 ft  
Excellent mounding habit; beautiful white new growth over older green; best not sheared.

Photos 16-18 and 20-23 by Charles Brun, WSU; Photo 19 by Paula Dinius, WSU Chelan County



## Tall Conifers for Use as Screens and Hedges

The tall conifer selections shown in Table 4 can be used very effectively as screens. They provide dense, intricate branching and fine leaves (needles) that can block out unsightly views and undesired light exposure, both summer solar radiation and urban light pollution. Tall conifers block cold winter winds, capture air pollutants, and can reduce noise significantly.

The selection is vast, with cultivars

ranging in height and width to fit many screen designs. They come in a variety of colors from bright green (Smaragd arborvitae and Incense cedar), to blues (Colorado blue spruce, Vanderwolf’s Pyramid pine, Arizona cypress). Branch characteristics can be found from upright (Incense cedar) to weeping (Weeping white spruce) forms that provide aesthetic appeal.

It is important to remember the mature size of these plants, as many can grow quite large, potentially 50 ft or more (Cox 2005). Where space is available,

these workhorses will prove their merit as year-round evergreens. If desired, some can be sheared, such as Emerald green arborvitae and Skyrocket juniper. Caution should be taken not to cut into the interior dead zone of conifers because they will not fill out with new green growth (McConnell 1998). A screen planted with tall conifers can be a useful backdrop for other plants to create a beautiful landscape. Wildlife find that conifers provide good shelter and protection from predators and harsh environmental conditions.

**Table 4. Conifers Over 10 ft at Maturity**

 <p>Figure 24. <i>Calocedrus decurrens</i> <b>Incense cedar</b> Zone 5 Width: 15 ft Upright conical shape to 75 ft; dense canopy; aromatic green foliage; furrowed bark; no winter browning. <b>WA state native</b></p>	 <p>Figure 25. <i>Chamaecyparis nootkatensis</i> <b>Weeping Alaska cedar</b> Zone 4 Width: 12 ft Ascending to 60 ft; horizontal branches; scale-like, blue-green foliage; best west of Cascades. <b>WA state native</b></p>	 <p>Figure 26. <i>Cupressus glabra</i> 'Blue Ice' <b>Blue Ice Arizona cypress</b> Zone 5 Width: 12 ft Grows to 30 ft; drought tolerant; powdery-blue foliage; do not shear; best west of the Cascades.</p>	 <p>Figure 27. <i>Juniperus scopulorum</i> 'Skyrocket' <b>Skyrocket juniper</b> Zone 3 Width: 2 ft A drought Rocky Mountain juniper cultivar; matures at 14 ft; minimize shearing; blue-green foliage. <b>WA state native</b></p>
 <p>Figure 28. <i>Picea glauca</i> 'Pendula' <b>Weeping white spruce</b> Zone 2 Width: 8 ft Rocketship form may reach 40 ft; weeping, prickly needles; striking accent; no shearing.</p>	 <p>Figure 29. <i>Picea pungens</i> var. <i>glauca</i> <b>Colorado blue spruce</b> Zone 3 Width: 15 ft Stately pyramidal growth habit; excellent cold hardiness; silvery-blue foliage; great on the east side.</p>	 <p>Figure 30. <i>Pinus flexilis</i> 'Vanderwolf's Pyramid' <b>Vanderwolf's Pyramid pine</b> Zone 2 Width: 15 ft Soft, silvery, blue-green needles; grows to 30 ft; full sun; do not shear. <b>WA state native</b></p>	 <p>Figure 31. <i>Thuja occidentalis</i> 'Smaragd' <b>Emerald Green arborvitae</b> Zone 2 Width: 3–5 ft Very common; allow to grow 8–20 ft tall; shear as needed; do not top; set plants 4 ft apart in rows.</p>

Photos 24-31 by Charles Brun, WSU

## Shorter Broadleaf Evergreens for Hedges

Low-growing evergreen shrub selections (Table 5) are very popular as foundation plants that can either be left to develop on their own or sheared into formal hedges (Klett 2011), in contrast to the low-growing conifers (Table 2) that are best not sheared.

Most of the selections shown in Table 5 are suitable for pathways leading up to the entrance of a home, or as fillers in a boulevard strip (area

between sidewalk and street curb). For alternatives that circumvent the maintenance and pest issues associated with boxwood, consider the fine texture offered by Sutherland Hebe, which should not be sheared, and Grosso lavender, which can be sheared as it ages. With the exception of Sutherland Hebe and the Orchid rockrose, all of the selections are largely winter hardy for most of Washington State.

Gardeners with shaded sites will find that Warty barberry, Girard's Rainbow

leucothoe, Sutherland Hebe, Fragrant Sweetbox, and Taunton's hybrid yew will all perform well. For flowering hedges, gardeners should consider Grosso lavender, Girard's Rainbow leucothoe, or Orchid rockrose. In order to attract a plethora of nectar-seeking pollinators in early July, plant a row of lavender from the vast selection of cultivars available. For a barrier shrub, the Warty barberry is an excellent choice as it has very spiny foliage. The Goshiki Holly Osmanthus can serve as an alternative for English Holly for Christmas greenery.

Table 5. Broadleaf Evergreens Under 4 ft at Maturity



Figure 32. *Berberis verruculosa*

### Warty barberry



Zone (5) 6 Width: 5 ft  
Arching habit; branches are very stiff; foliage glossy dark green and spiny; 3-part spines cover the stems; rod shaped, very small fruit in the fall; very drought tolerant. Can be sheared as desired.



Figure 33. *Cistus purpureus*

### Orchid rockrose



Zone 7 Width: 4 ft  
Rounded form, 1-in.-long, narrow leaves; dull grey above, lighter below; 2-3 in. flowers, pink with 5 red spots; yellow stamens; typically not sheared.



Figure 34. *Hebe pinguifolia* 'Sutherlandii'

### Sutherland Hebe

Zone 7 Width: 4 ft  
Rounded form, dense habits with small silver-green leaves, small white summer flowers; typically not sheared; drought tolerant.



Figure 35. *Lavandula intermedia* 'Grosso'

### Grosso lavender



Zone 5 Width: 4 ft  
This popular herbal shrub features summer flowers used for perfumes and sachets; grows to 3 ft; often used to line a pathway; best sheared in the spring.

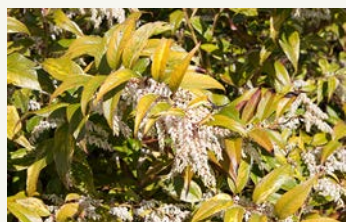


Figure 36. *Leucothoe fontanesiana* 'Girard's Rainbow'

### Girard's Rainbow leucothoe



Zone 4 Width: 6 ft  
A leucothoe cultivar with early season white, pink, and coppery foliage; matures to green with streaks of cream; fragrant, urn-shaped flowers. Do not shear.

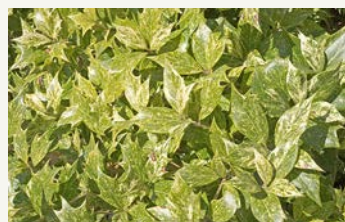


Figure 37. *Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Goshiki'

### Goshiki Holly Osmanthus

Zone 6 Width: 4 ft  
Goshiki Holly features glossy green variegated leaves with splashes of pink and orange that lack spines; fragrant spring flowers, can be sheared to form a hedge.



Figure 38. *Sarcococca confusa*

### Fragrant Sweetbox

Zone (6) 7 Width: 4 ft  
Widely used in the floral market for its very fragrant white winter flowers and lustrous green leaves; dense habit; spreads by underground shoots; shiny black berries if not sheared; can take shade.



Figure 39. *Taxus x media* 'Tauntonii'

### Taunton's hybrid yew

Zone 5 Width 6 ft  
A foundation shrub with dark green foliage; a spreading habit; resistance to winter burn; good summer heat tolerance; can withstand full shade. Shear as desired.

Photos 33-39 by Charles Brun, WSU

## Medium Height Broadleaf Evergreens for Screens and Hedges

The medium height evergreens listed in Table 6 represent the best plant material for arranging into hedges, which can be used to divide yards from one another. They can be informal or sheared, as desired. Other than the Blueblossom, Sundance Mexican orange, and Escallonia, they are all generally winter hardy in many areas of Washington and

lack any serious pest issues. All of the selections feature small leaves that will block views through their canopies. All of them offer interesting colors that provide nice contrasts to the traditional evergreen hedges.

The Blueblossom and Delavay Osmanthus make very attractive hedges, which pollinators will greatly enjoy when the flowers are in full bloom. The Meserve hybrid hollies and the Ebbinge's silverberry offer vigorous growth that can be easily sheared into dense hedges.

The Mexican orange and Delavay Osmanthus both work well in the shade. Finally, the Japanese pieris makes a wonderful addition in any garden as it offers a multitude of colors as the season progresses. To ensure a bountiful supply of flowers, limit the amount of pruning, or prune according to flowering time. Prune plants that flower in the spring on last year's wood after flowering display. For plants that flower in the summer on new wood, prune in late winter (Gilman 2005).

Table 6. Broadleaf Evergreens 6 ft to 10 ft at Maturity



Figure 40. *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*

**Blueblossom**



Zone 7 Width: 6 ft  
Vigorous growth; bright shiny 2-in. green leaves; spike-like, blue flower cluster from May through June; a great hedge plant; takes well to shearing.  
**WA state native**



Figure 41. *Choisya ternata* 'Sundance'

**Sundance Mexican orange**



Zone 8 Width: 6 ft  
Mounding form; chartreuse golden foliage arranged in whorls; citrus smelling, white spring flowers; likes part shade.



Figure 42. *Elaeagnus ebbingei* 'Gilt Edge'

**Ebbinge's silverberry**



Zone (6) 7 Width: 6 ft  
Dense habit; 2–4-in.-long leaves with ruffled margins; variegated green/yellow foliage; excellent hedge plant; shear as needed.



Figure 43. *Escallonia langleyensis* 'Pride of Donard'

**Pride of Donard Escallonia**



Zone 7 Width: 6 ft  
Arching stems; narrow dark green leaves; scarlet flowers spring through summer; can be hedged.



Figure 44. *Ilex meserveae* 'Blue Girl'

**Blue Girl meserve holly**



Zone 5 Width: 8 ft  
Bright red stems bear blue-green foliage; bright red fruit on female plants; needs male plant for pollination; good for hedging; shear in winter.



Figure 45. *Ilex x meserveae* 'Heckenstar'

**Castle Wall blue holly**



Zone 5 Width: 4 ft  
Columnar blue-green holly is ideal for narrow privacy hedging; grows 2 in. per year; takes well to shearing.



Figure 46. *Osmanthus delavayi*

**Delavay Osmanthus**



Zone 7 Width: 8 ft  
Sweet April flower fragrance (peach fruit scent) and dark green leathery leaves. Tea Olive makes a great shade-tolerant evergreen mound. It looks best not sheared and may produce small blue-black berries.



Figure 47. *Pieris japonica*

**Japanese Pieris**



Zone 5 Width: 6 ft  
Upright habit; narrow, elliptical leaves arranged in whorls; spring growth red; summer growth green; white urn-shaped flowers.

Photos 40-44 and 46-47 by Charles Brun, WSU; Photo 45 by Paula Dinius, WSU Chelan County

## Tall Broadleaf Evergreens for Screens and Hedges

The plants listed in Table 7 have been proven to grow vigorously throughout Washington State. However, not all are hardy in the colder regions of the state. Most broadleaf evergreen shrubs do best west of the Cascades. In eastern Washington, consider species hardiness and tolerance to winter leaf burn.

These plants form tall, dense screens that can be left either natural or sheared to a desired height and width. If a formal look is desired, consider

plant selection and form because it will be hard to shear an evergreen shrub that is over 10 ft in height, unless a stepladder is used to stand alongside the hedge.

In order to attract songbirds to a home garden, consider plants that provide food, shelter, and protection, such as the female Altaclara holly, Pacific wax myrtle, or Burkwood viburnum. For shadier sites, consider the Japanese plum yew, mountain laurel, or Burkwood viburnum. The Fraser photinia is popular with its early season red leaves, but it does require good air circulation and a sunny site

in order to reduce the incidence of fungal leaf spot.

When space is at a premium, consider the Japanese plum yew, which can be sheared to stay narrow. To attract pollinators, Zanzibar variegated California lilac, Pacific wax myrtle, Pacific rhododendron, and mountain laurel are good choices (Webb 2011). The Altaclara holly is popular in Europe as it is not invasive and does not have the spiny leaves of English holly. It is available from mail-order supply houses. Plant both a male and a female if one desires beautiful red berries in the fall.

**Table 7. Broadleaf Evergreens over 10 ft at Maturity**

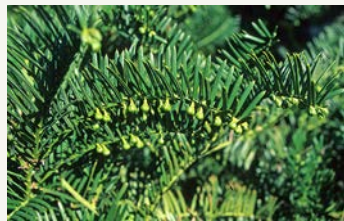


Figure 48. *Cephalotaxus harringtonia* 'Fastigiata'

### **Upright Japanese plum yew**

Zone 5 Width: 7 ft  
Columnar habit; erect branches; dark green 2-in.-long needles with sharp tips; can take full shade.



Figure 49. *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*

### **Zanzibar California lilac**



Zone 8 Width: 10 ft  
Greenish-yellow leaves blotched with green centers; profuse light blue flowers in the spring that are attractive to pollinators.



Figure 50. *Ilex x altaclerensis* 'Lawsoniana'

### **Lawsoniana Altaclara holly**



Zone 7 Width: 10 ft  
Pyramidal habit; untoothed leaves with yellow centers and green margins; female plants with red berries. Takes well to shearing.



Figure 51. *Kalmia latifolia*

### **Mountain laurel**



Zone 4 Width: 15 ft  
Open form with age; leaves 2.5–5 in. long and elliptical; flowers 5-sided; red or pink bloom; sun to full shade; prefers acidic sites. **WA state native**



Figure 52. *Rhododendron macrophyllum*

### **Pacific rhododendron**



Zone 6 Width: 15 ft  
Rounded habit; large, oblong leaves; large rose-purple flower clusters in late spring/summer; acid soil loving; shade tolerant; Washington State flower. **WA state native**



Figure 53. *Myrica californica*

### **Pacific wax myrtle**



Zone 7 Width: 20 ft  
An extremely vigorous shrub that could exceed 30 ft at maturity; 4-in.-long, narrow leaves; yellow flowers produce purple berries for the birds. **WA state native**



Figure 54. *Photinia fraseri*

### **Fraser Photinia**

Zone 7 Width: 15 ft  
Very vigorous upright habit; brilliant red new growth fades to glossy green; white flowers in umbels; no fruit; ensure good sunlight and air exposure, hedge plant.



Figure 55. *Viburnum burkwoodii*

### **Burkwood viburnum**



Zone 5 Width: 5 ft  
Forms a rounded mound to 10 ft; 2.5-in. white flower heads in April (often called snowball viburnum); black berries in fall; partial shade; can be sheared.

Photo 48 by John Ruter, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org; Photos 49–55 by Charles Brun, WSU

## Shorter Deciduous Shrubs for Hedges

The lower-growing deciduous shrubs listed in Table 8 are often used for lining walkways and feature seasonal interest. Many produce attractive flowers and fruits, as well as bold fall color, such as the black chokeberry and American cranberry bush.

Shorter deciduous shrubs are best when densely planted to facilitate hedgerow closure. These smaller shrubs can also be planted at the base of taller trees or shrubs to increase hedge density, which can provide a noise buffer or wildlife habitat (NRCS

2011). If low shrubs are used in this way, care must be taken to ensure plant sun and shade requirements are met. For example, Goldfinger shrubby cinquefoil requires full sun, therefore, if used at the base of taller plants, the low growers must be oriented toward a southern exposure. If full sun is not possible, the selection should include plants with shade and part-shade tolerance, such as the black chokecherry, Caucasian daphne, or sweetspire.

When flowers or fruit are desired and pruning is needed, prune according to season of bloom. If flowering occurs before June, prune immediately after flowering because


next year’s flower buds begin to form at this time. Plants with flowers that bloom after June can be pruned in late winter, before growth starts. These plants flower on current-year wood.

Plants with unique form are best left unsheared, although many species will tolerate shearing. Snow Mound spirea is such a plant. Shearing it can be done to create a more formal structure, but in doing so will reduce flowering and restrict the fluid motion of the arching stems. For more information on hedge pruning, see *An Illustrated Guide to Pruning* (Gilman 2006) in Further Reading.

**Table 8. Broadleaf Deciduous Under 4 ft at Maturity**




Figure 56. *Aronia melanocarpa*

**Black chokeberry** 

Zone 3 Width: 5 ft  
A sucker-forming shrub; serrated, glossy green summer leaves turn red in the fall; white flowers yield pea-sized, glossy black berries in the fall.



Figure 57. *Cornus sericea* ‘Kelseyi’

**Kelsey dogwood** 

Zone 2 Width: 3 ft  
Globe shaped; oblong leaves; white flat-topped flower clusters; fall foliage bronze-purple.




Figure 58. *Daphne caucasica*

**Caucasian daphne** 

Zone 4 Width: 5 ft  
Globe shape to 4 in.; small pale green leaves; fragrant white flowers in June; sporadically later; shade loving.



Figure 59. *Fothergilla gardenii*

**Dwarf Fothergilla** 

Zone 5 Width: 4 ft  
Mounding shape; bluish-green foliage all summer; green-white bottle-bush-like flowers in April–May; red fall foliage.




Figure 60. *Hydrangea serrata* ‘Bluebird’

**Bluebird lacecap hydrangea**

Zone 6 Width: 4 ft  
Rounded form; sea-blue, sterile florets surround a cluster of rich blue, fertile flowers; reddish fall foliage.




Figure 61. *Itea virginica*

**Sweetspire** 

Zone 5 Width: 6 ft  
A round ball shrub with 3–6 in. white drooping flower clusters in June; likes partial shade; red leaf color in fall; pollinator friendly.




Figure 62. *Potentilla fruticosa* ‘Goldfinger’

**Goldfinger shrubby cinquefoil** 

Zone 3 Width: 4 ft  
Dense, rounded shrub bearing bright yellow flowers all summer long; very drought tolerant; no pests; best in full sun. **WA state native**



Figure 63. *Spiraea nipponica* ‘Snow Mound’

**Snow Mound spirea** 

Zone 4 Width: 4 ft  
Arching stems on this round ball shrub; 1-in.-diameter white flowers smother the branches in the spring; multiple plants for hedge.

Photos 56–63 by Charles Brun, WSU

## Medium Height Deciduous Shrubs for Screens and Hedges

Deciduous shrubs of medium height are versatile due to the wide variety of plant characteristics in this category. Table 9 lists some commonly used and widely available choices hardy to most regions in Washington State. They can be lightly sheared for a more formal look or left to natural form, depending on the space available and landscape design.

Careful plant selection is crucial to ensure proper size, form, and









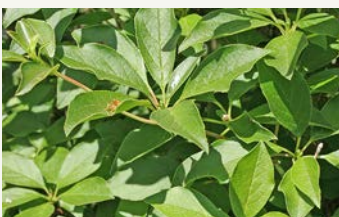







characteristics appropriate to a location. For example, a plant with a natural fountain shape, like Natchez mockorange, will need more room to spread if maintained in its natural form, rather than as a hedge pruned to a formal shape.

All the selections listed here are highly attractive to native pollinators. The chokeberry, beautyberry, and red twig dogwood all produce berries that are attractive to wildlife. The moderate size of plants in this category make them good screens for privacy and for hiding unsightly areas, without

blocking distant vistas.

It may be necessary to occasionally rejuvenate the plant. To do so, remove dead, damaged, or diseased branches, in addition to wayward (too long) and crossover branches, suckers, and sprouts. For plants such as red twig dogwood, cutting back all stems to 9 inches from the ground can stimulate new, bright red twig growth, providing year-round interest. Some species respond better than others to pruning, so know your plant. See Further Reading for *An Illustrated Guide to Pruning* (Gillman 2006).

**Table 9. Broadleaf Deciduous 5 ft to 10 ft at Maturity**

 <p>Figure 64. <i>Aronia arbutifolia</i> 'Brilliantissima'</p> <p><b>Brilliant Red chokeberry</b> </p> <p>Zone 5 Width: 8 ft Sucker-forming, round; elliptic leaves; green morphing to red; bright red fruit lasts into winter.</p>	 <p>Figure 65. <i>Callierpa bodinieri</i></p> <p><b>Bodinier beautyberry</b> </p> <p>Zone 6 Width: 6 ft Upright, bushy form; ovate leaves 2.5–5 in. long; purple flowers give rise to small purple berries in the fall.</p>	 <p>Figure 66. <i>Cornus alba</i> 'Elegantissima'</p> <p><b>Variegated dogwood</b> </p> <p>Zone 3 Width: 6 ft Mounding habit to 6 ft; striking bicolor foliage; could be sheared for a hedge if desired.</p>	 <p>Figure 67. <i>Cornus sericea</i></p> <p><b>Red twig dogwood</b> </p> <p>Zone 3 Width: 12 ft Fast-growing thicket shape to 10 ft; green summer foliage gives rise to reddish purple in the fall; lovely red twigs in the winter; white fruits attract song birds; generally not sheared. <b>WA state native</b></p>
 <p>Figure 68. <i>Enkianthus campanulatus</i></p> <p><b>Redvein Enkianthus</b> </p> <p>Zone 4 Width: 6 ft Upright narrow form; leaves at ends of branches; green in summer turning to red in fall; egg-shaped fruit.</p>	 <p>Figure 69. <i>Philadelphus virginialis</i> 'Natchez'</p> <p><b>Natchez flowering mock orange</b> </p> <p>Zone 4 Width: 8 ft Fast growing to 8 ft; upright fountain shape; 2-in. fragrant white flowers in the spring cover the bush; mass plant for screening.</p>	 <p>Figure 70. <i>Ribes sanguineum</i></p> <p><b>Red flowering currant</b> </p> <p>Zone 5 Width: 5 ft Northwest native to 10 ft; upright habit bearing 3-in.-long, white or pink flower clusters; red fall berries for the birds; best not sheared.</p>	 <p>Figure 71. <i>Viburnum trilobum</i></p> <p><b>American cranberry bush</b> </p> <p>Zone 2 Width: 6 ft Slender upright form; 3-lobed leaves; green in summer; red in fall; white flowers yield red berries.</p>

Photos 64–71 by Charles Brun, WSU

**Tall Deciduous Trees and Shrubs for Screens and Hedges**

Tall deciduous plants make excellent screens and hedges for large properties. They can be planted in groups or combined with other species, like conifers. For these large-growing plants, spacing is important at planting timing. Plants left to grow in natural form should be spaced farther apart than those that will be formally pruned.

Table 10 lists plants that will do

well in most areas of Washington State. These plants possess varying characteristics for assorted uses. For example, the hornbeam, European filbert, and beech have been used as hedges for centuries throughout Europe for just such landscape elements. The Star magnolia has beautiful spring blooms and can take light shearing. The Staghorn sumac should not be sheared.

If a formal look is desired for any of these selections, it is best to start structural pruning early and develop

a dense hedge slowly overtime. Extreme cuts after plants have grown too large can cause stress and become problematic. When shearing, be sure to leave the bottom of the plant slightly wider than the top, so sun can reach the entire plant. Otherwise, the lower portion of the hedge will become bare and woody. For natural form plants like lilacs, occasional removal of old large stems will encourage strong new growth. More information on pruning can be found in the Further Reading section.

**Table 10. Broadleaf Deciduous over 10 ft at Maturity**



Figure 72. *Carpinus betulus* 'Frans Fontaine'

**European hornbeam**

Zone 4 Width: 8 ft  
Columnar shape to 40 ft; summer green foliage; golden yellow in fall; multiple plants for hedging; takes to shearing.



Figure 73. *Corylus avellana*

**European filbert**

Zone 4 Width: 12 ft  
Fast-growing shrub/tree from 12–20 ft tall and wide; suckers profusely, making a dense hedge; trees bear tasty edible hazelnuts in October.



Figure 74. *Fagus sylvatica* 'Purple Fountain'

**European purple beech**

Zone 4 Width: 15 ft  
Growing to 25 ft in height, this purple-leafed spire makes a great accent species; multiple plants would make a hedge.



Figure 75. *Magnolia liliiflora*

**Lily magnolia**

Zone 5 Width: 15 ft  
Sprawling, multi-stemmed; green foliage; purple-white spring flowers stand erect and appear before leaves.



Figure 76. *Magnolia stellata* 'Royal Star'

**Star magnolia**



Zone 5 Width: 12 ft  
Dense, oval shrub/ small tree to 20 ft. Early spring fragrant white flowers; dense foliage; mass plant for hedges; no shearing.



Figure 77. *Rhus typhina*

**Staghorn sumac**



Zone 3 Width: 20 ft  
Open-spreading habit; velvety stems bear compound leaves that are dark green in summer, yellow-orange in the fall.  
**WA state native**



Figure 78. *Staphylea trifolia*

**American bladdernut**



Zone 3 Width: 15 ft  
Fast-growing, suckering shrub with compound 3-part leaves; bell-shaped, showy white flowers in April and May; fruit 1 to 2 in. long, egg-shaped capsules in the fall.



Figure 79. *Syringa vulgaris*

**Common lilac**



Zone 3 Width: 10 ft  
Vigorous shrub 1 to 5 ft; irregular shape; spring flowers in multiple colors with good fragrance; many cultivars; best in full sun; mass plant for a hedge; best not sheared.

Photos 72–79 by Charles Brun, WSU

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