

# Hedges

Fact Sheet No. 7.208

Gardening Series | Trees & Shrubs



\*J.E. Klett and R. Ford

Using closely-planted shrubs to create a hedge adds functional beauty to a landscape. A hedge can be used as a windbreak, living fence, a barrier for noise abatement or as a foundation backdrop. Formal and informal landscapes can both benefit from hedge plantings. Understanding species selection, planting procedures and pruning are important when planning and maintaining a hedge.

## Selection

Shrubs for hedges should be healthy and uniform. When selecting plants for a hedge, consider the area's location, exposure, space for growth and desired landscape effect. Shrubs such as privet, arborvitae and viburnum respond well to shearing and are a good choice for a formal landscape. Use lilac, dogwood or juniper in informal landscape planting for a more natural look. For year-round screening, use evergreens such as yew, juniper or hardy forms of boxwood. Consider budget, availability and immediate needs when selecting materials. Large ball-and-burlap shrubs are more expensive and more difficult to handle but will have a mature look more quickly. Shrubs in small number five to number fifteen plastic containers are less costly but need more time to grow into a dense hedge. Using bareroot nursery stock makes a hedge planting more affordable. Not all retail nurseries carry bareroot stock—check with local nurseries in early spring.

## Planting

After a site has been selected for the hedge planting, consider the height and spread that the area can accommodate. Improperly

placed shrubs may overtake walkways and yards, or crowd access ways, easements, and property lines. Planting and spacing shrubs according to their mature height and spread will reduce maintenance problems later. Also be cautious when planting near or under utility areas.

Hedges which will be sheared, or kept formally, are planted closer together. Natural, informal hedges are planted at a wider spacing and allowed to grow together. For help with spacing refer to the included table; in which plant sizes are based on height and spread on three average years of growth. All hedge material will need to be planted into soil that has been amended to meet the various species requirements. Refer to Colorado State University Extension fact sheet [7.235–Choosing a Soil Amendment](#). Don't forget that adequate watering is necessary to establish plant material. In the first season use a soaker hose, or drip irrigation with mulch to reduce drying from sun and wind. Success with bareroot nursery stock will depend on planting early in the spring and maintaining proper soil moisture. To learn more about specific planting techniques refer to [Colorado Master Gardener Garden Notes 636](#).

## Pruning

Hedges can be maintained in either a natural or formal form (sheared). Proper pruning is important for training and maintaining a healthy hedge. All hedges need regular pruning in order to maintain shape and increase density. Natural form hedges require less maintenance and are ideal in an informal landscape. Pruning to remove old, broken, diseased or unfavorable growth is sometimes needed. Species used informally are spaced so natural habit and form can be preserved.

Sheared hedges require more maintenance. Shearing trains and helps

## Quick Facts

- Plants used for hedges should be uniform and healthy.
- Pruning can help renew a hedge that has been neglected.
- For less maintenance and minimal pruning plant an informal hedge.



maintain the proper shape of the hedge so that a dense growth habit can develop. Privet, boxwood, yew, and currants are shrubs that respond well to shearing and are often used in formal landscapes. Once a hedge has been trained, the frequency of pruning will depend on species and

landscape use. Commitment to a pruning schedule will make the difference between a beautiful or an overgrown hedge.

If shrubs have gotten too large, it is possible to rejuvenate certain species. Plantings of lilac or honeysuckle, for example, can be pruned using renewal

and thinning cuts on the old wood. Some species are easier to maintain and renewal prune than others. Overall success with a hedge will depend on understanding and coordinating proper pruning on a regular basis. Refer to [Colorado Master Gardener Garden Notes 619](#) on pruning shrubs.

Table 1. Deciduous and Evergreen Shrubs for Hedge Use

Species	Cultivars	Height	Spread	Light	Comments
<b>Deciduous Shrubs*</b>					
small shrubs (generally mature < 6ft)					
<i>Berberis x mentorensis</i>		4-6'	6'	sun/part sun	dense, thorny, dark green leaves, holds foliage late in winter
Mentor Barberry					excellent planting for barriers
<i>Berberis x 'Tara'</i>		4-5'	5'	sun	deer resistant, heavily thorned, yellow flower, red fruit with red fall color; holds foliage late into fall
Emerald Carousel® Barberry					
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>		3-5'	5'	sun	green foliage, adaptable to all but wet conditions, heavily thorned, good for barriers; red leafed forms available
Japanese Barberry					
<i>Caragana frutex</i>	'Globosa'	2-3'	3'	sun	dark blue-green foliage, slow-growing dense globe shaped
Globe Russian Peashrub					
<i>Cornus sericea</i>	'Isanti'	3-5'	5'	sun/shade	dense and compact, red twigs
Isanti Dogwood					white flowers and white fruit when not sheared
<i>Euonymus alatus</i>	'Compacta'	4-5'	5'	sun/part sun	brilliant crimson leaves for fall, responds to shearing
Dwarf Burning Bush					corky wings along stems for winter interest
<i>Forsythia x intermedia</i>					yellow flowers in spring prior to leafing out, bronze fall color
Lynwood Gold Forsythia	'Lynwood'	6-7'	7'	sun/part sun	excessive pruning in fall results fewer flowers in spring
Spring Glory Forsythia	'Spring Glory'	4-6'	5'	sun	clonal selection with better flower bud hardiness
Northern Sun Forsythia	'Northern Sun'	4-6'	5'	sun	clonal selection with better flower bud hardiness
<i>Ligustrum x vicaryi</i>		4-6'	3'	sun	golden leaves hold late into season, less hardy than "Cheyenne" privet
Golden Vicary Privet					
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	'Lodense'	2-3'	3'	sun/part sun	very compact, xeric
Lodense Privet					
<i>Lonicera x xylosteoides</i>	'Clavey's Dwarf'	4-6'	4'	sun/part sun	yellow to white flowers, grey - green leaves
Clavey's Dwarf Honeysuckle					
<i>Physocarpus monogynus</i>		3-4'	4'	sun/part sun	native, bark sheds into paper thin layers
Native Ninebark					
<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>		3-4'	4'	sun	yellow flowers early, compact, rounded
Shrub Potentilla	'Abbotswood'	2-3'	3'	sun	white flowers, spreading
	'Gold Drop'	2-3'	3'	sun	bright green leaves with smaller yellow flowers
	'Jackmannii'	2-3'	4'	sun	bright yellow flowers all season, upright rounded habit
<i>Ribes alpinum</i>		3-5'	6'	sun/shade	good for shearing, good green foliage
Alpine Currant					
<i>Ribes aureum</i>		4-6'	6'	sun/shade	native, red fall foliage, fragrant yellow flowers
Golden Currant					
<i>Rosa x Meidiland®</i>		3-4'	5'	sun	available in many colors, white, pink, red, fuchsia
Meidiland® Rose Series					flowers throughout summer

Table 1. Deciduous and Evergreen Shrubs for Hedge Use Continued

Species	Cultivars	Height	Spread	Light	Comments
<b>Deciduous Shrubs*</b>					
<i>Rosa x Carefree Series</i>		2-3'		sun	double or single flowers throughout growing season
Carefree Wonder, Carefree Delight					
Carefree Beauty, Carefree Sunshine					
<i>Rosa x 'Rad Razz' Knockout</i>		2-3'		sun	single flowers throughout growing season
<i>Spirea x japonica</i>	'Froebelii'	3-4'	5'	sun	natural rounded form
Spirea	'Anthony Waterer'	2-3'	5'	sun	leaf color purple red, then matures to dark green
<i>Spirea nipponica</i>	'Snowmound'	3-5'	5'	sun	white flowers, blue-green leaves
Spirea					
<i>Syringa patula</i>	'Miss Kim'	3-5'	5'	sun	good for small gardens, pale lilac flowers
Dwarf Lilac					
<i>Viburnum opulus</i>					
European Cranberrybush Viburnum	'Compactum'	4-5'	5'	sun/part sun	white flowers, scarlet fruit, compact rounded habit
medium shrubs (generally mature < 10ft)					
<i>Cornus alba</i>	'Argenteo-marginata'	6-8'	8'	part sun	white-edged leaves
Variegated Dogwood					
<i>Cornus sericea</i>					
Redosier Dogwood	'Baileyi'	6-8'	8'	sun/part sun	very adaptable, red stems in winter
<i>Cotoneaster lucidus (aka acutifolius)</i>		6-8'	5'	sun	black fruit, tolerates extreme pruning, good fall color
Hedge Cotoneaster (Peking)					
<i>Euonymus alatus</i>		6-8'	8'	sun/part sun	deer resistant, brilliant red fall color, corky wings more prominent
Burning Bush					
<i>Forestiera neomexicana</i>		6-8'	6'	sun	olive-green leaves, finely twigged, yellow flowers in early spring, yellow fall color; blue-black fruit on female plants
New Mexico Privet					
<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i>	many clones available	6-8'	6'	sun	dark green foliage turns pale yellow in fall, showy late flower
Rose-of-Sharon					
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	'Cheyenne'	6-8'	6'	sun/part sun	glossy green foliage, dense, responds well to shearing,
Cheyenne Privet					good formal hedge, white flowers and black fruit when not sheared
<i>Philadelphus lewisii</i>	'Cheyenne'	6-8'	6'	sun/part sun	thrives with no special care, fragrant white flowers in spring
Cheyenne Mock orange					
<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i>	'Diablo'	6-7'	6'	sun	purple red foliage, layered bark
Ninebark	'Luteus'	6-7'	6'	sun	yellow new foliage color, layered bark
<i>Prunus x cistena</i>		6-8'	4'	sun	purple foliage all season
Purple Leaf Sand cherry					
<i>Spiraea x vanhouttei</i>		6-8'	10'	sun	fountain habit, white flowers in spring
Vanhoutte Spirea					
large shrubs (generally mature > 10ft)					
<i>Caragana arborescens</i>		10-15'	5'	sun/pt sun	good for screens and windbreaks
Siberian Peashrub					
<i>Lonicera korolkowii</i>	'Floribunda'	10-12'	8'	sun	blue-green foliage, pink flowers, Plant Select® 1999
Blue Velvet Blueleaf Honeysuckle					
<i>Prunus tomentosa</i>		6-10'	8'	sun/part sun	good bird habitat, red fruit, pink flowers in spring
Nanking Cherry					
<i>Rhamnus frangula</i>	'Columnaris'	8-12'	3'	sun	upright growth habit, glossy green leaves
Columnar Buckthorn					

Table 1. Deciduous and Evergreen Shrubs for Hedge Use Continued

Species	Cultivars	Height	Spread	Light	Comments
<b>Deciduous Shrubs*</b>					
<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	'Aurea'	8-12'	6'	sun	good fruit, white flower, new foliage yellow
Golden Elder					
<i>Sambucus pubens</i>		4-12'	12'	sun/shade	red berries late summer to fall, dark green leaves
Native Elder					
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>		10-12'	12'	sun/part sun	fragrant purple flowers in spring, prone to powdery mildew
Common Lilac	'Alba'	8-12'	12'	sun/part sun	very hardy, fragrant white flowers in spring
<i>Viburnum opulus</i>					
Snowball Viburnum	'Roseum'	8-12'	5'	sun/part sun	profusion of sterile white flowers, xeric, aphids often a problem
<b>Evergreen Shrubs*</b>					
small shrubs (generally mature < 6ft)					
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>					
Boxwood	'Julia Jane'	3-5'	3'	part sun/ shade	dark green foliage, hardier form
<i>Pinus mugo</i>	'Slowmound'	3-5'	4'	sun	remains dwarf, dark green foliage
Slowmound Mugo Pine					
<i>Taxus x media</i>	'Densiformis'	3-4'	8'	part sun/ shade	tolerates shearing
Dense Yew					
<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	'Hetz Midget'	3-4'	3'	sun	slow growing, rounded dense growth habit
Hetz Midget Arborvitae					
medium shrubs (generally mature < 10ft)					
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>					
Boxwood	'Green Tower'	6-8'	2'	part sun/ shade	upright habit, good green leaf color in winter
<i>Juniperus chinensis</i>	'Blue Point'	8-10'	4'	sun/part sun	maintains shape with little shearing, sets fruit
Blue Point Juniper					
<i>Taxus x media</i> 'Hicksii'		8-12'	4'	part sun/ shade	upright habit, darker green foliage in winter
Upright Yew					
large shrubs (generally mature > 10ft)					
<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>	'Wichita Blue'	8-12'	5'	sun	tolerates shearing
Rocky Mountain Juniper					
<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>					
Arborvitae	'Degroot's Spire'	10-12'	3'	sun/part sun	tolerates shearing
	'Emerald'	10-12'	4'	sun/part sun	does not yellow in winter, dark green foliage

\*based on three years of growth