



Pest Resistant Evergreens and Hedges

What is the worst choice of hedging plants?

The sad truth is that there are VERY FEW EVERGREEN plants that are really suitable for hedging in our climate and for our suburban purposes.

Yew and holly have been suffering due to massive scale invasions and overwatering by sprinklers. Boxwoods get psyllid insects and terrible problems with fungus.

Most of the common arbor vitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) are in critical condition from insect miners, too much shade, berm plantings, planting too deep (see decline about 5 years after the fact), and secondary fungal blights due to stress and winter damage. Do not plant unless you are using *Thuja plicata*, or giant arborvitae

Leyland Cypress is also now overused, prone to fungal issues like Seridium canker, blow over, and is very difficult to root unless you plant containerized plants vs. balled and burlapped. They do tolerate more shade and grow very rapidly.

Privet and euonymus used to be the answer but now are subject to severe scale infestation

Skip laurel gets blasted by wind. If you must use skip laurel, plant only the straight species and not a hybridized variety, for better winter desiccation tolerance.

How should a hedgerow be laid out?

Layout of a formal hedge row requires hammer, stakes, string, tape measure and turf paint. Run a line on the ground between two stakes marking the ends of your proposed hedgerow. Spray your line with turf paint at the center point and the places where your planting holes should go. When a curved hedge is desired, a hose or rope provides a firmer substrate for your painting pattern.

How should a new hedge be trained?

Hedge plants should have each year's new growth cut back by one third until plants reach the required height. By removing the plant's main growth point, you are forcing side branches to close the gaps.

How should the hedge be pruned once it is established?

Once the hedge has reached its final height, it should be sheared twice a year to almost the base of the current year's growth in late spring and then again in summer. The trick to pruning the top of a hedge levelly is to install a line with a line level and then trim accordingly. If you are using

power trimmers, it means you need to keep the blade parallel to the hedge surface and use long, sweeping strokes without entangling your line.

Is there a wrong way to prune?

Although square or rectangular cut hedges are immensely popular, it is very bad for the plant because then top branches can shade out lower branches. This also happens if the top is wider than the bottom. Your best bet is to cut in a wedge: the bottom should be wider than the top. A narrow top also allows the hedge to deflect wind better and reduces the amount of snow that will settle there thus reducing winter breakage and damage.

How far APART should my hedge plants be planted?

If plants are spaced too closely they shade and crowd out each other. While smaller plants are growing in, consider ornamental grasses as temporary fillers. They can be dug, divided and moved elsewhere when your hedge plants get to sufficient size to do their thing. Increments listed are how far apart you should put your plants, NOT how tall they get. All of these plants can be and are used as hedges but some are not the best options due to disease and insect troubles.

Abelia: 2'
Acanthopanax: 3'
Aronia: 24-30"
Azalea, evergreen: 15-24"
Azalea, deciduous: 15-36"
Berberis: 15-24"
Buddleia: 30-36"
Buxus: 2-3'
Callicarpa: 4'
Calycanthus: 3-5'
Caryopteris: 15-24"
Chaenomeles: 15-24" (C. speciosa 2-3')
Clethra: 2-3'
Shrubby Cornus: 30-36"
Cotinus: 4'
Cotoneaster: 15-36", depending on height
Deutzia: 30-36"
Forsythia: 2-5'
Hamamelis: 4-6'
Hibiscus: 2-5'
Hydrangea paniculata or quercifolia: 30"
Hypericum: 15-18"
Ilex, evergreen: 24-30"
Ilex, deciduous: 3'
Itea: 3'
Juniper: 2-5' depending on height
Kalmia: 30-36"
Kerria: 3-4'
Kolkwitzia: 3-5'
Leucothoe: 15-24"

Ligustrum: 1-2'
Magnolia: 30-36''
Mahonia: 2-3'
Myrica: 18-24''
Philadelphus: 24-30''
Photinia: 4'
Physocarpus: 24-30''
Pieris: 24-36''
Mugo pine: 30''
Potentilla: 15''
Pyracantha: 2-5'
Rhodys: 24-36''
Rhodotypos: 24-36''
Rhus: 2-4'
Ribes: 15-24''
Roses: 18-24''
Spirea: 1-2'
Stephanandra: 1-3'
Syringa: 30''
Taxus: 18-36''
Thuja: 30-36
Viburnum: most 2-4'
Wigelia: 2-3'
Yucca: 2'

Are there some plants that can help exclude unwanted human and animal traffic?

Yes. Planting thorny plants not only helps to prevent unwanted intrusions, but planted under a window can reduce crime and also provides a safe haven for birds or other wildlife trying to get away from predators. Some good choices for thorny hedging plants with thorns that reach a height of more than ten feet tall include *Caragana arborescens* which is drought and high pH tolerant, hawthorns, *Pyrus ussuriensis* (sand pear), *Shepherdia* (silver buffaloberry) which is drought and high pH tolerant, and although it is hard to find, and northern prickly ash is also a good choice for an urban thicket. If you want a hedge 3-10 feet tall, try the other caraganas, gooseberries, currants, raspberries or flowering raspberry.

Are there plants that can double as barrier and better bird habitat?

Choose a rust resistant hawthorne variety like Russian hawthorne, *Crateagus ambigua*, Washington hawthorn or green hawthorn. For dry shade, try a prickly gooseberry hedge that will be attractive to wildlife and provide berries the wildlife.

Are there plants that can create a completely impenetrable barrier?

Try osage orange or *Maclura pomifera*. If it is pruned right, it is a fabulous candidate for difficult urban and suburban settings. It will tolerate wet to dry sites, gets more than 10 feet tall

if you let it, but does have large, bizarre fruit. You can easily get around this by only putting in male plants.

What are the best hedging choices?

Common Name	Leaf Habit	Height	Width		
Glossy Abelia	deciduous				
Crepe Myrtle	“				
Kerria Japonica	“				
Deutzia	“	2-4’	3-4’		
Forsythia	“	6-8’	8-12’		
Cutleaf Stephanandra	“	4-7	4-7		
Bayberry	“	5-12	5-12		
Rose of sharon	“				
Hawthorn	“				
Buttercup winterhazel	“	4-6’	8-10’		
Symphoricarpos	“				
Shrubby Saint John’s Wort	“				
Trifoliate Orange	“				
Osage orange					
Ninebark	“				
Red or gray twig dogwood	“				
Philadelphia Bush	“				
Weigela	“				
Oriental beautyberry					
Bridal wreath spirea					
Oak leaf hydrangea					
PeeGee hydrangea					
Smokebush					
Cultivated Blueberries	“				
Alpine Currant	“				
Boxleaf Lonicera	“				
Russian arborvitae	Narrow leaf evergreen				

White fir	“	30-50’	15-30’		
Momi fir	“	“	“		
Japanese plum yew	“	3-4’	4-5’		
Lawson’s Falsecypress	“	50-75’	20-30’		
Hinoki Falsecypress	“	50-75’	10-20’		
Japanese False Cypress					
Yoshino Cryptomeria	“	30-40’	10-20’		
Serbian spruce	“	40-50	NARROW (10’)		
Oriental Spruce	“	8-10’	4-5’		
Lacebark Pine	“	30-50’	15-35’		
Western Arborvitae	“	40-50’	15-25’		
False arborvitae	“	30-50’	10-20’		
Aucuba	Broad leaf evergreen	6-10’	6-10’		
Florida Anise	“	6-7’	6-8’		
Osmanthus	“	5-6’	6-7’		
Switchgrass	Grassy				
Feather Reed Grass	“				
Pampas Grass	“				

Some Specifics for Evergreens

Japanese Plum Yew:

- Can prune back to needle-less wood
- Takes a wide variety to soils
- No phythophthora
- No Black Vine Weevil
- If you want the look of a Hick’s Yew (upright) replace with *Cephalotaxus fastigiata*
- Copes with being planted in islands
- Groundcover form: Sea Island variety *Cephalotaxus*
- Slow growing

White Fir:

Better in sun than in shade, fails in too much shade
Good replacement for Colorado Blue spruce
Fast Growing
Can be sheared or pruned
Ok for poorly drained soils
Easiest to grow of all firs
Can get weeping form

<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/a/abicon/abicon1.html>

False Cypress:

Stick with these varieties because they do not need to be pampered:

Cryptomeria lawsonia
Cryptomeria thyoides

Cypress

Cupressis arizonica Carolina sapphire or *Cupressis arizonica* var. *glabra* Blue Ice (happy with full sun hot and dry, takes wind and salt, great replacement for Junipers)

Lacebark pine:

Deer resistant
More drought and pest tolerance
Durability in heavy snow
Sycamore appearance to bark

Western arborvitae:

Can nip tops to keep shorter, make more dense
Takes salt and shade
Good for tall screen
Thuja plicata Virescens: very narrow and very dark green, great if you only have 6-8 feet to work with