



Planting for Privacy

Neighbors are wonderful. They are nearby for an impromptu barbeque. They look after your house when you 're on vacation. Their kids may even mow your lawn or shovel your driveway. And while we enjoy the company of our neighbors, there are times when we want to be alone, unnoticed, in our backyards. A 6' stockade fence may be a quick and easy answer, but you can create a much more beautiful living fence with plants.

Plant arborvitae in a sunny spot with moist but well-drained soil for their best performance. If you have a need for screening in the shade, Canadian hemlocks (*Tsuga canadensis*) are ideal. These graceful evergreens can be sheared to any height or shape, but if left on their own would reach from 40 to 70' tall and more than 20' wide. They proudly hold their soft, graceful branches horizontally.

Evergreens

A row of evergreens gives the same amount of privacy. Emerald Green arborvitae grow more than 20' tall and about 8' wide. They are perfect pyramids of emerald green foliage. If you think a solid row of the same plant lacks creativity, include some deciduous shrubs in your living wall.

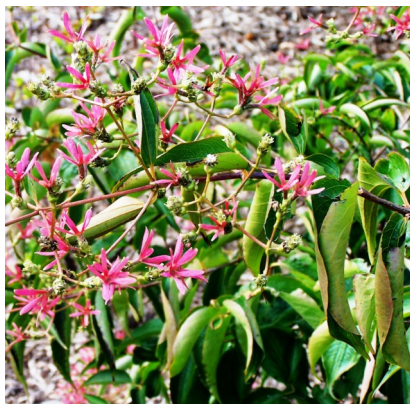
Or select my current favorite from the Viburnum family, Blue Muffin. It grows 6 to 8' tall, but stays much more narrow – only 4 to 5' wide. Growing in my own privacy planting, it is covered with so many flowers in late spring you can hardly see the foliage. The blue berries are striking but don't last long on the shrub. The birds love them as much as I do!

If you prefer a looser, more natural look, choose Techny. Its foliage is coarser and darker green. **Deciduous Shrubs** Viburnums are perfectly suited to our northern Illinois gardens. They can be planted in full sun to part shade. Spring Grove is a fast-growing, superior selection with dark, glossy green foliage and excellent winter color. Spring Grove grew twice as fast as the others in my landscape.

Limelight grows 8 to 10' tall and wide. It shines in mid summer when its soft green flowers burst into bloom. In fall, the blooms turn rich, deep pink. Tardiva may be the most

adaptable of hydrangea varieties. It grows 15' tall and 10' wide. Its large, cone-shaped flowers begin blooming in July and remain attractive for many weeks.

One of my most favorite large shrubs, Seven Sons Flower (*Heptacodium miconioides*), is in its glory right now. Its fragrant white flowers in late summer are lovely, but the pink calyxes are even prettier in fall. (A calyx is the leaf-like, protective outer ring of a flower.) The attractive peeling bark of the Seven Sons Flower will delight you after the leaves have fallen and it is revealed in winter.



The pink calyxes of Seven Sons Flower are stunning!

Perennials

There are also many tall perennials that mix well with shrubs in an attractive screen. I have often raved about Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium macula-*

tum), and once again, it is an ideal choice. It quickly grows to up to 6' tall. Its purple-tinted dark green foliage is topped with clusters of dark mauve flowers in August and September.

Herbstonne Coneflower (*Rudbeckia nitida*) is one of the finest, long-lived coneflowers. Blooms of bright yellow shine in the landscape from July to September on stiff, 6' stems.

If you need a tall perennial for a partly shaded site, look no further than Queen of the Prairie (*Filipendula rubra 'Venusta Magnifica'*). Topping out at 6' tall, deep pink flowers appear on strong stems in July and August.

Ornamental grasses also work well. The tallest by far, and the grass that hides my neighbor's driveway, is Giant Chinese Silver Grass (*Miscanthus floridulus*). Layers of robust, bamboo-like foliage blush with purple in the fall. It quickly grows to 10' tall. I swear if I stood still long enough, I would be able to see it grow.

Another beautiful grass to consider is Dallas Blues switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*). While not a giant, it stands tall at 6 to 8' tall, and its wide baby

blue leaf blades are stunning.

If you are having trouble deciding on permanent plantings but desire privacy quickly, try a temporary solution. Purchase a wide trellis (or a few of them) and plant annual vines. Morning glories are an ideal choice. There are available in just about any color. My favorite is Heavenly Blue – the classic morning glory. Its magnificent blooms are bright sky blue.

Planted once the ground has warmed and the danger of frost has passed in the spring, morning glories will quickly grow to thickly cover the trellis with foliage and trumpet-shaped flowers.



Morning glories grow quickly .

There are many plants available that you can use to create a friendly, beautiful screen. You can enjoy your neighbors and your privacy, too!