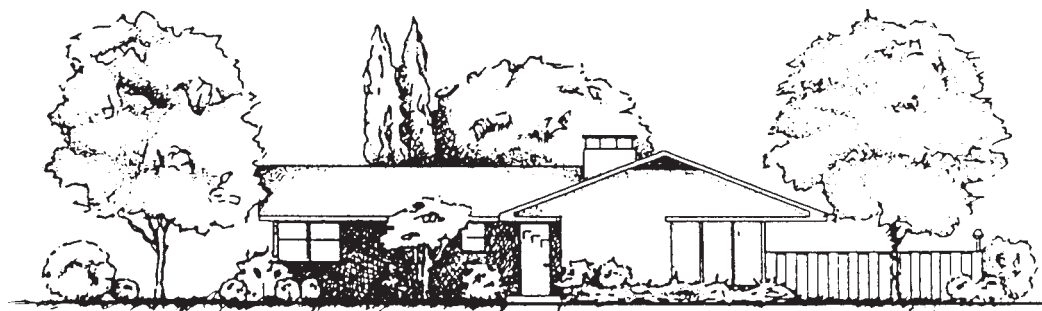


HEDGES IN THE HOME LANDSCAPE



A well maintained hedge, either formal or informal, can be a thing of beauty, regardless of its function.

The display of spring bloom, as well as fruit and twigs, add texture and color, besides form to the landscape.

In the landscape, typical functions of a hedge are a combination of any one of the following:

1. Separation of two use areas, such as the vegetable garden and lawn.
2. Screening—the blocking of an undesirable view or providing privacy on a patio.
3. Windbreaks—a hedge often is more effective than a solid wall to control winter winds, as it does not block the wind, but diffuses it.
4. Hedges can collect and trap snow, helping keep driveways clear.
5. Well placed hedges can catch a cooling summer breeze and direct the air flow onto a patio or other places where it is needed.
6. A hedge helps control blowing dust.
7. A fine textured hedge can help reduce noise pollution.
8. Thorny hedges can keep pets in and unwanted animals out.
9. Hedges provide habitat for small game and song birds. They can act as a travel lane to bring song birds closer to the home for viewing.
10. A hedge, especially the formal hedge, can be an attractive complement to the architectural features of a home.

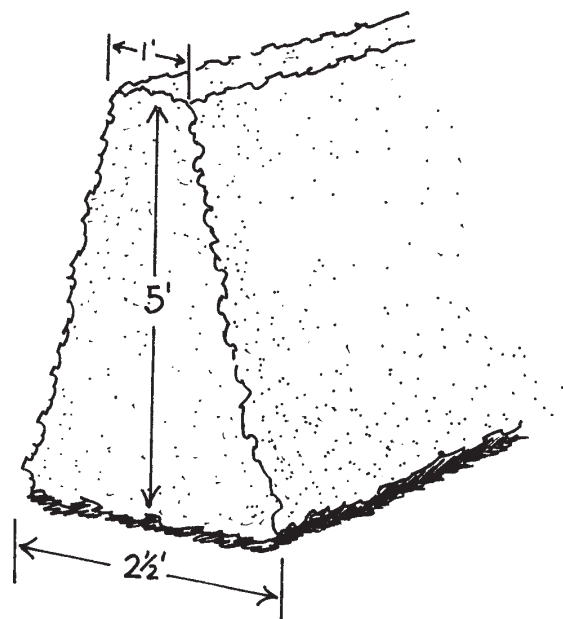


Figure 1. Correct Shape of a Formal Hedge

11. A formal hedge occupies relatively limited space.
12. Hedges can be used to mark boundaries along property lines, but this is probably the most unimaginative use of hedges as the monotony of a hedge on 3 sides of the yard is visually boring. When separation of properties has to be established, a composition of different shrubs, arranged according to design principles, would be far more attractive and provide the necessary visual diversity.

Hedges may be high or low, trimmed or untrimmed (formal or informal), deciduous or evergreen; planted in

straight lines or curved lines or in double rows. Regardless of the arrangement, hedges should be dense and compact. The trimmed or formal hedge should be easily sheared, and all hedges should have the typical hedge form, which is broader at the base and narrower at the top. When formal hedges are trimmed this way, it keeps green foliage all the way to the ground and prevents die back. See figure 1.

To be forewarned, persons considering a formal hedge as an addition to their home landscape, should be committed to a maintenance program of shearing at least once, probably twice a year. If you are interested in low maintenance landscaping, the informal hedge should be the choice.

Selection

All maintenance can be lowered through the careful selection of plant material. When only a low and narrow hedge is needed, one should select plant material that fits those requirements. If you need a 4-foot formal hedge, select plant material that grows 5 to 6 feet at mature height. When a tall hedge is needed, select species that matures at a taller height.

Deciduous hedges generally provide full screening only during the growing season. However, some types, if pruned severely over time, will form a dense tangle of twigs which provides an adequate and interesting winter scene, especially if wood is colored.

In Kansas, especially western Kansas and for poor sites, only the hardy species should be selected. When buying deciduous plant material, select well rooted bare root stock, free from insects and diseases. Buy plants that are as much alike as possible in age, size, form and fibrous root development. Narrow and broadleaved evergreens should preferably be container grown. Large evergreen material should be balled and burlapped.

Planting

Most soils are fertile enough and little special preparation is needed. If soils are very sandy, apply well rotted barnyard

manure or other organic matter and incorporate into the soil. If possible, prepare the soil in the autumn for spring planting. For most hedges, digging a planting trench is preferred over digging individual planting holes. Individual planting holes are dug for the larger evergreen plant material which is spaced further apart and is generally installed by professionals.

The spacing of plants in the row depends on the kind of stock and purpose of the hedge. Plants for small formal hedges should be spaced 6 to 8 inches apart in the row. Plants for medium sized hedges should be placed about 12 inches apart. Vigorous growing plants for tall, trimmed hedges should be spaced 18 to 30 inches apart.

Plants for informal or untrimmed hedges should be spaced further apart; as a guide, double the space for untrimmed hedges.

As the hedge is allowed to grow taller, it is also growing wider. At planting time, make allowance for this spreading.

Most hedges are planted in single rows, which works quite satisfactorily. However, a double row of staggered plants is sometimes recommended to grow a denser hedge. In this arrangement, 2 rows are planted about 12 inches apart and the plants are staggered in the row; the plants in one row being planted opposite the spaces in between the plants. Spacing of larger evergreens can be 6 to 8 feet apart.

When planting bare root, spread roots out in all directions and set plants at their original soil depth. Soil should be pressed firmly around the roots. While planting, do not expose roots to hot sun and wind. Carry the plants with roots submerged in a pail of water or keep them wrapped in wet burlap.

Pruning

Deciduous plants should be cut back severely to induce bushiness close to the ground. Evergreen plants should not be cut back severely, but should only be trimmed into shape. Figure 2 shows yearly pruning practices for a formal

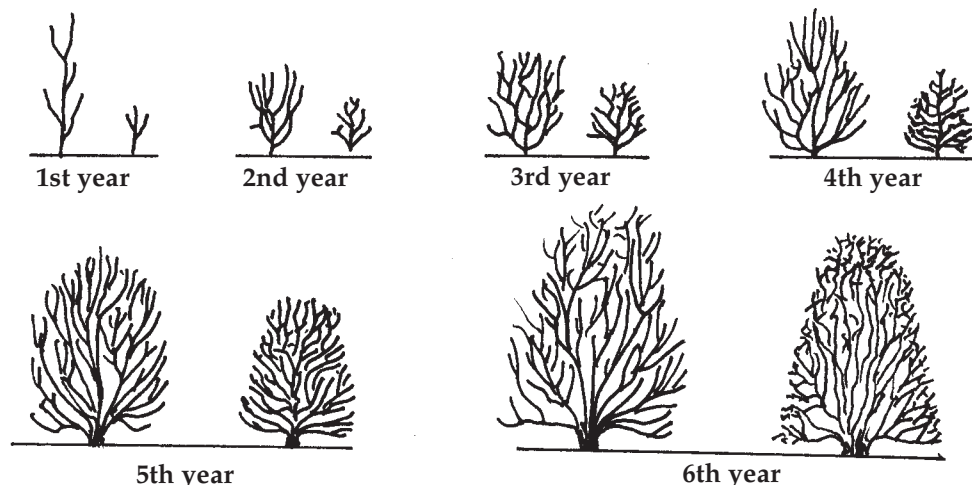


Figure 2. Each pair of drawings shows—starting with a small plant—the before and after pruning in growing and shaping a formal hedge over a period of six years.

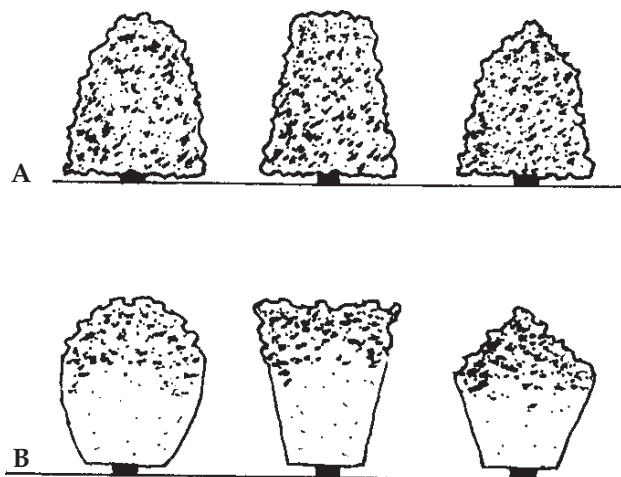


Figure 3.

A) Good Form: Good hedge form has broader base than top, so lower branches receive plenty of sunlight and, consequently, keep their leaves.

B) Bad Form: Lower branches die back because of insufficient sunlight—hedge becomes open at bottom.

deciduous hedge over a period of a six year development. Remember that the important phase of a successful hedge making comes in the early stages of the plant's development.

The aim of shearing the formal hedge should be towards the so call "inverted V." This form allows the hedge to remain alive, full and dense at ground level because all of it will be exposed to the sun. For a medium formal hedge to be in good proportion, it should be 2½ to 3 feet wide at the ground, 1 foot wide at the top, and approximately 5 feet high. The top should be slightly rounded.

Informal deciduous hedges should be pruned only to encourage fullness and control tall shoots. Formal evergreen hedges are shaped like formal deciduous hedges, but are pruned differently. Most evergreens do not recover from severe pruning and at no time should they be pruned back beyond the live growth. Once pruned back to the so called "dead center," the plant will not grow new shoots. An exception is the yew.

To encourage bloom on spring flowering hedges, they should be sheared immediately after blooming in the spring. Summer blooming hedges should be sheared before bud breaking in early spring or later winter.

Fruit bearing hedges should be pruned for maximum fruit display. In case of the pyracantha, a spring bloomer, prune after blooming, leaving plenty of fruit clusters. During the summer, this shrub tends to grow wood past the ripening fruit. This new growth can be partly pruned back during mid-summer. Do not prune pyracantha too late in the growing season as it increases the chance for winter damage to the twigs.

In the near future, it is likely that chemical growth retardants may be used to supplement mechanical pruning to help reduce labor time.

Renovating Old and Neglected Hedges

Many old hedges detract, rather than add, beauty to home landscape plantings. The plants are larger than desirable, are open at the bottom, and/or show much dead wood. Such a hedge, if still needed, should be pulled out and replaced by new plants, or if the plants are still alive, the hedge could be renovated by cutting it back severely.

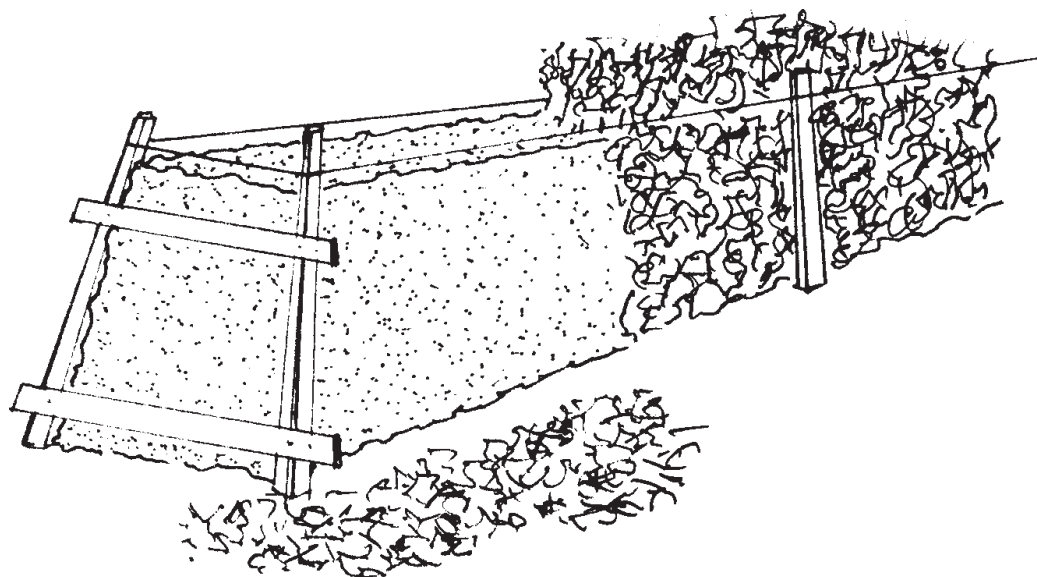


Figure 4. Secured stakes of an adjustable 'A' frame. Stakes placed along the hedge with tight guide wires or ropes to ensure a more even surface.

To renovate a deciduous hedge that is too large but is well filled out at the bottom, cut it back to the desired size and shape during the dormant season and from there, trim it in the usual manner. If the live hedge is open at the bottom, cut it back to almost ground level so that it will develop a new top. Some hedges which respond well to such severe treatment are lilacs, Peking cotoneaster, Van houtte spirea. The conifers do not tolerate severe pruning and once they are no longer attractive as a hedge, they should be taken out and replaced.

Choosing a Hedge

There are many species and cultivars to choose from to grow a hedge. The most imposing hedge I ever saw was a splendid Bur oak hedge. It was well over 12 feet tall with a base width of six feet and over 60 feet long.

As each situation tends to be different with its own microclimate, soil type and need, it would be wise to consult with your local nursery as to what particular plant to choose for your situation.

Eastern redcedar is hardy and drought-resistant. In its natural form it is often used as a tall screen or windbreak. However, it can be trimmed to make a tall, formal hedge.

Rocky Mountain Juniper is an excellent evergreen for hedge purposes. It is hardy and resistant to both drought and cold. It makes a fine trimmed, tall hedge.

Both junipers are subject to infection by cedar-apple rust; therefore, should not be selected for a hedge near apples or hawthorns.

Chinese lilac is hardy and drought resistant. It is adapted to wide use around farm homes as a trimmed or untrimmed hedge. Its suckering habit keeps it green close to the ground, and it makes good recovery after it has been cut back severely. It has attractive, fragrant lavender blooms. It grows to a large size and can reach up to 9 feet.

Common lilac is hardy and drought resistant. However, it does not make the most attractive formal hedge because of

its coarse texture. Untrimmed it makes a good, dense hedge growing to a height of 10 feet or more. The French hybrids (of which the common lilac is a parent) offer a wide selection of good hedges.

Vanhoutte spirea is very attractive as an untrimmed flowering hedge. It grows to a height of about 6 to 7 feet and a width of about 8 feet. It may be trimmed to make a medium-sized formal hedge. Its attractive white flowers appear in the spring and its fall leaf color is a golden bronze.

Snowmound spirea is a smaller variety and is also very attractive with its white bloom.

Anthony waterer and Froebel spirea are two more compact growing spireas with pink bloom. They bloom in early summer and make attractive small hedges.

Peking cotoneaster is very hardy and drought resistant and makes an excellent medium-sized trimmed hedge. Its small shiny leaves appear early in the spring and remain green until late fall. It has a dense growth form which responds well to formal trimming. It can be trimmed to low or medium heights.

Hedge cotoneaster is a smaller variety suitable for a lower hedge form. It has small leaves and twiggy dense growth that withstands the season trimmings necessary to keep the hedge in good condition.

Winged euonymus makes an attractive hedge. It has small foliage and twiggy growth. Foliage and fruits are colorful in the fall. The fall leaf color is deep red. A tall-growing variety and a dwarf variety, the latter, only growing to about 5 feet, are available in the trade.

Cinquefoil or Potentilla provides many varieties for a small formal or informal hedge. The plants have fine twiggy growth with dark green foliage and yellow flowers.

The above are only a partial list of suitable trees and shrubs for hedges. Consult with your nurseryman and ask for recommendations for your particular needs and growing conditions.

Gustaaf A. van der Hoeven Landscape & Environmental Horticulture

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