

PART THREE

ELEMENTS
OF DESIGN*Hedges • Fences • Screens • Walls • Trellis*

Lend structure and depth to your garden by choosing characterful boundaries and screens

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Along with defining the boundaries of your garden, walls, fences and hedges help set the scene for features and planting within it. Before settling on a style, consider the vernacular architecture and what would fit best with your surroundings. Hedging can be clipped and sculptural or composed of a mixture of plants to create a looser effect. A low wall might be topped with trellis to gain privacy, then softened by a scramble of roses or clematis. If disparate types of wood have been used for

fencing, a single dark paint colour can unite them. The space within the garden can also be manipulated with judicious use of screening. Eyesores such as compost bins can be hidden behind wooden, willow or hazel panels, for example. Designer George Carter (georgecartergardens.co.uk) recommends repeated pairs of screens – used in the same way as pieces of scenery jutting in on either side of a stage to add depth. These can be either hedges, low walls or trellis screens, depending on how much you want to see through them.

MAKING A
DIVISION

Separating the space in a garden with screening immediately creates a sense of intrigue and usually has the effect of making the whole plot appear larger than it is. Rustic pole screening or trellising, with an opening or archway in it, helps to frame and soften the view of your outdoor space and draw visitors to explore beyond. It can also be used effectively where privacy is needed – to shield a seating area from prying eyes of neighbours, for instance, or encircle a space where you want to dine out.



USING CLIMBERS

A living screen in the form of climbing plants is one of the best options. Use a low-key timber support, such as trellising or rustic poles with wire stretched between them to create a framework, then choose flowering climbers to suit. Roses such as 'Madame Alfred Carrière' give wonderful scent and masses of flowers, while 'Mortimer Sackler' is strong and reliable. 'Félicité-Perpétue', 'Bobbie James' and 'The Garland' all have the RHS Award of Garden Merit. ➔





CHOOSE SOME RUSTIC FENCING

Timber fences are endlessly adaptable to suit the style of your property and garden. A white-painted picket is a country cottage staple, while a darker colour such as sage green, russet or black can give it a more contemporary edge. Various designs are available, so shop around a bit to find something unusual. Chestnut paling is relatively inexpensive and looks good in a rural setting, as does chestnut post and rail fencing, particularly with a froth of plants weaving through it. Try coppice-products.co.uk to find local suppliers or go to a specialist woodworker such as edbrooks.com or greenmanwoodcrafts.co.uk to commission a bespoke design. Reclaimed timber, including driftwood, adds a textural, coastal feel.



HEDGES ON STILTS

If you want a certain degree of screening but would still like to have some transparency, a so-called hedge on stilts is perfect. This is a line of pleached standard trees, leaving a bare trunk for about the first six feet but providing full leaf cover higher up. *Phillyrea latifolia*, *Ligustrum lucidum*, Portuguese laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*) and holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) all lend themselves to this treatment, according to architecturalplants.com, as do beech and hornbeam.



Woven willow and hazel hurdles are attractive features in their own right



GET WEAVING

Woven willow and hazel hurdles are attractive features in their own right, so are ideal for disguising a garden's working area or for creating a decorative edging for flower or vegetable beds. Online, primrose.co.uk, musgrovewillows.co.uk and willowfence.co.uk have a good selection. Living willow can be woven on site in a criss-cross lattice effect to create a 'fedge' - a cross between a hedge and a fence. Use one- or two-year-old whips of the golden willow (*Salix alba var. vitellina*) or scarlet willow ('Britzensis') for a striking effect and plant in winter to late spring. ➔





UP THE WALL

The initial financial outlay for stone or brick walls may be high but the sense of permanence they offer to a garden scheme is unrivalled. Dry-stone walling is especially effective in a rural setting. If mortared joints are used, ensure they are made as subtly as possible with a mortar colour that blends with the stone. Encourage moss and lichen to colonise the stones or introduce rambling plants such as nasturtiums to drape over them and add colour.



EDIBLE SCREENS

If you need a screen between the more ornamental parts of your plot and the vegetable garden, or to provide privacy, there is no reason why it shouldn't earn its keep by being productive. Espaliered fruit trees, such as apple, pear and quince, lend

themselves beautifully to this purpose, providing lovely blossom in the spring and a space-saving way of growing fruit.

A training system of taut horizontal wires between posts will help to establish the framework and annual pruning is needed

in late summer. A hedge can be edible, too. Try hazels (food writer and grower Mark Diacono at otterfarm.co.uk recommends *Corylus avellana* 'Webbs Prize Cobb'), elder and *Rosa rugosa* for its long-lasting ruby-red hips in autumn.



GREEN BORDERS

Tightly clipped hedges make some of the best boundaries and dividers, providing a lush green backdrop for other planting. Depending on how the light falls on them, you get colour and texture changes as well as attractive shadow play, especially when they are trimmed into exciting shapes or undulating curves. Yew is a favourite evergreen hedging plant and faster to grow than you might think, putting on about a foot or more of growth a year. Hornbeam and beech give a more open look and can be trimmed to give an equally neat geometric finish.

To frame a view, why not cut a window? For topiary, an alternative to box (*Buxus sempervirens*) is *Phillyrea angustifolia*, a member of the olive family, which is tough and clips beautifully. In spring it offers the bonus of tiny, fragrant, off-white flowers.

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