

Hedges Can Substitute For Fencing

If you could erect a hedge as quickly as a fence, then there would probably be little call for the latter.

A well-groomed hedge can be a real feature in the garden and much easier to maintain—apart from the occasional clipping, you can leave them to their own devices.

Unfortunately, they can take a long time to establish, and there seems to be a king of "sod's law" for gardeners that says the nicer the variety, the harder it is to grow.

However, if you are fed up with rebuilding panels after a strong wind or digging out rotten fence posts, the idea of a hedge may be appealing, either as a boundary or a garden feature. And now is the time to start. Apart from latitude, you also need to consider site, soil, cost and how much clipping and care is required for your chosen hedge variety.

If the hedge is also going to be a boundary, you may be particularly keen to have something tall and sturdy, or even one which is prickly enough to deter intruders or keep animals on or off your land.

Prepare the site carefully—it's for life—and allow at least two feet of growing space within your boundary. Double-dig the site and add plenty of well-rotted organic compost to ensure a strong and long-lived hedge.

Conifers are by far the most popular type because they are not only handsome but also fast-growing, particularly in the case of the sturdy hybrid Leyland Cypress. This can put on two feet a year and create a thick hedge within a few years. Unfortunately, while they are soaring skywards, they do not put down strong roots, so they will need staking for the first two years.

The Yew is more traditional and takes longer to establish. It is a handsome variety when grown as a tall hedge. You could also consider the following varieties:

Box—Slow growing and makes an excellent low hedge. Great for trimming geometric gardens and borders, but it is expensive.

Holly—Attractive and good at keeping intruding animals at bay. It is also slow-growing and expensive.

Hawthorn—Produces scented flowers and berries and is inexpensive and easy to grow. Looks bare and boring during the winter after shedding its leaves.

Beech—Not the most inexpensive choice, but it is beautiful and can be trimmed to keep its leaves through the winter months.

Honeysuckle—Certain varieties make cheap, medium-height

hedges and give off a lovely scent.

Privet—Very inexpensive and fast-growing. However, it takes regular clipping to be kept neat and tidy.



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