Florida-Friendly Shrubs for Perimeter Plantings

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FORMAL HEDGES are usually monocultures, made up of one, (usually alien) species, and trimmed to conform to an angular shape.

Current Situation with Hedges

- Ixora X ‘Nora Grant’
- Murraya paniculata ‘Lakeview’
- Podocarpus macrophyllus
FORMAL HEDGES large or small, when grown in monoculture, may be destroyed by a single pest or disease. The greater number of species segments planted, the greater the chance that only one segment will be lost to disease or pests.
Current Situation with Hedges

**Silver buttonwood** - *Conocarpus erectus var. sericeus*

**Firebush** - *Hamelia patens*

**FORMAL or INFORMAL HEDGES** of only one native species do NOT avoid the problem of a particular pest or disease destroying the entire planting, and must be suited to the soil type, exposure to salt spray, moisture, light and other conditions present at the site.
Current Situation with Screens and Informal Hedges

- **Oleander** — *Nerium oleander*
  - informal large hedge/screen
- **Golden Bamboo** — *Phyllostachys aurea*
  - used as a privacy screen

- **Arizona State University Extension**

- Privacy screens and informal hedges traditionally composed of one species
- Need to increase diversity of species used in each screen or informal hedge
- Need to maintain screens and informal hedges with natural curves; reduce or eliminate angles.
Current Situation with Hedges

*Ficus benjamina*

single species hedge

destroyed by Ficus thrips and Ficus whitefly along Nova Drive in Davie

Many hedges in common areas managed by HOAs and COAs, municipalities and shopping centers are monocultures of *Ficus benjamina*, currently subject to Ficus whitefly, Ficus Thrips, Ficus scale and Ficus Gall Midge.
Alternatives to Monoculture: Species Composition and Design

• Avoid long segments of one species; use segments of alternating species; go for **HIGHER SPECIES DIVERSITY**
• Use aesthetically pleasing layers, along with bands or alternating blocks that vary texture and color to enhance focal points of the landscape, and reduce vulnerability to disease and pests
• Carefully select shrubs that are similar, according to the following factors:
  • Drought resistance and water needs
  • Growth rates; flowering or fruiting time if applicable
  • Most commonly maintained heights
  • Shade or light tolerance
  • Salt spray and wind tolerance
  • Soil requirements, particularly whether the species must be well-drained and necessary organic content
Alternatives to Monoculture: Species Composition and Design

- You MAY NOT plant any species listed on “Non-Native species restricted by Federal, State or Local Laws in Florida”
  [http://www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/invaspec/2ndlevpgs/pdfs/list.pdf](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/invaspec/2ndlevpgs/pdfs/list.pdf)

- You should not plant any FDACS “regulated species,” that is, plants known or suspected to be potential carriers of disease affecting agricultural plants, such as:
  - *Zanthoxylum fagara*- Wild Lime
  - *Murraya paniculata*- Orange Jasmine
  - All species in the Lauraceae- Laurel family, native or alien (exotic)

- You should be aware of any plant toxins, skin irritants, spines, or thorns to make an informed decision regarding your choice of species
Multiple-Species Perimeter Plantings
Increased Diversity and Layering

Small rooftop, Purple False Eranthemum alternated with another green foliage species, Singapore

Silver Buttonwood alternating with arborescent *Bougainvillea*, and a layer of larger Buttonwood to increase wind tolerance, Fort Lauderdale, FL
Multiple-Species Perimeter Plantings
Increased Diversity and Layering

**INFORMAL**
Downy Jasmine layered with Ixora X ‘Nora Grant” adjacent to Coccoplum and layered under Wax Myrtle, Tamarac, FL

**FORMAL**
Coccoplum foundation hedge segments interspersed with Yaupon Holly and Gumbo Limbo trees, with Faxahatchee grass foreground islands, Davie, FL
Multiple-Species Perimeter Plantings
Increased Diversity and Layering

INFORMAL Hedge/Screen
Walter’s *Viburnum* mixed with White Indigo Berry, Cape Coral, FL (above) used as a border planting (below)

FORMAL
Confederate Jasmine (ground) layered with Schilling’s *Ilex* and *Ficus benjamina* segment (far left-starting to die—should be replaced) connecting to *Ixora* (far upper right) next to red stopper, Ft Lauderdale
Multiple-Species Perimeter Plantings
Increased Diversity and Layering

Segmented informal hedge
*Pittosporum* and *Ixora* ‘Nora Grant
Iron fence imparts more formality

*Clusia rosea* ‘nana’ dwarf pitch apple
Layered with Japanese *Pittosporum*
And taller Green Buttonwood near the building
Multiple-Species Perimeter Plantings Increased Diversity and Layering

Various sizes of Texas sage, dwarf yellow *Ixora* and other plants provide a short screen to a maintenance area.

Dwarf *Mussaenda* informal hedge alternated with Coccoplum (far upper right) in strips.

Sea Grape privacy screen with Bald Cypress and Live Oak plantings.
After we install a design, how do we maintain it? Through Pruning

Definition:
The removal of plant parts to induce plant growth in a particular manner.
Reasons for Pruning

• Size control
• Plant Health
• Safety- line of vision
• Training to a shape
• Improve appearance
• Highlight focal points
• Influence flowering, fruiting and/or vigor
Do Not remove more than 1/4 of the foliage at one time
Pruning for Height and to Restrict Spread

Note: center branches are closer than before
Pruning to Increase Spread

Note: center branches are more open than before
Pruning Overgrown Plants

Before

After
Pruning Grafted Shrubs

Remove new shoots that start below the graft.
Pruning Shrubs Incorrectly

Growth Before

Growth pattern after cut
Pruning Shrubs for Informal Perimeter Plantings (hedges and screens)

Before Pruning

After Pruning
Correct Formal Hedge Profile

Base wider than top increases sun and rain to the base and thicker foliage

Top wider than base encourages leaf loss, less vigorous growth, less sun and rain to base, lower wind tolerance
Proper Formal Hedge Profiles

• For South Florida, we are concerned with organic matter that would accumulate on broad flat tops (1) along with less light caused by the rectangular shape, resulting in poor growth in the middle of the plant.

• Note that light is maximized with Numbers 2-5.