

Good Screens Make Good Neighbors



Space is getting scarcer. If your lot – whether in a newer suburban neighborhood or in the city – is small, you may feel too close to your neighbors for comfort. To claim and beautify your space, plant a grouping of plants to screen views and create a sense of intimacy and privacy.

Today's screens differ greatly from the hedges of old, which were usually evergreens of a single variety planted in a straight row and pruned into a square. Those weren't always attractive and could take years to grow large enough to do any good. Homeowners today artfully situate a variety of trees, shrubs and large perennials as a screen along a property line or near an outdoor seating area. Using several types of plants lends movement and beauty, attracts wildlife, and offers a changing view of blooms, berries and leaf colors.

Planted screens also serve as wind-breaks, stop blowing snow in colder climates, and shield from the sun.



Massed trees, shrubs and perennials in this screen block views.

Consider having an irrigation system installed for your screen to keep

things green and growing. Accessorize with a birdbath, sundial, gazing ball, even a bench or Adirondack chair, to make the space your own. And tell the neighbors you'll see them at the block party!

- Keep up with mowing so that you remove no more than 1/3 of the grass blade at a time. That keeps intact the part of the plant where photosynthesis takes place (for growth). Your lawn will be thicker and healthier.
- By the way, changing the direction you mow each time is a good idea. It helps grass stand up better, improving the grain and therefore the look, and ensures that all parts of each plant benefit equally from sun and air.
- It's a great time to add new basics to your landscape in the form of larger trees and shrubs. Choose plants for shade, screening, attracting wildlife or the plant's unique charms. Water new plantings regularly until they get established. If it hasn't rained much for a week, it's time to start watering all your lawn and landscape. If you delay, some smaller roots will die.
- Spring brings new growth throughout your whole landscape, so trees and shrubs need fertilizer now for good green-up and healthy growth.

Here are some tips for successful screening:

- **For appearance and ease of maintenance, remove grass from the entire area and mulch everything as one large bed.**
- **Consider the neighbors' view and convenience. No overhanging branches or plant litter.**
- **Put taller plants near the back or (if neighbors can also see) the center of the screen. Put the shortest near the edges. You might also want to leave the edges open as a place to plant seasonal color.**
- **Take mature size into account. You can plant easy-to-move shrubs or perennials between plants to form the screen until larger shrubs or trees take over.**
- **Use odd numbers: 1 large tree, 3 large shrubs; 7 small shrubs or perennials. Mass each type of plant to create an instant visual barrier.**
- **Limit color to three main shades that complement one another.**
- **Vary textures (rippled, pointed, rounded, needled), leaf color tones and plant shapes.**

Questions & ANSWERS

Q. It seems that weeds are worse along my driveway and sidewalks. Why?

A. It's true; you'll see more weeds getting the upper hand near surfaces that hold heat. Weed seeds germinate a lot faster than grass seeds in hot spots. Also, grass suffers more

quickly from the heat than weeds do, allowing grassy and broadleaf weeds to thrive as good turf falls victim. But there's more to the story, and you can do some things to help.

First, don't get too aggressive when using your string trimmer or edger in these areas. When you trim grass too short, you cut off the food-producing part of the plant. That causes grass to be thinner, allowing pesky weeds to take over.

Watering liberally along these areas cools soil and

gives grass a fighting chance. A selective herbicide to control the weeds and spot seeding will also help correct problem areas.



A light hand with your edger or trimmer helps turf fight invading weeds.





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Battling the Fungus Among Us

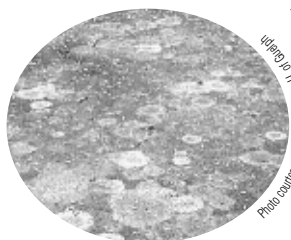
Watch for early signs of disease

Fungus spores lie dormant on all lawns. When certain types of weather (excessive rain, high humidity, heat) or other conditions (too much thatch, grass left long over the winter) are present, spores can start to grow rapidly, leading to disease. Different fungus problems tend to get growing at different times of the year.

Like a healthy body, a robust lawn is often able to withstand disease attacks. A lawn can fend off fungal attacks better if proper mowing, watering and fertilizing practices are followed. Watching for signs of fungus disease and dealing with them right away also help prevent damage from getting out of hand.

Snow mold is common in spring in some areas

Patches of matted silver-gray or bleached white turf signal snow mold. It often shows up in the spring after the ground thaws and new snow falls on the unfrozen lawn surface. It rarely does permanent damage, but to



Snow mold shows up as areas of matted lighter-colored turf.



Red thread is characterized by the strands of fungus growing on lawn surfaces.



Leaf spot starts as a single spot but can cause areas of blades to die and brown.

speed break-up, you can rake the areas lightly. Prevention by mowing late in the fall and fertilizing to speed recovery are good ideas.

Red thread is a threat

A pinkish cast to the lawn is an early sign of red thread. Gelatinous pink fungus forms red thread-like strands. Areas then brown and dry out. If this is a persistent problem on your lawn, overseeding with a more resistant variety of grass may help.

Spot leaf spot early

Leaf spot shows up as purplish brown spots with lighter centers on grass blades. The tips often die as spots girdle blades, and dead lawn patches may result. It can progress to a more serious condition, melting out. To keep ahead of these diseases, control thatch (through core aeration), mow a little longer, and fertilize appropriately.

Call us if you have questions or want to discuss control measures for these or any other lawn diseases.

For Expert Ability This is the Real McCoy!

The Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) recently announced that Matt McCoy has met the qualifications for and passed the Certified Landscape Professional (CLP) exam.

The six-hour exam covers all aspects of working in the landscape industry. It is divided into five sections: Business; Risk, Law and Contracts; Human Resources and Healthy/Safety; Production/Operations and Horticulture; and Sales, Marketing, Communications and Public Relations.

The CLP exam was designed to be to the landscape profession what the CPA exam is to the accounting profession. There is no higher certification within the landscape industry.

Matt McCoy is the President of McCoy Landscape Services, Inc., a Marion, Ohio-based landscape development and management firm.

ALCA represents approximately 2,000 professional landscape maintenance, installation, and design/build contracting firms and suppliers on a national basis.

