

SCREEN SCENE

Whether it's to mask a view or divide a garden, there is no shortage of screening options

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If you have areas of your landscape that are just screaming to be hidden away, you need to know what options are available to beautify your space and replace mess with style.

The good news is there are many different screening and fencing options, each giving different degrees of privacy. The busier or uglier the site you want to screen, the greater the density of the screening you'll need to do the job. Large-leafed plants, thick stands of clumping bamboo, bushy hedges and solid masonry walls are some of the denser "hard-core" options.

However, if you just want a sense of greater enclosure and don't need to block noise out or close off visibility completely, a semi-transparent screen will work well. One example might be panels of lattice or a series of metal screens with — or without — climbing plants growing over them. If all you need to do is delineate one area from another or mark the boundary of a property, a more traditional fencing option such as post-and-rail might be all you need. And for an outdoor room where you want to separate zones or increase privacy as needed, a portable room divider/screen may be all you want.

Depending on what you wish to screen or fence in, there are various choices.

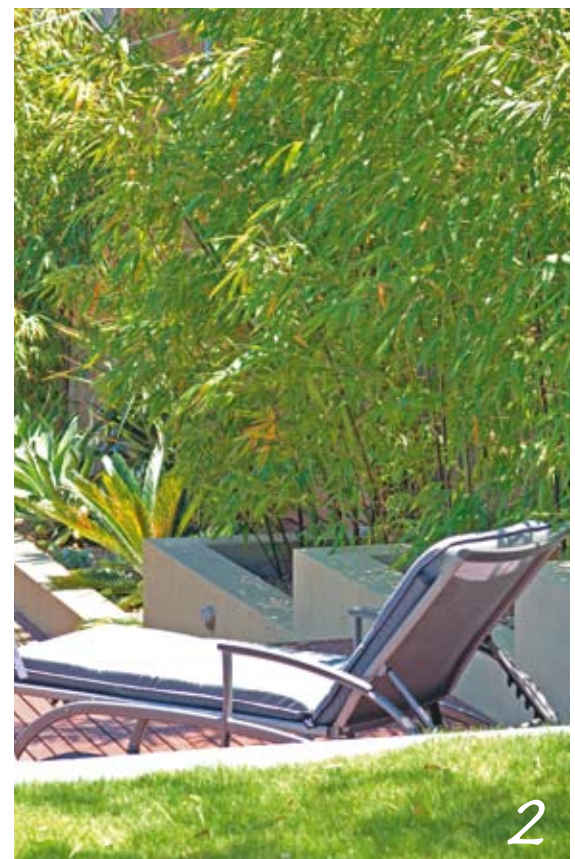
Living screens of lush leafy green

Plants can be used for screening in many ways. There are different types of plants suitable for screening, and different ways of planting them. The most straightforward screen planting is the hedge — planting shrubs or trees at equal spacings and pruning them into box or other shapes to act like a living fence. Hedges can be planted in the ground or in raised planter boxes, which gives them extra height and adds visual interest to a garden.

You can also have a more informal hedge or screen planting using various shrubs, bamboo or tropical-style plants such as gingers, cordylines and palms. The leaf size of the plants you use has a great effect on the visual style created: large leaves give a lush, tropical feel, while plants with smaller leaves tend to have a softer look, lending themselves to bushland or cottage styles.

Trees can act as screening, especially in larger landscapes, but even a small tree can stretch a branch conveniently out into an area and provide privacy or protection from the wind or sun.

It's important to choose the right plant for a screening task. Be aware of how high the plants will grow — you don't want to end up blocking the sun out of your home or those



around you. Also avoid plants that drop berries if they're going to be near a walkway to avoid trips, as well as mess. One non-messy option is clumping bamboo. There are many fast-growing varieties with masses of leafy foliage and interestingly coloured or patterned culms (stems).

Another fantastic option for live screening is to install a "green wall". This is, in effect, a vertical plant bed that uses a special growing medium and typically has its own irrigation system. There are many plants that can be grown this way, including herbs and flowering plants.

Using timber screens in creative ways

Timber is used for screening in the landscape in a variety of forms. Lattice or trellis screens are not of solid construction so, of course, let in a certain degree of light. If maximum sun penetration or air flow isn't vital, or you want to soften their look, you can grow climbers

on them. Timber slat screens are currently a very popular choice and, depending on how far apart the slats are placed, you will have varying degrees of visibility — and light. Slatted screens, whether horizontal or vertical, are best suited to modern house and landscape styles. →

1. Add interest to an outdoor space or mask an old fence with some contemporary bamboo panelling from House of Bamboo. For more information: www.houseofbamboo.com.au

2. Bamboo is a great screening solution and can create a sense of enclosure and tranquility. Garden design by Seed Garden Design & Maintenance.

3. A timber screen of horizontal slats is used to increase privacy at a side boundary and to act as a backdrop for a Buddha statue set amid foliage.



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“Plants can be used for screening in many ways”

Then there are the more traditional timber fencing designs, ranging from lap-and-cap to rural post-style fencing. The latter is very useful for when you just need to delineate one area from another, establish a boundary or create a rustic or country look.

If you are looking for screens made of natural materials other than timber, there are many screening panels made from bamboo, reed and brush. This type of material can be attached to frames or fastened to existing fences to revamp a garden space. To enhance the look of any screen, timber or otherwise, place some plants in front.

Metal screening is long-lasting

Metal is a handy material for landscape use because of its durability and also the way it can be manipulated and moulded into decorative shapes and designs. Metal can be welded, bent or laser-cut to form all kinds of designs.

Metal grille fences and screens look good with plants surrounding them and are a fast and easy way to create a screen. They can be double value if combined with lighting and placed where the sun can shine through them, creating silhouettes on the surface behind them.

Sheetmetal can be used with decorative finishes and sculptural effects. These can be very sturdy and long-lasting screens, with great visual presence. (Just keep in mind that metal screen fences may require your council's

approval and an engineer to certify that they are safely constructed.)

If you live in bushfire-prone areas, steel fencing such as Colorbond can be a good choice as it is non-combustible. It's also a good choice for boundary fences where you want complete privacy or to keep in pets and kids.

Masonry walls are a solid choice

Masonry walls are a heavy-duty screen, good for blocking out sound and other elements as well preventing access to areas where security or privacy is important. Masonry walls can also make for attractive feature walls depending on the treatment they are given and the other materials they are combined with.

They can be rendered and painted brick or block walls, dry stone walls, walls clad with stacked stone panels, gabion walls (constructions of wire filled with rocks) or brick walls. Depending on their height, these may also require council approval and need to be certified by a structural engineer.

Dry stone walls look amazing in a cottage or country-style garden, gabion walls are fantastic in modern or native gardens, while rendered brick or block walls can be adapted to any kind of setting but are especially well suited to more contemporary designs. For variety or to let light and air in, you can take a masonry wall and use feature inset panels of other fencing materials such as timber slats or metal grilles. ■



4. In this garden the quirky staggered screening is of timber slats and gabion feature walls filled with marble rock. Garden design by Outdoor Style.

5. Norwood Post & Rail boundary fencing is made from selectively harvested Australian hardwoods. For more information: 1300 551 248