



STEPHEN & KRISTIN PATEGAS

in the garden *by Stephen and Kristin Pategas*

## Edgy Situation

There are times when the growth habits of spreading plants call for extraordinary measures to decrease maintenance and maintain the look of the garden. The level of maintenance ramps up when plants creep into, under, through and sometimes up adjacent plants. We suggest the use of a physical edging that allows two different plants to co-exist without fighting.

A successful edge is long lasting and solid without gaps so plant stems can't creep through spaces. Choose one that is flexible and bendable enough to make curves and sharp angles. Since gardens evolve, edging should be easily removable. Plastic or metal edging won't decay, while wood which is less expensive is not long lasting. Avoid poured concrete which cannot be adjusted and is too strong of a visual statement. Edging should be functional but rarely seen, so keep the thickness to about one-eighth of an inch and avoid the thick rolled top plastic edging. Other considerations are the height of the edging. The roots of spreading plants may travel horizontally underground at various depths and may creep along the surface as well. So the edging height is determined by the growth habit of the plant it is to contain.

In our designs we specify the six-inch height Super-Edg by Oly-Ola Edgings (800.334.4647/ [www.olyola.com](http://www.olyola.com)) with stakes along beds of plants that creep in order to contain them and to define the edge for maintenance. Some plants creep below ground and an edge extending down into the soil can halt their spread. Other plants run along the ground before they root in. Use a barrier that



Trim at the edging at the perimeter of the bed.



Concrete is expensive to install, highly visible and inflexible for landscape bed changes.



Installation of Super-Edg with stakes prior to planting.

rises above the surface to define the edge where they should be trimmed before they grow into adjacent plants.

Edging four inches in the ground and one inch above is fine for mondo grass. For dwarf Asian jasmine two inches in the ground and four inches above provides a good trimming edge. Clumping bamboo is typically controlled by trimming but to prevent it from travelling under a fence use a durable barrier such as 20 gauge galvanized steel 10 inches in the ground and two inches above. A running bamboo needs a three foot deep concrete wall that rises above the ground about four inches.

Plants that creep above and below ground (extend barrier mostly below ground to halt spread) include: mint, horsetail, cast iron plant, wire vine, mondo, perennial peanut, lady palm, bamboo, and sansevieria. Plants that run mostly above the ground before rooting in (extend barrier mostly above ground to define the perimeter of the bed): dwarf Asian jasmine, ivy, St. Augustine grass.

A word of warning is needed for spreading plants such as the invasive sword fern which will only be partially contained by edging since spores germinate where the breeze takes them. Meanwhile the also invasive Mexican petunia moves beyond barriers due to its way too fertile seeds. Skip the edging on these and rip out the plants.

Your referee duties will be over if you avoid invasives, select the proper edging and install it at the correct depth. ■

All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis

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