



Stephen & Kristin Pategas

in the garden by Stephen and Kristin Pategas

Your Hedge – How To Empower It

A hedge is an unnatural use for a plant that never grows in nature in a uniform row. While we can bend most plants to our will, it does take the right plant, growing conditions and maintenance to make a successful long-lasting hedge.

The first step is determining the growing conditions and space limitations. Start with what we usually ignore - where the roots grow in the soil. Determine whether the soils are well or poorly draining. For many plants it makes a big difference. If there is debris, remove it. Check the soil pH since it affects whether a plant can take up nutrients and will thrive. Rise above the soil level and calculate the amount of sunlight that will strike the foliage throughout the year. The right amount of light will provide the photosynthesis needed to support growth.

Now, think about how high and wide the hedge needs to grow. Is it to provide privacy from a one or two-story home or just screen a blank wall, fence or air conditioning condenser? What density is needed? Must it be all one plant or will a variety of plants with varying textures, foliage colors and perhaps blooms fill the need?

The next step is selection of the right plant to meet the site conditions and your needs. Typically throughout Central Florida one plant – sweet viburnum (*Viburnum odoratissimum*) is used in the majority of hedges. This coarse leaved plant does not lend itself to shearing since its large leaves exhibit brown cut edges. It also grows rapidly and is difficult to keep narrow. We frequently see these hedges sucking up a six to eight foot width of valuable real estate. Unfortunately the glossy privet (*Ligustrum japonicum*) is sometimes still used as a hedge. Since it naturally grows into a vase shape and gets see-through on the bottom it rarely accomplishes what a hedge is needed for – screening. However, it does make a fabulous multiple or single small trunk tree.

Recommended plants for Central Florida include: Sandankwa viburnum/*Viburnum suspensum* (short mature height); Yew podocarpus/*Podocarpus macrophyllus* (fine texture and can be trimmed for narrow spaces); Anise/*Illicium parviflorum* (native, licorice scented foliage); Dwarf Walter’s viburnum/*Viburnum obovatum* ‘Riefler’s Densa’ or ‘Select’ (native, short mature height, white blooms) and Simpson’s stopper/*Myrcianthes fragrans* (native, fragrant white blooms).

The maintenance of the hedge is critical for its long term survival and aesthetic value. First, if at all possible, do not allow the edges to be sheared with power or hand shears. Require the use of hand pruners and have small portions pruned out so sunlight penetrates and stimulates interior growth. This method also minimizes the loss of flower buds and lengthens the time between pruning sessions. Second, make sure hedges are wider on the bottom than on the top. This allows sunlight to reach the base so it stays full. To keep that top narrower than the base, think pyramidal and lean into the hedge when pruning.

The correct formula for a winning hedge is the selection of the right plant for the conditions and your needs along with proper maintenance – then the hedge is guaranteed to be a natural.

At right, hand trim anise to create a durable hedge.

Photos by Stephen G. Pategas, Hortus, Oasis.



Top photo, a thin hedge of yew podocarpus. Below, a pyramidal shape allows sunlight to reach the bottom.



Hortus Oasis (FL26000315) in Winter Park is a boutique garden design company specializing in residential, commercial and specialty gardens. Stephen is a registered landscape architect and Kristin is a certified landscape designer. Contact them at 407-622-4886/garden@hortussoasis.com

PROACTIVE PLANNING

[AND LIFELONG SECURITY]



“The Mayflower is an incredible safety net.”

At The Mayflower, Nancy Klingler benefits from the wisdom of proactive planning. She enjoys her stunning, customized villa – along with a maintenance-free lifestyle that enables her to travel regularly and maintain her social circle. And having moved here with her late husband Bob, the advantages extend even further.

“We’d always planned to make the move later on, but we fast-tracked our decision when Bob became ill,” Nancy says. “He wanted to make sure I was taken care of – and I am. You never know what will happen in the future, so you have to prepare. No matter what comes my way, The Mayflower is an incredible safety net that provides a sense of security – for me and my children.”

What’s your plan for the future?
Call today, and let’s talk about it: 407.672.1620.



THE MAYFLOWER
www.themayflower.com
1620 Mayflower Court
Winter Park, FL 32792

