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## GARDENER'S REFERENCE

*Filoli's walkways are lined with a mile of formal hedges, ranging from low grey English Lavender borders to ten-foot tall screens of English Laurel. What are all of these different hedges, and how do the gardeners keep them so straight and level?*

# FORMAL HEDGES

The use of hedges as architectural elements in the garden dates back centuries. Hedges were also used as a protection against wild animals, as wind-breaks, and to protect private plots from wandering livestock. Today, hedges are often used in gardens to create garden rooms and to screen off unsightly work areas. At Filoli, one of their most important roles is as edging about the geometric parterres and as architectural elements in the flower and knot gardens. Tightly sheared hybrid yew (*Taxus x media*) encloses the sunken garden; fragrant English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) borders the paths of the cutting garden; informally pruned *Camellia sasanqua* 'Jean May' lines the tiers of the wedding place; and English laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) screens the working gardens.

### Hedge Development

**Spacing.** Small evergreen plants may be planted as close as 12" apart and at least 36" apart for large deciduous and evergreen plants.

**Shearing and Training.** To develop a compact, strong framework, low edging plants should be cut back after planting to within 3-4" of the ground. Cut larger woody hedges to within 6-12" and again when the growth resprouts to 6 inches. As the hedge grows, the base of the hedge should be left slightly wider than the top. This reduces bottom shading and helps maintain lower foliage, especially for

hedges that face in an east-west direction. Experienced gardeners use their eye to get straight lines on most hedges, but string lines and line levels are used for large hedges and for training purposes.

**Timing.** Shearing of the mature evergreen hedge is best completed in late spring or early summer for maximum size control. Deciduous plants can be sheared while dormant in winter. In the case of flowering hedges, shearing time should be carefully considered to avoid removing developing flower buds. Spring bloomers are best sheared right after blooming, and summer bloomers are sheared during the winter.

**Renovation.** Severe pruning is necessary on a regular basis for rejuvenating overgrown evergreen hedges and for keeping them in bounds. In the spring, cut back height and width by up to 50%, or approximately 6 inches smaller than its desired size, to allow for vigorous re-growth. Latent buds re-sprout naturally along the stems and trunks of good hedging plants. Note that some hedges such as conifers, rosemary, English lavender and old boxwood do not re-sprout readily from old wood; when in doubt, we experiment with one side before hedging all sides.

**Tools.** We use electric hedging shears for fine textured, small-leaved hedges. Short handled hedging shears are used for large-leaved hedges, because they cut cleanly through leaves and they give the hedge a finished look.

Botanical Name / Common Name	Decid Evgr	Height & Growth Rate	Texture	Spacing	Shearing Time	Special Features	Location at Filoli
<b>FULL SUN</b>							
<i>Ballota pseudodictamnus</i> Woolly Horehound	E	18" / fast	Fine	12"	Early spring	Pearly grey foliage	Knot garden
<i>Chaenomeles speciosa</i> Flowering Quince	E	2-8' / fast	Medium	3'	In bloom & immed. After	Showy flrs. Feb. – Mar.	Panel garden
<i>Erica x darleyensis</i> 'Darley Dale' Heath	E	1' / moderate	Fine	8"	After bloom	Purple flrs. Nov. – May	Walled garden
<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i> Rose of Sharon	D	6-12' moderate	Coarse	3'	Early spring	Showy flrs. Summer	Panel garden
<i>Iberis sempervirens</i> Candytuft	E	8" to 1' / fast	Fine	6-8"	Late summer	White flrs. Spring	Garden shop
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i> English Lavender	E	3-4' / fast	Fine	18-36"	Late summer	Lavender flrs. Summer	Knot garden
<i>Myrtus communis ssp</i> <i>tarentina</i> 'Compacta' Dwarf Myrtle	E	To 3' moderate	Fine	18"	Summer	Soft green fragrant	Walled garden
<i>Taxus x media var</i> Hybrid Yew	E	To 40' slow / moderate	Fine	2'	Summer	Soft green	Sunken garden, high place
<i>Teucrium chamaedrys</i> Germander	E	To 1' moderate	Fine	12"	Summer	Good green	Knot garden
<b>FULL SUN / LIGHT SHADE</b>							
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> Common Box	E	1-20' moderate	Fine	12"	Late summer / fall	Good green	Entrance court, walled garden
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Suffruticosa' Edging Box	E	To 3' moderate	Fine	6-8"	Late summer / fall	Good green, topiary	Dinning room terrace
<i>Choisya ternata</i> Mexican Orange	E	4-8' / rapid	Medium	3'	After Bloom	White flrs. Spring	Cottage garden
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> Atropurpurea Group Copper Beech	D	10-40' moderate	Coarse	3'	Early spring	Purple foliage & fall color	Panel garden
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i> English Holly	E	5-40' / slow	Medium	2'	Summer	Berries Nov. – Dec.	Walled garden
<i>Laurus nobilis</i> Grecian Bay Laurel	E	12-40' moderate	Coarse	3'	Summer	Good green	Walled garden
<i>Loropetalum chinense</i> Loropetalum	E	3-5' moderate	Medium	3'	Late summer	White flrs. Spring	Swimming pool
<i>Osmanthus fragrans</i> Fragrant Olive	E	10'+ / slow	Medium	3'	Summer	Orange flrs. Oct. Very fragrant	Tree peony bed
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i> English Laurel	E	To 30' / fast	Coarse	3'	Summer	Good green	Panel garden
<i>Pittosporum tenuifolium</i> Tawhiwhi	E	5' / moderate	Medium	2'	Summer	Good narrow hedge	Dutch garden
<b>LIGHT SHADE</b>							
<i>Camellia sasanqua</i> Sasanqua Camellia	E	To 4' moderate	Medium	Medium	Immed. After bloom	Showy flrs fall	Wedding place

Information sheet adapted from a pamphlet created by 1996 Filoli interns for the San Francisco Garden and Landscape Show at Fort Mason Center. This sheet may be accessed from the Filoli website.

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