

79 Hedges (Screens and Buffers) of South Florida Gardens, Landscapes and Roadways: Florida friendly and unfriendly plants

Key words: privacy hedge; plant hedge; Florida hedges

All the plants included in the tables are capable of growing well in south Florida. However, many hedges have their problems and some will not be suited for your location. This may depend on micro-climate, poor soil, irrigation water, and pest pressure. Other things one should consider before planting include the invasive tendency of the plant, its rate of hedge formation, maintenance, and neighbor's reaction. A few of the hedges pictured here may not have practical application but they may serve to educate and stimulate one's imagination. It will take from 12 to 30 months for most new plants to grow into a hedge. To create a formal hedge, the gardener works against the natural or the alternate form (AForm) of the plant. For this reason, whenever possible, pictures of the AF of plants are included for the landscaper's and gardener's insight into the art of hedging. However, some species need no pruning to form a natural screen or buffer. A hedge kept pruned will not become its natural or alternative form. Other plants that make appropriate hedges are not listed in Table 1 or 2 simply because they were not found as hedges. Plants listed as invasive or prohibited (Tables 1, 2 and 4) are generally not recommended and are considered "unfriendly" plants. Check with your local county Extension agent for clarification. Noxious plants (Table 4) are prohibited by the state and should not be propagated, transported, sold or planted.

Table 1. Florida Native Plants

Common Name	Botanical Name	Typical Height (ft.)	Hedge formation	Leaf Size	Growing Zone	Drought Tolerance	Salt Tolerance	Major Problems	Photos
Buttonwood, green	<i>Conocarpus erectus</i>	3-15	Fast	Medium	S	High	High	Sri Lanka weevil	Hedge1 Leaves AForm Hedge2
Buttonwood, silver	<i>Conocarpus erectus</i> var. <i>sericeus</i>	3-9	Slow	Medium	S	High	High	Discolored leaves; Sri Lanka Weevil	Hedge Leaves
Cocoplum 'Horizontal'	<i>Chrysobalanus icaco</i> var. <i>icaco</i>	3-6	Moderate	Medium	S	High	High	Cold damage	Hedge AForm Leaves
Cocoplum 'Red Tip'	<i>Chrysobalanus icaco</i> var. <i>pellocarpus</i>	4-8	Moderate	Medium	S	Moderate	Medium	Cold damage	Hedge1 Leaves AForm Hedge2 Fruits

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Common Name	Botanical Name	Typical Height (ft.)	Hedge Formation	Leaf Size	Growing Zone	Drought Tolerance	Salt Tolerance	Major Problems	Photos
Coffee, Bahamas	<i>Psychotria ligustrifolia</i>	2-4	Slow	Small	S	Low	Medium	None	Hedge Leaves
Coffee, Wild	<i>Psychotria nervosa</i>	2-5	Moderate	Medium	S	Low	Medium	Scales; sooty mold	Plants1 Plants2 Leaves
Fakahatchee grass	<i>Tripsacum dactyloides</i>	4-6	Fast	Long and thin	S, C, N	High	Medium	Spider mites	Hedge1 Hedge2
Fiddlewood	<i>Citharexylum spinosum</i>	3-12	Moderate	Medium	S	High when established	Medium	Whiteflies	Hedge Leaves Inflorescence
Firebush	<i>Hamelia patens</i>	3-8	Fast	Medium	S	High	High	Cold damage; aphids; mites; croton scales	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves Inflorescence
Florida privet; wild olive	<i>Forestiera segregata</i>	4-10	Fast	Small	S, C, N	High	High	None	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves1 Leaves2 AForm
Golden Creeper	<i>Ernodea littoralis</i>	1-5	Moderate	Petite	S	High	High	None	Hedge Leaves
Horsetail	<i>Equisetum hyemale</i>	3-6	Slow	Long and thin	S, C, N	Low	Low	Weedy	Hedge Stem
Jamaican caper	<i>Capparis cynophallophora</i>	4-7	Slow	Medium	S	Low until established. High after establishment	High	Slow to establish and often yellow until established	Hedge1 Leaves Flowers AForm
Myrsine	<i>Myrsine cubana</i>	3-7	Moderate	Medium	S	Moderate	High	None	Hedge Leaves Fruits
Necklace pod	<i>Sophora tomentosa</i> var. <i>truncata</i>	3-7	Fast	Small	S	High	High	Mealybugs, scales	Hedge Leaf Inflorescence AForm

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Common Name	Botanical Name	Typical Height (ft.)	Hedge Formation	Leaf Size	Growing Zone	Drought Tolerance	Salt Tolerance	Major Problems	Photos
Pitch apple	<i>Clusia rosea</i>	4-9	Slow	Large	S	High	High	Cold damage; scales	Hedge Leaves
Red cedar	<i>Juniperus silicicola</i>	4-10	Fast	Needle-like	S, C, N	High	High	Mites; leaf blight	Hedge AForm Leaves Old Trunk
Saw palmetto	<i>Serenoa repens</i> (green and silver varieties)	3-7	Slow, silver faster than green	Mammoth	S, C, N	High	High	Palmetto weevils	Hedge1 Hedge3 Hedge2
Sea grape	<i>Coccoloba uvifera</i>	4-12	Moderate	Large	S	High	High	Scales	Hedge1 Hedge3 Fruits Hedge2 Leaf AForm
'Schellings Dwarf' / Yaupon holly	<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	1.5-4	Slow	Petite	S, C, N	High	High	None	Hedge1 Leaves Hedge2 AForm
Simpson's stopper	<i>Myrcianthes fragrans</i>	3-6	Slow	Small	S	High	High	None	Hedge1 Leaves1 Inflorescence Hedge2 Leaves2
Strangler Fig	<i>Ficus aurea</i>	4-10	Moderate	Medium	S	High	Medium	Croton scales	Hedge AForm Leaves
Walter's viburnum	<i>Viburnum obovatum</i>	3-6	Moderate	Petite	S, C, N	High	Low	None	Hedge1 Leaves Hedge2 Flowers
Wax myrtle	<i>Morella cerifera</i>	3-9	Fast	Small	S, C, N	High	High	None	Hedge1 Leaves Hedge2 AForm

Table 2. Introduced Plants

Common Name	Botanical Name	Typical Height (ft.)	Hedge Formation	Leaf Size	Growing Zone	Drought Tolerance	Salt Tolerance	Major Problems	Photos
Arborvitae	<i>Platycladus orientalis</i>	4-12	Slow (space wide)	Long and thin	S, C, N	Medium	Low	Mites; bacterial blight	Hedge Leaves
Areca palm	<i>Dyopsis lutescens</i>	8-18	Moderate	Mammoth	S	High	Medium	Cold damage; ganoderma	Hedge
Australian pine	<i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i>	4-10	Fast	Needle-like	S	High	High	Invasive and prohibited plant	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves AForm
Bottlebrush	<i>Callistemon rigidus</i>	3-7	Moderate	Small	S, C	Medium	Medium	Witches broom; nematodes	Hedge Leaves AForm
Bougainvillea	<i>Bougainvillea glabra</i>	3-8	Moderate	Medium	S	High	High	Caterpillars	Hedge1 Hedge2 Flowers
Brazilian pepper	<i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i>	4-25	Fast	Medium	S	Medium	Medium	Invasive and prohibited plant	Hedge Leaves&Fruits AForm
Brush cherry/Scrub cherry	<i>Syzygium australe</i>	3-15	Fast	Small	S	High	Low	Fungal disease; guava rust	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves
Cape honeysuckle	<i>Tecoma capensis</i>	3-6	Fast	Medium	S	Medium	Medium	Scales; mites; nematodes; root rots	Hedge Leaves Inflorescence
Carissa	<i>Carissa macrocarpa</i>	2-4	Slow	Small	S	High	High	Not tolerant of flood; Anthracnose	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves Flowers
Confederate jasmine	<i>Trachelospermum jasminoides</i>	3-8 On fence	Moderate	Small	S, C, N	Medium	Medium	None	Hedge1 Hedge2 Inflorescence AForm
Copper leaf	<i>Acalypha wilkesiana</i>	4-8	Fast	Small, medium & large	S	Low	Medium	Cold damage; mealybugs, nematodes	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves AForm

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Common Name	Botanical Name	Typical Height (ft.)	Hedge Formation	Leaf Size	Growing Zone	Drought Tolerance	Salt Tolerance	Major Problems	Photos
Croton	<i>Codiaeum variegatum</i>	4-6	Moderate	Medium and large	S	Low	Medium	Cold damage; Croton scales	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves1 Leaves2
Downy jasmine	<i>Jasminum multiflorum</i>	3-5	Moderate	Small	S	Medium	Low	Scales	Hedge1 Leaves Hedge2 Flowers
Ficus - Creeping Fig	<i>Ficus pumila</i> On wall or fence	4-14 On fence or wall	Fast	Medium	S	High	Medium	None	Hedge Leaves1 Leaves2
Ficus 'Green Island'	<i>Ficus microcarpa</i>	2-6	Slow	Small	S	High	Medium	None	Hedge Leaves
Ficus - Indian Laurel/ Cuban Laurel	<i>Ficus microcarpa</i>	4-20	Fast	Small	S	High	Medium	Invasive; thrips	Hedge Leaves&Fruits AForm
Ficus - Weeping fig	<i>Ficus benjamina</i>	4-20	Fast	Small	S	High	Medium	Cold damage; Ficus whiteflies ; thrips	Hedge1 Hedge2 Hedge3 Leaves AForm
Firebush, dwarf (not a dwarf)	<i>Hamelia patens</i> var. <i>glabra</i>	3-8	Fast	Medium	S	Moderate	High	Cold damage; aphids	Hedge1 Hedge2 Hedge 3 Leaves1 Leaves2 AForm Inflorescence
Firecracker plant	<i>Russelia equisetiformis</i>	3-8	Moderate	Long and thin	S	High	High	Nematodes	Hedge Leaves Inflorescence
Golden dewdrop	<i>Duranta erecta</i>	2.5-6	Fast	Small	S, C	High	Medium	Scales; nematodes	Hedge1 Hedge2 Hedge3 Leaves Inflorescence
Guava - Cattley	<i>Psidium cattleianum</i>	3-9	Fast	Medium	S	High	Low	Invasive; fruit flies; messy	Hedge Leaves Fruits
Guava - Strawberry	<i>Psidium cattleianum</i> var. <i>littorale</i>	3-9	Fast	Medium	S, C	High	Medium	Invasive	Hedge Leaves Fruits

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Common Name	Botanical Name	Typical Height (ft.)	Hedge Formation	Leaf Size	Growing Zone	Drought Tolerance	Salt Tolerance	Major Problems	Photos
Hibiscus	<i>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</i>	3-7	Fast	Medium	S	Low	Medium	Cold damage; nutrient deficiencies; aphids; scales; mealybugs; mites; Anthracnose	Hedge1 Leaves Flower1 Hedge2 Hedge3 Flower2
Indian Hawthorn	<i>Raphiolepis indica</i>	2-4	Moderate	Medium	S, C, N	Medium	Medium	Scales; leaf spots	Hedge1 Leaves Hedge2
Ixora - Flame of the Woods	<i>Ixora coccinea</i>	2.5-8	Moderate	Small	S	High	Medium	Fe deficiency; scales	Hedge1 Leaves Inflorescence AForm Hedge2
Ixora 'Nora Grant'	<i>Ixora chinensis</i>	3-6	Fast	Medium	S	Medium	Medium	Cold damage; Fe deficiency; scales; fungus; nematodes	Hedge1 Leaves Inflorescence Hedge2
Lady palm	<i>Rhapis excelsa</i>	4-12	Slow	Mammoth	S	Medium	Medium	Fe deficiency; mealybugs; scales	Hedge1 Hedge2
Ligustrum-Glossy Privet	<i>Ligustrum lucidum</i>	3-7	Moderate	Medium	S, C, N	Medium	Low	Invasive in C and N FL. Not tolerant of flooding; whiteflies; leaf spots	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves
Oleander	<i>Nerium oleander</i>	3-8	Moderate	Medium	S, C, N	High	High	Poisonous; caterpillars; scales; witches broom	Hedge1 Leaves Inflorescence AForm Hedge2
Orange	<i>Citrus sinensis</i>	5-9	Slow	Medium	S	Medium	Low	Aphids; scales; Sri Lanka weevils; leaf spots	Hedge

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Common Name	Botanical Name	Typical Height (ft.)	Hedge Formation	Leaf Size	Growing Zone	Drought Tolerance	Salt Tolerance	Major Problems	Photos
Orange jasmine	<i>Murraya paniculata</i>	4-9	Fast	Small	S, C	High	Medium	Quarantine; Invasive; citrus psyllids; scales; whiteflies	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves Inflorescence
Passion fruit	<i>Passiflora edulis</i>	3-6 On fence	Fast	Large	S	Medium	Low	Caterpillars; nematodes	Hedge Leaves Flower
Philodendron selloum	<i>Philodendron bipinnatifidum</i>	4-7	Slow	Mammoth	S	Medium	Low	Mites; K deficiency	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaf
Pitch apple 'Small Leaf'	<i>Clusia guttifera</i>	4-9	Moderate	Medium to Large	S	High	High	Cold damage; scales	Hedge1 Hedge2 Hedge3 Leaves
Pittosporum	<i>Pittosporum tobira</i>	3-7	Slow	Small	S, C, N	High	High	Leaf spots; fungal dieback; virus; nematodes	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves AForm
Plumbago	<i>Plumbago auriculata</i>	2.5-6	Moderate	Petite	S	High	Medium	Irritant; scales; chili thrips; mites	Hedge1 Hedge2 Inflorescence
Podocarpus-Yew Podocarpus	<i>Podocarpus macrophyllus</i>	4-20	Slow	Small	S,C,N	Medium	Medium	Aphids; scales	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves
Red powderpuff	<i>Calliandra haematocephala</i>	3-12	Medium	Medium	S	High	Low	Acacia whiteflies; Ambrosia beetles; thornbugs	Hedge Leaves Flowers AForm
Ruellia/Mexican petunia	<i>Ruellia brittoniana</i>	2-3	Fast	Medium	S	Low	Low	Invasive (use seedless variety); slugs; snails; leaf scars	Hedge1 Leaves Hedge2 Flowers Plants
Scaevola/Beach Naupaka	<i>Scaevola taccada</i>	4-7	Fast	Large	S	High	High	Invasive; spider mites	Hedge Leaves&Fruits AForm

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Common Name	Botanical Name	Typical Height (ft.)	Hedge Formation	Leaf Size	Growing Zone	Drought Tolerance	Salt Tolerance	Major Problems	Photos
Schefflera	<i>Schefflera arboricola</i>	3-9	Fast	Medium	S	High	Medium	Scales; Anthracnose	Hedge1 Hedge3 Leaves2 Leaves3 AForm
Sea Hibiscus/Mahoe	<i>Talipariti tiliaceum</i>	3-14	Moderate	Large	S	High	High	Invasive, Category 2	Hedge1 Leaf Flowers Hedge2 Leaves AForm
Senegal date palm	<i>Phoenix reclinata</i>	6-20	Slow	Mammoth	S	High	Medium	Invasive; spiny; caterpillars; Ganoderma ;	Hedge
Shell ginger (green)	<i>Alpinia zerumbet</i>	4-7	Moderate	Mammoth	S	Medium	Low	None	Hedge1 Leaves Hedge2
Silverthorn	<i>Elaeagnus pungens</i>	4-10	Moderate	Medium	S, C, N	High	High	None	Hedge Leaves
Skyvine	<i>Thunbergia grandiflora</i>	3-6 On fence	Fast	Large	S	High	Medium	Nutrient deficiencies	Hedge Leaves&Flowers
Snowbush	<i>Breynia disticha</i>	2.5-5	Slow	Small	S	Medium	Low	Caterpillars ; chili thrips	Hedge1 Leaves Hedge2
Star jasmine/ Shining jasmine	<i>Jasminum nitidum</i>	2.5-6	Fast	Small	S	Medium	Medium	Scales; whiteflies	Hedge1 Leaves AForm Flowers
Surinam cherry	<i>Eugenia uniflora</i>	4-8	Fast	Small	S	Medium	Medium	Invasive; scales	Hedge1 Leaves Hedge2 AForm

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Common Name	Botanical Name	Typical Height (ft.)	Hedge Formation	Leaf Size	Growing Zone	Drought Tolerance	Salt Tolerance	Major Problems	Photos
Texas sage	<i>Leucophyllum frutescens</i>	2-5	Slow	Petite	S, C, N	High	Medium	None	Hedge1 Leaves Hedge2 Flowers
Thryallis	<i>Galphimia gracilis</i>	3-5	Moderate	Small	S	Medium	Medium	None	Hedge Inflorescence
Thunbergia/ King's Mantle	<i>Thunbergia erecta</i>	3-6	Moderate	Small	S	Low	Medium	None	Hedge Leaves&Flowers
Viburnum, Awabuki /Mirrow leaf Viburnum	<i>Viburnum odoratissimum</i> var. <i>awabuki</i>	4-14	Fast	Large	S, C, N	Medium, but very low at planting	Low	Aphids; whiteflies; downy mildew	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves
Viburnum – Sweet	<i>Viburnum odoratissimum</i>	4-10	Fast	Medium	S, C, N	Medium	Low	Aphids; scales; mites; fungal blight	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves Inflorescence
Viburnum- Sandankwa	<i>Viburnum suspensum</i>	3-6	Slow	Medium	S, C, N	Medium	Low	Scales; whiteflies; nematodes	Hedge1 Hedge2 Leaves

Table 3. Hard to find Plants

Native Species	Introduced Species
Coffee, Bahamas	Bottlebrush
Horsetail	Carissa
	Guava - Cattley
	Guava - Strawberry
	Ixora - Flame of the Woods
	Orange jasmine
	Passion fruit
	Silverthorn

Table 5. “Easiest” and “Best” Blooming Hedges

“Easiest” Natives	“Easiest” Introduced	“Best” Bloomers
Cocoplum ‘Red Tip’	Areca palm	Bougainvillea
Green buttonwood (not silver)	Firebush, dwarf	Confederate jasmine
Florida privet	Golden Dewdrop ‘Gold Mound’	Firebush (native)
Red Cedar	Pitch apple ‘Small Leaf’	Firebush, dwarf (introduced)
‘Schellings’/Yaupon holly	Pittosporum	Ixora - Flame of the Woods
Sea grape	Podocarpus	Ixora ‘Nora Grant’
Simpson’s stopper	Schefflera	Skyvine
Walter’s viburnum	Viburnum - Sweet	Star jasmine

Table 4. Discouraged or Prohibited Plants for South Florida

Invasive Species	Unincooperated Lee County Prohibited Species*
Guava - Cattley	Australian pine**
Ruellia	Brazilian pepper**
Scaevola/Beach Naupaka	Ficus - Indian/Cuban laurel
Senegal date palm	Ficus - Weeping fig
Surinam cherry	

*Prohibited in community landscapes but not on single family properties.

**Noxious plants (weeds) whose propagation, transportation, sale and planting are prohibited by the

Typical Height: Normal expected height when used as a hedge, screen or buffer. A chosen height must be maintained by scheduled pruning of once to five times a year depending on the plant's rate of growth and desired appearance.

Hedge Formation: The time it takes for a row of plants from 3-gallon containers to form a recognizable hedge. Fast, 8 to 20 months; Moderate, 21 to 30 months; Slow, more than 30 months.

Leaf Size: This determines the texture and appearance of the hedge. Petite; Small; Long and thin; Medium; Large; Mammoth

Growing Zone: S, South Florida; C, Central Florida; N, North Florida.

Drought Tolerance: Low = frequent irrigation; Medium = plant can survive on rainfall after establishment; High = require very little water after establishment

Salt Tolerance: The plant's relative tolerance of salt, both from salt sprays and brackish irrigation water. Low; Medium; High

Nutritional Requirement: Low; Medium; High

Major Problems: Problems not limited to those cited. In many cases, for some species, a major problem may never be seen by individual gardeners or landscapers.

AF (Alternate Form): A likely form, shape or size the plant would become if left unpruned. This is not a constant.

References

Broschat, T.K., Merrow, A.W. 2001. Betrock's Reference Guide to Florida Landscape Plants. Betrock Information System

[Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council Invasive \(FLEPPC\) Plant Lists](#)

Useful Links

[South Florida Native Plant Fact Sheets](#)

[Prohibited Plants of Lee County](#)

[Small Trees for South Florida](#)

[Stephen Brown's Web Page](#)

[County Extension Offices](#)

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