

Custom Home

Outdoors

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Warming Trends

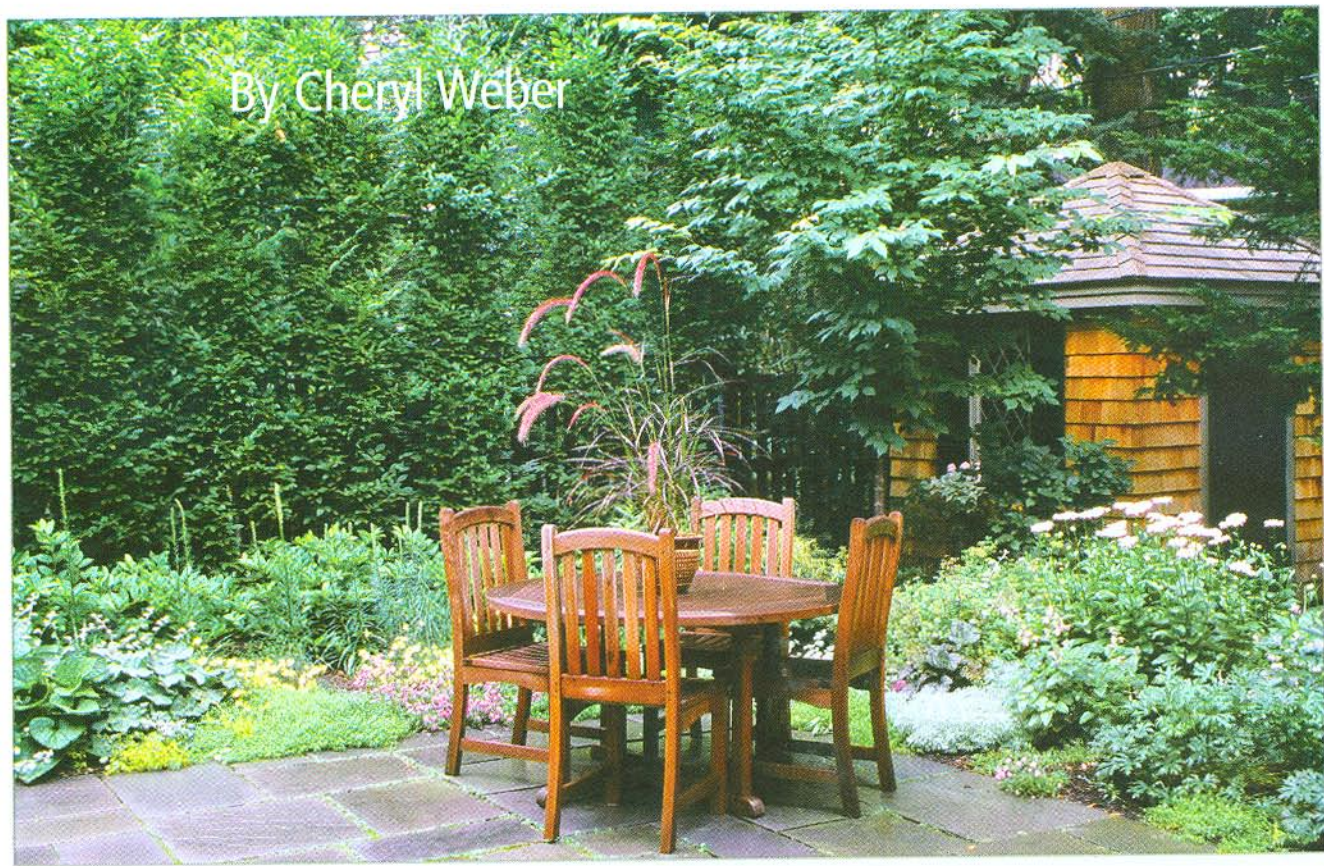
Outdoor living in northern climate sites

Expert Opinion

Curtain Call

Good screens make good neighbors.

By Cheryl Weber



The trick to creating attractive screening is to vary the edges. For this garden a pavilion provides one element of privacy. ■ Landscape contractor: Bill Knight Inc., Hopkinton, Mass.; Designer: Gregory Lombardi Design, Cambridge, Mass.

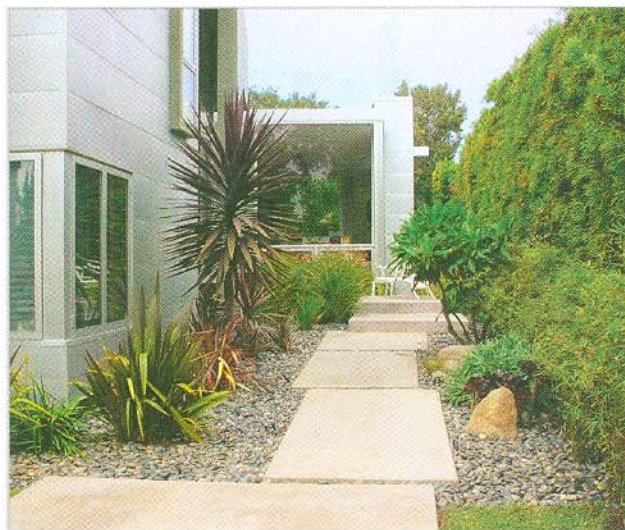
A year ago, landscape architect Gregory Lombardi was called in to fix a botched attempt at screening a suburban property in Wellesley, Mass. The previous owners had remodeled the Colonial house and installed a 6-foot white fence around the entire backyard. The effect, he says, was like being in a cattle pen. It's a classic example of the quick fix gone wrong—creating privacy while leaving the occupants feeling claustrophobic.

As lawn sizes shrink to accommodate larger houses and clients find themselves face to face with the neighbors, the need for attractive screening—

whether for visual or acoustical privacy—has never been greater. The key, though, is to think of a screen as part of a controlled design plan. "It needs to be a compositional piece," says Lombardi of Lombardi Design in Cambridge, Mass. At the Wellesley garden, he convinced the owners to give up 10 feet of lawn at strategic spots to plant mixed evergreens, deciduous trees, and shrubs alongside the fence. The lawn sloped toward the house, and by building retaining walls to create a level play lawn and a patio, he also added visual interest inside the space.

"You don't want a uniform condition the whole way around the property," Lombardi says.

Curtain Call



One way to mix it up is to create a focal point in the foreground. He recently added eye appeal to a compact Cambridge garden by installing an intricately paved terrace, a fountain, and a brightly colored oversize urn. Another

And to vary the barrier itself, he suggests using both plants and built elements. One edge can be green and orderly—a hedge, for example. Another piece can be looser—a scrim of deciduous trees. And a third element might be a jewel-

The screen should fit with a garden's overall scheme. Here a soft, feathery *Bambusa* is combined with sculptural plants for layered privacy. ■

Landscape contractor: Nature Care, Sherman Oaks, Calif.; Designer: Orange Street Studio, Los Angeles.

solution is to frame a “borrowed view” outside the property; instead of being trapped, let the eye wander off somewhere.

like garden pavilion or a pergola with a solid back wall.

Visual and Acoustical Calm.

When it comes to editing views, large properties have the luxury of square footage. Thick evergreen borders won't encroach on precious yard space. But although the options may narrow for small spaces, the possibilities become more interesting. For an elegant look in an urban garden, Lila Fendrick of Lila

Fendrick Landscape Architecture and Garden Design in Chevy Chase, Md., likes to create an aerial hedge with American or European hornbeams, beeches, and Nellie Stevens or Foster hollies. Planted in groups, these trees have dense foliage that can be limbed up to 5 feet and clipped to form a continuous eye-level barrier, and then underplanted with small shrubs. “You can use your land more effectively if screening is