

# NORTHERN

# Gardener

CREATING & CARING FOR YOUR ENVIRONMENT

## Hedge Plants for the Upper Midwest

Many different woody plants can be used to create attractive hedges or screens, adding beauty and privacy to the home landscape. When planting a hedge, plants are spaced closer than normal so that they will grow together densely. Hedges can help define a space in the landscape or create a visual or physical barrier.

Hedges can generally be described as formal or informal. Formal hedges are trimmed or sheared in a geometrical shape so that the foliage forms a smooth plane. These hedges must be pruned one or more times per year. Informal hedges are pruned only minimally and the plants develop their normal growth habit. They may only need light maintenance pruning every two to three years.


The following list includes a number of shrubs and small trees that work well as hedges or screens. Many of these plants can be grown as either formal or informal hedges, but some are best left informal.

### **Amelanchier spp.** **Amelanchier or** **Serviceberry**


There are a number of Amelanchier species and cultivars, and they all have lovely white flowers in the spring, edible purple-black fruit, and good fall color. Shrubby, lower growing cultivars and species such as 'Regent', 'Prince William',

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✓ Both common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*) have been sold extensively over the years, especially for use as hedges. Columnar, or Tallhedge, glossy buckthorn has been very popular because its narrow, upright habit made it useful for screening in fairly narrow planting sites. Unfortunately, all of these buckthorns have proven to be invasive pests. They produce many seedling plants which are often found growing in cultivated landscapes and invading the understory of native woodlands. Buckthorn often crowds out more desirable plants and have become a serious weed problem in both urban and rural areas. Because of its invasiveness, buckthorn is no longer recommended for planting.



**Rhamnus cathartica**



**Rhamnus frangula**



**Buckthorn**

and thicket serviceberry (*A. canadensis*) are most useful for hedges.

### **Aronia melanocarpa** **Black Chokeberry**

This hardy shrub is noted for its profusion of white spring flowers, glossy green leaves, black fruit, and bright red to burgundy fall color. Black Chokeberry tolerates a wide range of soil conditions. The variety *elata* and the cultivar "Autumn Magic" grow smaller than the species.

### **Berberis spp.** **Barberry**

The dense, thorny growth of Barberries make them ideal for use as barriers. There are many cultivars available of Japanese Barberry (*B. thunbergii*) and Hybrid Barberries, including many with red, gold, or purple foliage. Most Barberries have attractive yellow flowers in spring and clusters of bright red fruit which adds color in fall and winter.

