


Natural SECURITY



Natural Security is about providing safe and secure surroundings in an environmentally friendly way, without increasing isolation from each other or our environment.

By use of imaginative design, natural products, planting and low impact structures, boundaries can contribute to the wildlife and character of our home, work and leisure environments.

This leaflet, prepared by Hertfordshire Constabulary working with Hertfordshire County Council, provides suggestions on how boundaries can be enhanced and secured.



HERTFORDSHIRE
CONSTABULARY

Thorn Hedges



In our countryside and on the edge of villages, thorn hedges have been a way of marking boundaries for centuries. Thorn hedges contribute to the much valued appearance of our countryside and provide good habitats for wildlife. Looking after existing thorn hedges and planting new ones can also help to improve the security of your property.

Thorn hedges are usually composed of **hawthorn** (*Crataegus monogyna*) or **blackthorn** (*Prunus spinosa*), and can be grown as a hedge to any height. Both species have flowers in the spring and berries in the autumn, providing food for birds and other wildlife. Other native plants, such as **holly**, **hazel**, **field maple**, **crab apple** and **cherry plum**, can be included in your new hedge or planted in gaps. Their flowers and fruits will increase the visual interest of the hedge and its benefits to wildlife.

SECURITY :

An established and well managed thorn hedge will make an impenetrable barrier

MAINTENANCE :

An established thorn hedge needs trimming once or twice a year

WILDLIFE :

A thorn hedge will provide food and shelter for wildlife

TYPICAL LOCATION :

All properties in the countryside or on the edge of villages

A newly planted thorn hedge may need a temporary or low-key fence behind it to keep a garden secure whilst the hedge is getting established. A chestnut pale fence, or timber post and rail fence, will complement the rural character and retain a traditional feel. A modern chain link fence in a dark colour could also be used as it will be quickly hidden when a traditional hedge grows.

Plants on your Boundary



Existing Hedges

If you already have a thorn hedge on your boundary but it is in poor condition, you can bring it back to life. Some hedges can be cut down to encourage new vigorous shoots to grow from the base; any gaps can then be planted with appropriate species. There are specialists who may be able to 'lay' your hedge; a traditional way of ensuring that a hedge remained impenetrable to animals.

For advice on your hedge contact your local council or countryside ranger, or ask your local garden centre or landscape contractor.

New Hedges

As well as native species in thorn hedges there are many other plants that can be grown as hedges. A well-managed dense hedge will improve your security.

Holly (*Ilex*) is well known for its prickly leaves.

There are many varieties to choose from and most have berries.

Firethorn (*Pyracantha*) is an evergreen thorny shrub with flowers and berries. It will grow against north facing walls and as a hedge.

Berberis can be either evergreen or deciduous.

Most Berberis species have thorns.

MAINTENANCE :

Regular clipping will increase the density of your hedge. Avoid planting a hedge that will grow too tall as it will require extra maintenance and can become a nuisance to your neighbours.

Climbers

Climbing plants are useful where there is little space. They can improve the appearance of unattractive boundaries and bring benefits to wildlife. If thorny, they will improve your security.

Roses (*Rosa*) Climbing roses can be planted on any fence. Other roses can be grown as hedges or bushes.

Ivy (*Hedera*) provides evergreen all-year round cover, it has flowers and berries loved by insects and birds.

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) can be recognised by its sweet scent. It has flowers and berries and provides dense cover.

Clematis are well known for their beautiful flowers. The native Clematis (Traveller's Joy) is also beneficial to wildlife.

Timber Fences



Back gardens need to be secure and a timber fence is often the first choice for householders in towns. When adjacent to open land or footpaths, the height of the fence can be increased by adding trellis to the top. Growing thorny or prickly climbers, such as roses, along the trellis, will improve security as well as enhancing the appearance of the fence.

Hit and miss fences are a secure alternative to a **solid timber fence** and glimpses of planting through the fence can create an attractive appearance from public areas. The front page of this leaflet shows hit and miss fences, with wisteria, and shrub planting. **Post and rail** fences, or **hurdles** made from hazel or willow are other options for a timber fence.

Thorny or prickly plants grown against a timber fence can improve security, protect the fence and deter graffiti or other vandalism.

SECURITY

Arris rails should be on the inside of the fence - your garden side

MAINTENANCE

Correctly treated timber should not require further treatment.

WILDLIFE

To be beneficial to wildlife suitable plants must be grown alongside a fence

TYPICAL LOCATION

Gardens in towns and larger villages

When choosing your timber fence ask for wood with the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) mark. This confirms that the timber comes from a sustainable source.

Gravel boards along the bottom of a fence can extend its life.

Always choose timber that has been treated to British Standard, BS 8417:2003: Preservation of Timber specification.

Walls



A boundary wall can be a good means of securing your property; well designed and in the right place walls can enhance our towns. Walls should only be used as boundaries where this is characteristic of the local area, otherwise they can erode rather than enhance the local character.

The style of a new wall should be in character with the locality. Brick types and colours, for example, should match those used for walls or buildings in the local area. Long blank walls facing public spaces, the countryside or footpaths can appear forbidding and should be avoided.

Walls can provide wildlife habitats by supporting mosses, lichens, ferns and other small plants, and by providing cover for insects. Planting adjacent to a wall, or through a trellis attached to a wall, can increase the value of a wall to wildlife and enhance its appearance.

SECURITY

Can be very secure

MAINTENANCE

A new wall will have minimal maintenance requirements

WILDLIFE

Planting against walls, particularly with native species, will increase their benefit to wildlife

TYPICAL LOCATION

Towns where walls are characteristic

Glimpsed views of gardens through railings can contribute to the attractiveness of our towns, but first check the character of any railings in your area. If the style or height of new railings is very different from those in the surrounding properties they will look out of place.

Metal Fences



Welded mesh fencing creates a secure boundary. Using a smaller mesh will increase the security if required. Dark coloured fencing is less visible than a galvanised finish, softens the appearance of metal fencing and makes it easier to see through.

Metal palisade fencing is generally used where a high degree of security is required, but it can create a hostile impression. Other solutions should be considered where a boundary is adjacent to a well-used public space, or can be seen by lots of people. If there is no alternative to a metal palisade fence, the appearance of the fence can be softened by adjacent planting.

A thorn hedge, trees or shrubs planted alongside a metal fence will improve its appearance and encourage wildlife. If you are short on space, thorny climbers, such as roses, need little room and are good for wildlife throughout the year. Ivy is an excellent evergreen climber but can get heavy and weigh down less robust fences.

SECURITY

The level of security required can be achieved through mesh size

MAINTENANCE

A metal fence will have minimal maintenance requirements

TYPICAL LOCATION

Commercial properties, schools and institutions

Special Situations



Schools

Security is very important for schools but just as important is creating an attractive, welcoming environment for pupils. In the countryside or on the edge of villages, thorn hedges are easily planted along welded mesh fences. Planting occasional groups of trees can help to break up the rather forbidding effect of a long fence.

Open Plan Boundaries

Boundaries do not always have to be physical or defensive structures; an imaginative open plan approach can also work. Well designed planting schemes, (for example with roses), rockeries, water features (such as a pond) or even a change from short to long grass can define a boundary and imply privacy. Trespassers can easily be seen and illegal behaviour made more difficult.

Planning Requirements

You may need planning permission if your boundary wall or fence is over 2m (6'6") high. If your boundary is adjacent to a public road anything over 1m (3'3") may need planning permission.

If you live in a Listed Building or in a Conservation Area you will need consent for any changes you want to make to your boundaries.

Always check with your local planning department if you are unsure whether you require planning permission.

British Standards

All fences should be erected in accordance with **British Standard 1722 (2006): Fences**. Parts 1 and 13 (chain link); Part 2 (strained wire and wire mesh); Part 4 (chestnut pale); Part 5 (close-boarded and wooden palisade); Part 7 (wooden post and rail); Parts 8 and 9 (mild steel); Parts 10 and 14 (welded mesh); Part 11 (wood panel); Part 12 (metal pale).

Three Golden Principles

Appearance

The most attractive boundaries are those that reflect the natural environment and character of their local surroundings and are appropriately maintained. Remember your boundaries are part of the townscape or landscape for many people, and for many years to come.

Wildlife

Choosing the right plants for your boundaries and looking after existing ones will benefit wildlife. The flowers, fruits and leaves of native plants are a source of food for birds, small mammals and invertebrates. The plants themselves provide protective cover for small animals and sites for nests. Boundary planting and good management of hedgerows, shrubs and other plants can help to create green corridors for wildlife in towns and the countryside.

Security

Boundaries around properties should be well defined to help show the difference between public and private space, giving a feeling of ownership, influence and control over the property. In some situations it is helpful if casual passers-by can overlook the front of your property. The use of thorny and prickly plants, clipped or pruned to increase their density, can also improve your security.

Finally, take time to look at the boundaries around you and chat to your neighbours to find out what best suits your location and your needs.

Discover how using the right plants can benefit wildlife and improve your safety and security.

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