

# Hedge or Screen Plants for Arkansas

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Historically, the two most common landscape plants used for hedge or screen purposes in Arkansas would be redbtip photinia (*Photinia x fraseri*) or Leyland cypress (*X Cupressocyparis leylandii*). While both of these plants are superb hedge or screen plants, both candidates are in trouble due to looming disease problems. In the case of redbtip, the fungal problem is *Entomosporium* leaf spot (FSA6112, *Leaf Spot of Redtip Photinia*, [http://www.uaex.edu/Other\\_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-6112.pdf](http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-6112.pdf)). In some cases, this disease can be so serious in

Arkansas that a hedge will be leafless by June. Gardeners in states west and south of Arkansas often have less of a problem with this serious disease. The ever popular Leyland cypress has its own fungal problems (*Seiridium* and *Botryosphaeria* cankers) that make its future equally perilous.

Suggesting alternatives is no short order, and it would be misleading to assume that cookie-cutter options lie in wait. However, there are a number of plants that fit the mold fairly well (Table 1).

**Table 1. Alternative Hedge/Screen Options for Redtip Photinia and Leyland Cypress**

Genus	Common Name	USDA Cold Hardiness Zone <sup>2</sup>	Growth Rate	Height x Width
<b>Broadleaf Evergreens</b>				
<i>Ilex x koehneana</i>	Koehne Holly	(6b)7-9	Fast	20' x 12'
<i>Ilex opaca</i>	American Holly	5-9	Medium	35' x 15'
<i>Ilex x Oakleaf</i> <sup>TM</sup> and <i>Dixie Dream</i> <sup>TM</sup>	Holly	6-9	Medium to fast	14' x 8'
<i>Ilex x 'Nellie R. Stevens'</i>	Nellie Stevens Holly	6-9	Fast	18' x 12'
<i>Ilex cornuta 'Burfordii'</i>	Burford Chinese Holly	6-9	Fast	18' x 15'
<i>Ilex x attenuata 'Fosteri'</i>	Foster Holly	6-9	Medium	25' x 10'
<i>Ilex x 'Emily Bruner'</i>	Emily Bruner Holly	7-9	Fast	18' x 10'
<i>Illicium parviflorum</i>	Small Flowered Anise-tree	7-9	Medium	10' x 7'
<i>Prunus caroliniana</i>	Carolina Cherrylaurel	7-10	Medium	15' x 12'
<i>Ternstroemia gymnanthera</i>	Japanese Ternstroemia	7-9	Slow to medium	9' x 9'
<i>Elaeagnus x ebbingei</i>	Elaeagnus	6-9	Very fast	15' x 15'
<i>Photinia serrulata</i>	Chinese Photinia	6-9	Very fast	20' x 20'
<i>Myrica cerifera</i>	Southern Waxmyrtle	7-11	Medium to fast	12' x 12'
<i>Michelia skinneriana</i>	Banana-shrub	7-9	Medium to fast	8' x 8'
<b>Needle Evergreens</b>				
<i>Thuja occidentalis 'Emerald'</i>	Eastern Arborvitae	4-8	Slow to medium	15' x 5'
<i>Platyclusus orientalis</i>	Oriental Arborvitae	6-9	Medium	variable
<i>Thuja x 'Green Giant'</i>	Arborvitae	6-9	Very fast	30' x 8'
<i>Cryptomeria japonica</i>	Japanese Cryptomeria	5-8	Medium to fast	35' x 15'
<i>Cupressus arizonica</i>	Arizona Cypress	6-9	Very fast	35' x 15'
<i>Chamaecyparis thyoides 'Rachel'/'Emily'</i>	Atlantic Whitecedar	4-9	Fast	25' x 12'
<b>Miscellaneous Suggestions</b>				
<i>Osmanthus heterophyllus</i>	Holly Osmanthus	6-9	Slow to medium	12' x 12'
<i>Viburnum awabuki 'Chindo'</i>	Viburnum	7-9	Medium to fast	15' x 5'

<sup>2</sup>Cold hardiness zone 6b equates to Fayetteville, zone 7 to Little Rock and zone 8 to Hope, Arkansas.

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## Broadleaf Evergreens

### *Ilex* – Hollies

What better genus to look for broadleaf evergreen options than the hollies. Other holly species such as Chinese holly (*Ilex cornuta*), Japanese holly (*I. crenata*) and yaupon holly (*I. vomitoria*) already serve as a backbone plant in most Arkansas landscapes. One major cultural consideration needs to be discussed. Most of the evergreen hollies are intolerant of poorly drained or heavy soils. If your soil fits this bill, consider another plant option or amend the soil appropriately. Remember that most hollies are either male or female plants; therefore, you must purchase a female selection if you want the colorful fruits. The major exceptions to this are 'Nellie R. Stevens' and 'Burfordii,' both of which set fruit without pollination.

### *Ilex x koehneana* – Koehne Holly

While rare in the trade, this group of hybrid hollies would make an exceptional screening plant. The foliage is typically a very dark green, and the edge of the leaf is lined with distinctive teeth (serration). A number of worthy cultivars include 'Hohman,' 'Wirt L. Winn' and 'Martha Berry.'



Koehne Holly

### *Ilex opaca* (cultivars) – American Holly

For those individuals who favor using more native plants, the American holly provides a good option. Leaf color on American holly tends to be a lighter green compared to Chinese holly and Koehne holly. Several good selections are available including 'Cardinal,' 'Merry Christmas' and 'Greenleaf.'

### *Ilex x Oakleaf*<sup>™</sup> and Dixie Dream<sup>™</sup>

Plant Development Services in Loxley, Alabama, has introduced two series of hollies that offer several good options for hedge or screen purposes. Oakland<sup>™</sup>, Oakleaf<sup>™</sup> and Liberty<sup>™</sup> from the Red Holly series and Dixie Star<sup>™</sup>, Dixie Flame<sup>™</sup> and Dixie Dream<sup>™</sup> from the Dixie Holly series would be good candidates for screen plants. The Red Holly series are seedling selections from the popular 'Mary Nell' holly. The University of Arkansas Plant Evaluation Program evaluated Oakleaf<sup>™</sup> and Dixie Dream<sup>™</sup>, and both performed very well statewide. Oakleaf<sup>™</sup> holds a tight pyramidal shape with absolutely no pruning. The leaves, which have a sharply serrated margin, hold a clean, deep green year-round. Dixie Dream<sup>™</sup> is very similar in texture and style to Foster holly and has a nice red fruit display.



Oakleaf<sup>™</sup>



American Holly



Dixie Dream<sup>™</sup>

### *Ilex* x 'Nellie R. Stevens'

'Nellie R. Stevens' is hard to beat for hedge or screen purposes. Nellie is a large broadleaf evergreen with a pyramidal shape that can reach 20 feet. This holly is interesting in that it will set fruit without pollination.



Nellie R. Stevens

### *Ilex cornuta* 'Burfordii' – Burford Chinese Holly

Like 'Nellie R. Stevens,' this is a standard in the retail trade. It can be easily separated from 'Nellie' by looking at the number of sharp teeth on the leaf margin. 'Burfordii' typically has fewer teeth. Burford holly will tend to be more rounded than some other hollies.



Burford Chinese Holly

### *Ilex* x *attenuata* 'Fosteri' – Foster Holly

Foster holly is probably the most common cone-shaped holly used in foundation plantings across Arkansas. It is typically not used as a hedge plant

because of the pyramidal shape and lack of foliage density; however, it should not be overlooked for a soft-textured upright hedge.



Foster holly

### *Ilex* x 'Emily Bruner' – Emily Bruner Holly

This is a dense, pyramidal female clone with red fruits, and it is probably best suited to central and southern Arkansas.



Emily Bruner holly

### *Illicium* – Anise-tree

There are several good options when we mention *Illicium*. While they may not carry the same size and stature as redtip, they are still a worthy broadleaf evergreen option for a medium hedge. The University of Arkansas Plant Evaluation Program evaluated the

small anise-tree (*I. parviflorum*), and the results were not stellar. Although trial plants survived in full sun, partial shade sites would be recommended in Arkansas. All plants died at the Fayetteville (zone 6b) test site during the winter of 2000-01. The statewide results are surprising since small anise-tree is a staple, medium-sized hedge in the Atlanta, Georgia market. Anise-tree is easy to identify by the aromatic smell of leaves when crushed.



Anise-tree

### ***Prunus caroliniana* – Carolina Cherrylaurel**

Many Arkansas gardeners are familiar with this species as a native plant or large, almost tree-like broadleaf evergreen in older landscapes. Nurseries have introduced several improved selections including Bright 'N Tight™ ('Monus') from Monrovia Nursery and Cherry Ruffles™ from Flowerwood Nursery. The 1/3-inch diameter black fruits are readily spread by birds.



Carolina Cherrylaurel

### ***Ternstroemia gymnanthera* – Japanese Ternstroemia**

Most retailers still sell this plant under the genus name *Cleyera*. In the past, *Ternstroemia* was primarily grown from seed, which resulted in a great deal of variation in habit that was not good for formal

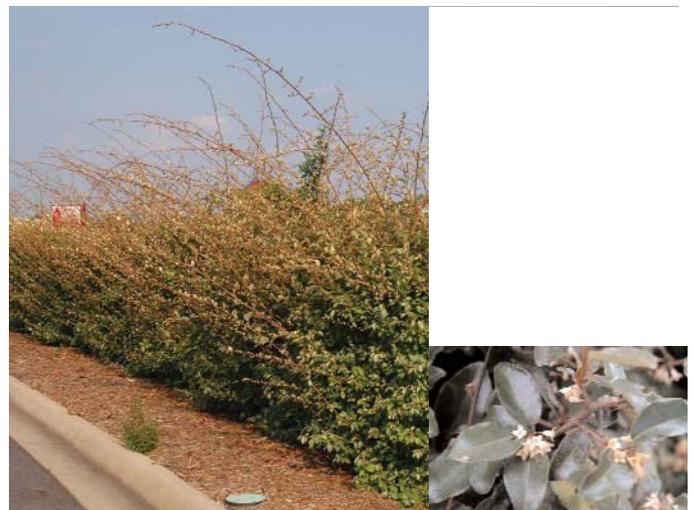
hedges. Today several nurseries are selecting and propagating improved selections from cuttings. Some of these new selections include LeAnn™, Regal™ and Bronze Beauty™. The new foliage on many of these is an attractive deep red, somewhat reminiscent of redbtip photinia. Most of these tend to be rounder than redbtip photinia with a mature size of 9' tall by 9' wide. The growth rate of *Ternstroemia* will not be as fast as some other hedge options.



Japanese Ternstroemia

### ***Elaeagnus x ebbingei***

This plant and the thorny elaeagnus (*Elaeagnus pungens*) are almost interchangeable. They are **very** fast-growing plants that tolerate a range of soil types. The growth habit may be a concern to some. In the spring, this shrub throws off very aggressive, unbranched stems all over the place that require frequent pruning attention. This plant is becoming a standard in most strip mall plantings. Unless pruned otherwise, this will be a large (15' x 15'), rounded shrub. One benefit of this plant is the extremely (equivalent to gardenia) fragrant flowers that develop in late fall/early winter.



Elaeagnus

### ***Photinia serrulata* – Chinese Photinia**

This is actually one of the parents of the redbtip hybrid. This plant is seen all over central and south Arkansas, but it is restricted to older landscapes. It is suggested that when redbtip hit the market in the late '50s, people stopped purchasing the larger Chinese photinia. Chinese photinia is clearly a much larger (20' x 20') and more rounded plant than redbtip. A number of people will show disfavor for this plant since the flowers have an unpleasant odor. The flower display is exceptional in late March/early April followed by a nice display of dull red fruits born in large clusters. Emerging foliage is more of a muted red in contrast to the striking red of redbtip. Leaf spot fungus is not as serious on this plant. This may be difficult to find in the retail trade. The Japanese photinia (*P. glabra*) would also be a good plant to consider but may be just as susceptible to leafspot as redbtip.



Chinese photinia

candle fragrance. *Myrica pensylvanica*, the northern bayberry, may be a possible hedge suggestion for the northwest corner of Arkansas.

### ***Michelia skinneriana* – Banana-shrub**

At some point in the near future, this will be renamed *Magnolia skinneriana*. The reason for suggesting this plant is based on the very favorable performance in the University of Arkansas Plant Evaluation Program. While not cold hardy in northwest Arkansas, this Michelia has been a top performer at Little Rock and Hope. Foliage is a very clean, medium green. Plants have a unique cream-white flower that is mostly hidden by the evergreen foliage. Flowers with a sweet banana fragrance appear in early April and then sporadically through October. This plant would lend itself to a medium-sized hedge.



Banana-shrub



Southern waxmyrtle

### ***Myrica cerifera* – Southern Waxmyrtle**

This is the southern version of the northern bayberry (*M. pensylvanica*). If you start in central Arkansas and drive south into the tip of Florida, you will see the southern waxmyrtle more frequently the further south you drive. Central Arkansas should be its northern limit, and in years with severe winters, it may be set back in that zone. Texture on this plant is very fine due to thin twigs and narrow leaves. Crush the leaves and you will smell the classic bayberry

### **Needle Evergreens**

#### ***Thuja occidentalis* 'Emerald'/'Smaragd' – Eastern Arborvitae**

This needle evergreen is the most common hedge or screen plant in the Pacific Northwest and Midwest. It is known for its beautiful emerald green color and tight, upright growth habit. Because it lacks heat tolerance, it is a better choice in northwest Arkansas than in central and south Arkansas. Eastern arborvitae is more tolerant of shade than many other needle evergreens.



Eastern arborvitae

***Platyclusus orientalis* (formerly *Thuja orientalis*) – Western Arborvitae**

This is essentially the southern version of the eastern arborvitae. The typical form is a large, rounded shrub, but specific upright cultivars are available at your local garden center.



Western arborvitae

***Thuja x 'Green Giant' – Arborvitae***

Introduced to the retail trade in the early 2000s, this is essentially an eastern arborvitae on steroids! This strongly pyramidal evergreen grows very fast. Once established, this plant should grow at least 2' per year. Mail-order catalogs suggest 'Green Giant' is deer resistant. Because it is an arborvitae, people always question whether it is susceptible to attack by bagworms. Based on results from the University of Arkansas, this plant is very susceptible to that insect. The trial also indicates that this plant is not tolerant of very wet soils. Preferred exposure would be full sun to partial shade. 'Green Giant' grows so fast that the central leader does not fill-in until the following year. 'Green Giant' may also be sold in the trade as 'Giganteoides' or 'Spring Grove.'



Green Giant

***Cryptomeria japonica* – Japanese Cryptomeria**

This needle evergreen, while used on a limited basis in Arkansas, seems to perform fairly well. Growth rate is medium, and the cone-shaped plant should reach 30' to 40' tall. The texture of the plant lends itself to Oriental gardens. 'Yoshino' is likely the most common selection in the trade. Other full-size forms include 'Elegans,' 'Ben Franklin' and 'Viridis.'



Japanese cryptomeria

***Cupressus arizonica* – Arizona Cypress**

This appears to be an excellent screen plant for full sun locations. While needle color on the species is a gray-green, most cultivars have an eye-catching silver-blue/powder blue color. The blue hue is even better than what you get with the blue atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'). Some of the blue foliage forms include 'Blue Ice,' 'Blue Pyramid,' 'Carolina Sapphire' and 'Silver Smoke.' 'Blue Ice' and 'Blue Pyramid' may have a much tighter pyramidal habit than 'Carolina Sapphire.' 'Carolina Sapphire' is a popular cut Christmas tree in Arkansas.



Arizona cypress

This needle evergreen grows faster than Leyland cypress. In general, the plant is free of serious insect and disease problems. Bagworms will be more common on 'Carolina Sapphire' than 'Blue Ice.'

The growth habit of young plants is very similar to our native eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*). Because needles are not born in flat sprays like Leyland cypress, the overall texture is very soft. Plants are clearly taller than they are wide and pyramidal in shape. As the plant matures, it will open up. Very old specimens almost have a weeping, graceful, pyramidal appearance. Arizona cypress thrives on full sun, exposed situations. While constant moisture might promote growth, an established plant should tolerate fairly dry conditions.

***Chamaecyparis thyoides* 'Emily' (Webb #1) and 'Rachel' (Webb #2) – Atlantic Whitecedar**

This plant performed exceptionally well in the University Plant Evaluation Program. The plant looks very much like the native eastern redcedar. The species is kind of unique in that it tolerates wet, boggy sites in the wild. It is a very fast-growing plant and appears to be not quite as narrow as 'Green Giant' arborvitae.



Atlantic whitecedar

**Other Miscellaneous Suggestions**

**Osmanthus**

Certainly this genus is a worthy suggestion for a great hedge or screen plant, even though most species tend to be a bit more rounded and much slower-growing than redbtip photinia. *Osmanthus* is known for extremely fragrant flowers. The *Osmanthus* seem to get no respect because they are easily confused with other genera. The little-used Devilwood (*O. americanus*) could fool many as a privet (*Ligustrum*) since the leaf margin lacks serration. Others like *O. x fortunei* (*O. heterophyllus* x *O. fragrans*) and *O. heterophyllus* look like hollies because of the serrated leaf margins. There is an easy way to

distinguish *Osmanthus* from hollies: leaf arrangement on *Osmanthus* is opposite and alternate on *Ilex*.



Osmanthus

***Viburnum awabuki* 'Chindo'**

While this broadleaf evergreen is relatively unknown in Arkansas, it is hugely popular as a hedge/screen plant in the southeast. It has very dark green almost waxed leaves. Based on University Plant Evaluation Program results and field observations, this broadleaf evergreen does not appear iron-clad in central and south Arkansas. The plant is not cold hardy in northwest Arkansas.



Chindo viburnum

Two miscellaneous options for the north-west corner of Arkansas include the yew and hemlock. Both of these would need to be situated in the shade. Suitable upright selections of the Japanese yew (*Taxus cuspidata*) include 'Capitata' and 'Pyramidalis.' Commonly used as a sheared hedge in the northeastern United States, the eastern



Japanese yew

hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) and Carolina hemlock (*T. caroliniana*) are soft-textured options for shaded locations. If left unpruned, hemlock will be a medium-sized (or larger) tree to 50'.



**Eastern hemlock**

In southern Arkansas, other options include another broadleaf evergreen *Viburnum* and a needle-looking evergreen. *Viburnum odoratissimum* (no common name) is a large (12' x 12'), coarse-textured broadleaf evergreen. It will grow well in full or partial sun situations. The Chinese podocarpus (*Podocarpus macrophyllus*) with its needle-like foliage is gaining in popularity in south Arkansas. The foliage looks very much like a yew. If you plan to use this plant for hedge or screen purposes, make sure you do not select one of the bushy or spreading selections. Exposure should be full to partial sun.



***Viburnum odoratissimum***



**Chinese podocarpus**

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