

How to Construct a Living Fence



WHAT IS IT?

A living fence uses trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, and other plants as part of the fence. In addition to forming a physical barrier around the garden space, these plants can provide shade and wind protection for the garden and food, fodder, fiber, and green manure for the household.

WHY DO WE DO IT?

Protection is one of the Minimum Standards for a Permagarden. Planting the fence line with several layers of plants that grow to different heights will make access to the garden more difficult for unwanted visitors, such as grazing animals. Intensively packing the fence with a wide variety of plantings can also provide additional resources to the household while taking advantage of a space that is generally not used.



Method

STEP 1

Mark where the fence will be constructed with a stick. Be sure to leave enough room inside the fence to navigate around the garden beds, kneel down for harvesting and weeding, and carry tools in and out of the garden.

STEP 2

Determine where the access gate will be along the fence line and mark it clearly.

STEP 3

Along the fence line, plant mature seedlings or cuttings of trees 1 m apart.

STEP 4

In the space between the trees, plant shrubs such as lantana or a spiky sisal plant.

STEP 5

In a line outside of the trees and shrubs, plant Vetiver grass.

STEP 6

Use thorny branches or strips of bamboo to help close off the garden until the trees and shrubs mature.

STEP 7

Allow the trees to grow to a height of 2 m before pruning to establish a strong root system. Then cut the trunk at 2 m height, using the branches and leaves as kindling or biochar and the leaves as green manure, composting material, or fodder for animals.

HOW TO

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STEP 8

As the tree continues to grow from the cut top, new stems and branches will emerge and can be harvested.

STEP 9

Prune and train the side branches over time to make the fence more dense and secure. Meanwhile, prune and shape the grasses and shrubs as they mature to fill in the gaps.

Plant the Fence with a diversity of shrubs, trees and vines to make the fence productive and long lasting.

- *Erythrina*, *Gliricidia*, *Jatropha curcas*, *Moringa oleifera*, or *Moringa stenopetala* can be used as corner posts.
- Plants with stickers or spines can be used for protection.
- Passion fruit, cassava, pigeon pea and fruit trees can be planted for shade and production.
- *Tithonia diversifolia* can be planted as a bush around the fence.



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