



Loropetalum chinensis
Plum Delight®



Juniperus chinensis
'Fairview'

Evergreen
**Hedge or
Screen Plants
for Arkansas**



Ilex crenata
'Sky Pencil'



Magnolia grandiflora
'Bracken's Browns Beauty'



Elaeagnus xebbingei



Thuja occidentalis

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Hedge or Screen Plants for Arkansas

Historically, the two most common landscape plants used for hedge or screen purposes in Arkansas would be redbtip photinia (*Photinia xfraseri*) or Leyland cypress (*XCupressocyparis leylandii*). While both of these plants are superb hedge or screen plants, both candidates are in decline due to disease problems. In the case of redbtip, the fungal problem is *Entomosporium* leaf spot (FSA6112, *Leaf Spot of Redtip Photinia*, at www.uaex.edu). In some cases, this disease can be so serious in Arkansas that a hedge will be leafless in 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 (FSA7536, *Branch Canker and Dieback of Leyland Cypress*, at www.uaex.edu).

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 (see the table).

Alternative Hedge/Screen Options for Redtip Photinia and Leyland Cypress

Genus	Common Name	USDA Cold Hardiness Zone ²	Growth Rate	Height × Width
Broadleaf Evergreens				
<i>Elaeagnus xebbingei</i>	Elaeagnus	6-9	Very fast	15' × 15'
<i>Ilex cornuta</i> 'Burfordii'	Burford Chinese Holly	6-9	Fast	18' × 15'
<i>Ilex crenata</i> 'Sky Pencil' or 'Steeds'	Japanese Holly	6-8	Medium	8' × 15'
<i>Ilex opaca</i>	American Holly	5-9	Medium	35' × 15'
<i>Ilex xattenuata</i> 'Fosteri'	Foster Holly	6-9	Medium	25' × 10'
<i>Ilex x'Emily Bruner'</i>	Emily Bruner Holly	7-9	Fast	18' × 10'
<i>Ilex xkoehneana</i>	Koehne Holly	(6b)7-9	Medium	20' × 12'
<i>Ilex x'Nellie R. Stevens'</i>	Nellie Stevens Holly	6-9	Fast	18' × 12'
<i>Ilex xOakland™</i>	Holly	6-9	Medium	14' × 8'
<i>Illicium parviflorum</i>	Small Flowered Anise-tree	7-9	Medium	10' × 7'
<i>Ligustrum japonicum</i>	Japanese Privet Waxleaf Privet	7-9	Medium-fast	12' × 12'
<i>Loropetalum chinense var. rubrum</i>	Chinese Fringeflower	7-9	Fast	10' × 10'
<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Southern Magnolia	6-10	Medium-fast	30' × 10'

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

Alternative Hedge/Screen Options for Redtip Photinia and Leyland Cypress

Genus	Common Name	USDA Cold Hardiness Zone ^Z	Growth Rate	Height × Width
Broadleaf Evergreens (cont.)				
<i>Magnolia virginiana</i> 'Green Shadow' or 'Willowleaf Bay'	Sweetbay Magnolia	6-9	Medium	25' × 12'
<i>Michelia skinneriana</i>	Banana-Shrub	7-9	Medium to fast	8' × 8'
<i>Myrica cerifera</i>	Southern Waxmyrtle	7-11	Medium to fast	12' × 12'
<i>Osmanthus</i>	Osmanthus	6b-9	Slow to medium	12' × 12'
<i>Photinia serrulata</i>	Chinese Photinia	6-9	Very fast	20' × 20'
<i>Prunus caroliniana</i>	Carolina Cherrylaurel	7-10	Medium	15' × 12'
<i>Ternstroemia gymnanthera</i>	Japanese Ternstroemia	7-9	Slow to medium	9' × 9'
<i>Viburnum awabuki</i> 'Chindo'	Viburnum	7-9 (south only)	Medium to fast	15' × 5'
<i>Viburnum odoratissimum</i>	Viburnum	8-10 (south only)	Fast	12' × 12'
Needle-Like Evergreens				
<i>Chamaecyparis thyoides</i> 'Rachel' or 'Emily'	Atlantic Whitecedar	4-9	Fast	25' × 12'
<i>Cryptomeria japonica</i>	Japanese Cryptomeria	5-8	Medium to fast	35' × 15'
<i>Cupressus arizonica</i> 'Blue Ice'	Arizona Cypress	6-9	Very fast	35' × 15'
<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i> 'Stricta'	Italian Cypress	7-9	Medium	20' × 2'
<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> 'Fairview,' 'Keteleeri' or 'Iowa'	Chinese Juniper	5-9	Fast	12' × 5'
<i>Juniperus virginiana</i> 'Idyllwild,' 'Manhattan Blue' or 'Taylor'	Eastern Redcedar	4-9	Fast	15' × 7'
<i>Platycladus orientalis</i>	Oriental Arborvitae	6-9	Medium	variable
<i>Podocarpus macrophyllus</i>	Chinese Podocarpus	8-9 (south only)	Medium	15' × 7'
<i>Taxus cuspidata</i> 'Capitata' or 'Pyramidalis'	Japanese Yew	4-6 (northwest only)	Medium	12' × 6'
<i>Thuja occidentalis</i> 'Emerald'	Eastern Arborvitae	4-7	Slow to medium	15' × 5'
<i>Thuja</i> x 'Green Giant'	Arborvitae	6-9	Very fast	30' × 8'

^ZCold hardiness zone 6b equates to Fayetteville, zone 7 to Little Rock and zone 8 to Hope, Arkansas.

Broadleaf Evergreens

Elaeagnus xebbingei

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. This plant is becoming a standard in most strip mall plantings. Unless pruned otherwise, this will be a large (15 feet tall by 15 feet wide), rounded shrub. One benefit of this plant is the extremely (equivalent to gardenia) fragrant flowers that develop in late fall.

Elaeagnus xebbingei



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 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 crenata* 'Sky Pencil' – Japanese Holly**

This uniquely shaped Japanese holly was originally discovered in the wild on Mount Daisen in Japan. The plant was given to a group of plant collectors from the U.S in 1985. In 1992 it was distributed by the U.S. National Arboretum. In habit, it is similar to the upright form of Yaupon holly (*I. vomitoria* 'Will Fleming'); however, 'Sky Pencil' splays less. Another cultivar, 'Steeds,' would also be a good choice for hedging. It is noticeably wider than 'Sky Pencil'.

'Sky Pencil' Japanese holly



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

For those individuals who favor using 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'

American holly



Ilex xattenuata '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-shaped female clone with red fruits, and it is probably best suited to central and southern Arkansas.

'Emily Bruner' holly



Ilex xkoehneana – 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.’

‘Martha Berry’ holly



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’ holly



Ilex xOakland™

Plant Development Services in Loxley, Alabama, introduced Oakland™. Oakland™ holds a tight pyramidal shape with absolutely no pruning. The leaves, which have a sharply serrated margin, hold a clean, deep green color year-round.

Oakland™ holly



Illicium – Anise-Tree

There are several good options when we mention *Illicium*. While they may not carry the same size and stature as redbtip, 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 2000-2001. The statewide results are surprising since the small anise-tree is a medium-sized hedge that is a staple in the Atlanta, Georgia market. Anise-tree is easy to identify by the aromatic smell its leaves emit when crushed.

Anise-tree



Ligustrum japonicum – Japanese Privet/Waxleaf Privet

This privet has been available in the trade for many years. The leaves are dark green and appear “waxed.” Some may object to the unpleasant odor of the flowers. Waxleaf privet lends itself to shearing.

Japanese privet



Loropetalum chinense var. *rubrum* – Chinese Fringeflower

Since their introduction to the retail trade in the late 1990s, the purple-leaved forms (var. *rubrum*) of Chinese fringeflower have made a profound impact on our landscapes. Many of the non-dwarf forms (Plum Delight[®], ‘Zhuzhou Fuchsia’ and ‘Blush’) would make an excellent sheared hedge in central and south Arkansas.



Plum Delight[®] Chinese fringeflower

Magnolia grandiflora – Southern Magnolia

Surprisingly, the Southern magnolia makes an excellent large screen. Several cultivars ('Little Gem,' 'D. D. Blanchard,' 'Bracken's Brown Beauty,' 'Alta®' and 'Hasse') have a dense pyramidal form that lends itself well for this landscape purpose.

'D. D. Blanchard' Southern magnolia



Magnolia virginiana – Sweetbay Magnolia

Sweetbay magnolia is an underutilized plant in Arkansas. The challenge when recommending it as a hedge plant is to find forms that have evergreen foliage (leaf retention can vary from deciduous to evergreen) and an upright growth habit. Most plants sold are grown from seed, so they will display variation in plant traits. For hedge or screen use, cultivars such as 'Green Shadow' or 'Willowleaf Bay' are worth the hunt.

Sweetbay magnolia



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 its 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 serving as a medium-sized hedge.

Banana-shrub



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 experience a setback 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 candle fragrance. *Myrica pensylvanica*, the northern bayberry, is a possible hedge suggestion for the northwest corner of Arkansas.

Southern waxmyrtle



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* are 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. xfortunei* (Fortune's osmanthus; *O. heterophyllus* x *O. fragrans*) and *O. heterophyllus* (Holly osmanthus) 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 to *Ilex*.

Osmanthus xfortunei



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 feet tall by 20 feet wide) 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 borne 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 species 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 leaf spot as redbtip.

Chinese photinia



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. 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. Several nurseries select and propagate improved selections from cuttings. Some of these new selections include LeAnn™ and Bronze Beauty™. The new foliage on many of these is an attractive deep red, somewhat reminiscent of redbud photinia. Most of these tend to be rounder than redbud photinia with a mature size of 9 feet tall by 9 feet wide. The growth rate of *Ternstroemia* will not be as fast as some other hedge options.

LeAnn™ Japanese ternstroemia



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 of Arkansas Plant Evaluation Program results and field observations, this broadleaf evergreen is best suited to south Arkansas. The plant is not cold hardy in northwest Arkansas.

'Chindo' viburnum



Viburnum odoratissimum – Viburnum

This broadleaf evergreen viburnum should display some winter injury in central Arkansas; however, due to its very fast growth, viburnum should recover quickly in the spring. Most reliable in south Arkansas.

Viburnum odoratissimum



Needle-Like Evergreens

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

This plant performed exceptionally well in the University of Arkansas Plant Evaluation Program. The plant looks very much like the native eastern redcedar. The species is 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.



'Emily' Atlantic whitecedar

Cryptomeria japonica – Japanese Cryptomeria

This needle-like 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 feet tall. The texture of the plant lends itself to Oriental gardens. 'Yoshino' is likely the most common selection in the trade. Other full-sized 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,' 'Cook's Peak' 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. This needle-like 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 borne 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 in exposed situations. While constant moisture might promote growth, an established plant should tolerate fairly dry conditions. Avoid wet spots.

'Blue Ice'
Arizona cypress



Cupressus sempervirens 'Stricta' – Italian Cypress

While not that common in Arkansas, the extremely columnar growth habit makes this plant easy to identify in the landscape. The Italian cypress is likely best suited to central and southern Arkansas.

Italian cypress



Juniperus chinensis – Chinese Juniper

Chinese junipers range in habit from low, spreading shrubs to large, upright plants. A number of cultivars would be useful as hedge or screen plants. Needle color will vary from a green ('Fairview' and 'Keteleeri') to a blue-green ('Iowa'). Be forewarned, Chinese juniper tends to be susceptible to fungal tip blights (*Phomopsis*, *Kabatina*) in Arkansas.



'Keteleeri'
Chinese juniper

Juniperus virginiana – Eastern Redcedar

Although our native landscape is swarming with Eastern redcedar, this plant is not as common in our retail trade. A number of excellent cultivars ('Idyllwild', 'Manhattan Blue' and 'Taylor') are good choices for a large screen or hedge.



'Manhattan Blue'
Eastern redcedar

Platycladus orientalis (formerly *Thuja orientalis*) – Oriental 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.

Oriental arborvitae



Podocarpus macrophyllus – Chinese Podocarpus

The Chinese podocarpus, with its needle-like foliage, is gaining popularity in south Arkansas. The foliage looks very much like a yew (*Taxus*). If you plan to use this plant for hedge or screen purposes, make sure you select an upright form. Exposure should be full sun to partial sun.

Chinese podocarpus



Taxus cuspidata – Japanese Yew

Upright forms of the Japanese yew are frequently used in the Upper Midwest and the East Coast as hedges. Upright growing cultivars such as ‘Capitata’ and ‘Pyramidalis’ work best for that purpose. Yews are frequently sheared to provide a formal look in the landscape. Japanese yew is best suited for shaded locations in northwest Arkansas. Another option for northwest Arkansas is the Canadian hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*). If left unpruned, hemlock will be a medium-sized tree that may grow to 50 feet.



‘Flushing’ yew



Eastern hemlock

Thuja occidentalis 'Emerald' or 'Smaragd' – Eastern Arborvitae

This needle-like 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-like evergreens.

'Emerald' Eastern 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 feet 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.' The extreme heat in 2012 demonstrated that 'Green Giant' is not as heat tolerant as some evergreens such as Arizona cypress or Eastern redcedar.

'Green Giant' arborvitae



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