

Landscaping Makes Good Neighbours

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Guest Writer

What can upset a good neighbour more than an unkempt yard? A tidy, nicely landscaped yard will say that you care about your home and that you care about your neighbours.

We've all heard the saying that appearances are everything. Well that goes for landscaping too. A well kept landscape says a great deal about the home-owners.

Beautiful gardens will be the envy of the neighbourhood. Your neighbours will be waiting for your invitation to join you for a get-together in your yard. And your immediate neighbours will be proud to have you as their neighbour.

Now if the yard next to you has an eyesore, instead of being obsessed with anger at the abomination that you have to look at every day, give some thought as to how a little landscaping can obscure or hide the mess. A couple of well placed shrubs and bingo! You now have a view that is pleasing to you and no more ill feelings about your neighbour.

We had that exact problem. Our neighbours had a very large mess behind their shed which was quite visible from our workshop patio. I planted some elderberry bushes – both black and common varieties – and we now have a beautiful landscaped wall of elderberries. And to boot I get the occasional elderberry pie! And we still have good neighbours.

The same holds true for your own lot. If you have a rather messy spot in your yard that you can't do anything with, a little landscaping will provide a visual break for your and your neighbours.

If you have a rather obtrusive accessory building – a workshop, garden shed or storage shed etc. – a bit of landscaping can soften the view considerably. Again, we had this problem.

I have a workshop in our back yard that is 20 feet by 40 feet. It is a new good looking building but sheer size makes it overpowering in the yard. We planted lilac bushes on one front corner and hardy kiwi vines on the other corner. From the kiwi vine corner we extended a narrow garden to just beyond the attached patio. The corner plantings softened the corners and size of the shop while the garden gives an added dimension that takes your eye away from the building.

If you have a building – even one of the little [metal garden sheds](#) – that you would like to mask or completely conceal, consider adding landscaping to complete the job.

You have no doubt heard the phrase fences make for good neighbours. Pleasant looking fences are the key here. Chain link fences work well for keeping children and pets safe but some can be less than pleasing to look at. For part of our yard we chose black chain link. Black seems to almost disappear into the landscape making the fence aesthetically pleasing.

For one area we wanted a bit of privacy. For this application we chose an open board fence and planted a variety of vines – both flowering and non-flowering. We chose trumpet vines, clematis, porcelain vine, honeysuckle vine and three varieties of hardy grapes. Now we get a beautiful wall of color and texture as well as our neighbour. (And the grapes are delicious right off the vine!)

Other options for good neighbour fences are of course hedges. Hedges are often used to define property lines. However, remember to trim BOTH sides of your hedge and clean up the debris to keep up good relations with your neighbour. We have a hedge of a variety of shrubs that gives color and fragrance all season long.

The hedge starts with a large shrub rose followed by some trimmed common lilacs. Adjacent to that are some stag horn sumacs. Next a forsythia give some early spring color followed by some cedars. Some multi-colored leafy shrubs flank a large butterfly bush and cedars finish to hedge off.

This hedge runs down the side of our house partially concealing our walkway and side door from the neighbour's side door.

The landscape ideas above are simply what appeals to us. There are many ways to enhance your property and your neighbourly reputation with a little planning and landscaping. Make sure that you are happy with your choice of plants, shrubs and trees. After all it is your yard and your choices reflect your personality.

And oh, did I mention that some well thought-out landscaping can actually increase the value of your property? Now there's a good reason to consider adding some color and greenery to your yard!

Brian A Schmidt is author and publisher of PrefabMetalBuildingKits.com. He lives in a small community in Southwestern Ontario, Canada with his lovely wife Carol of 34 years. They have three fantastic grown children and four wonderful small grandchildren. A construction company owner and long time construction manager including low-rise [residential metal building](#) fabricators, Brian enjoys gardening and woodworking in his backyard workshop.