



The Texas Living Fence™

By **CLAUDIA ALARCON** Photography and landscape palettes courtesy of **THE LOOKOUT DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

“Good fences make good neighbors” is an old adage made famous by Robert Frost’s poem, Mending Wall. But good fences do not have to be ugly fences. Here in Central Texas, a developer has come up with a sustainable fencing solution that will add long-lasting beauty to any backyard.

“The “Texas Living Fence™” is our creative solution to the common wooden plank privacy fence found in almost every community,” says William R. Hinckley, President of The Lookout Development Group. Unlike a wooden fence, the Living Fence gets better with age. “Wooden fences lean, warp, fade, block views and create a boring grid-like street scene. Organic fences look better with age and add seasonal colors to the neighborhood, while still providing privacy and security. Our Living Fence gives homeowners a chance to be creative and give their backyard a ‘personality,’ turning a monotonous stretch of wood into a living, beautiful conversation piece.”

These fences are anchored by a decorative steel picket, followed by a variety of plants especially selected to fit the terrain, soil type, watering needs and customer’s preference and budget. The Lookout Development Group has commissioned a landscape architect to design a series of landscape palettes to assist clients in developing their specific design. Each has its

own benefits; some are easy and inexpensive to install, but may take time to mature and provide complete privacy. Others are more elaborate and higher in price, but can yield more immediate screening results. In The Lookout Development Group’s two newest communities, ClearWater Ranch in Liberty Hill and Esperanza in Boerne, Living Fences are the only type of fence allowed. At Austin’s Crystal Falls they are not required; however, residents have embraced them wholeheartedly.

The admitted downside to a Living Fence is it will require varying degrees of watering and maintenance, depending on each design. Designs in the water-thrifty xeriscape palette need almost no maintenance or watering, while those with flowering plants will require more water and fertilizer. “It’s about finding the best organic palette that will work for the individual,” says Hinckley. “No two fences are exactly alike, and they can change with the season. Whether it’s a simple design with only jasmine, or a more elaborate xeriscape plan consisting of multiple vines, grasses and groundcovers, there is a palette for every level of budget and artistry.”

SOME ADVANTAGES OF LIVING FENCES INCLUDE:

- Seasonal variations ranging from spring flowers to autumn foliage
- Fruit production for household consumption, and to attract pollinators and birds

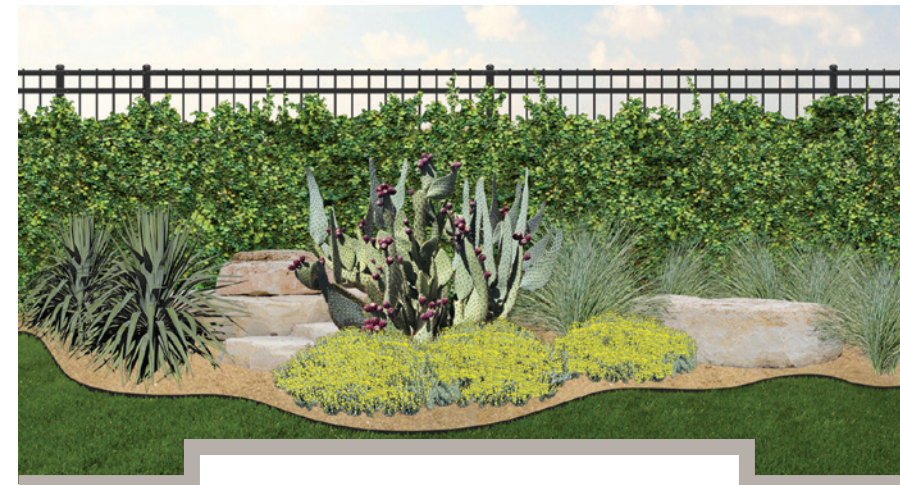
- Provides privacy, wind and noise barrier; wind breaks can save up to 20 percent on heating bills during Texas winters
- Shade trees strategically planted on the west and south sides can cut cooling costs up to 50 percent
- A major component of long-term property values

The cost of installing a Living Fence may be higher at first glance in relation to the standard cedar fences found in most subdivisions. A typical, top-capped cedar fence costs about \$18 per linear foot, compared to a decorative steel picket fence at \$25. This initial investment pays for itself quickly, since the cedar fence will require maintenance and is likely to need replacing every 10 years. The steel pickets require no ongoing maintenance or replacement, and the landscaping component can be accomplished for as little as \$500 for the minimal palette and up to of \$3,000 for more elaborate options.

The Lookout Development Group also uses the Living Fences to revolutionize the way they utilize landscape water while naturally beautifying their communities. “The next step is providing a smarter, economical way to maintain our landscaping,” says Hinckley. “At Esperanza, we’ve laid miles of purple pipe for transporting inexpensive, reclaimed water to every home in our community strictly for landscaping. As a developer in Texas, I am very aware of the current water crisis and I believe reusing water to irrigate lawns and landscape is the right thing to do. It’s about going the extra mile to make our communities economically beautiful. Our homeowners are going to save a ton of money and have verdant, grassy lawns without being embarrassed for watering during times of drought. Plus we are going to save 240 million gallons of potable water each year through the use of reclaimed irrigation water for landscaping. That’s equivalent to 364 Olympic-sized swimming pools! Esperanza residents can “Think purple and keep it green.”

Keep reading for suggested landscape layouts and plant selections.

THE LOOKOUT DEVELOPMENT GROUP
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Xeriscape Palette

Evergreen Climbing Vines

- CF Creeping Fig
- EI English Ivy
- IT Ivy Treebine
- MG Mustang Grape
- GB Greenbriar

Shrubs & Ornamental Grasses

- PT Rosemary
- YH Yaupon Holly
- DYH Dwarf Yaupon Holly
- CE Cotoneaster
- PH Purple Fountain Grass
- MF Mexican Feather Grass
- PG Pampas Grass
- MG Muhly Grass
- DG Dwarf Pampas Grass
- AS Autumn Sage
- IR Iris
- SE Sedum
- SO Sotol
- SE Sensia
- ND Nandina
- YU Yucca

- RY Red Yucca
- PP Prickly Pear Cactus
- GL Giant Liriope
- FF Foxtail Fern
- AG Asparagus Fern
- VB Viburnum
- SP Sago Palm
- SH Sacahuista
- WM Wax Myrtle
- DY Dwarf Yaupon

Groundcovers

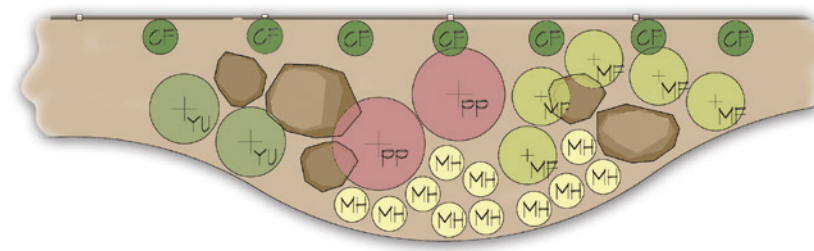
- PT Portulaca
- CL Creeping Lantana
- MH Mexican Heather
- VB Verbena

Pros

- Drought Tolerant
- Low Maintenance
- Low Water Requirements

Cons

- Less color
- Reduced plant selection
- Less plant material



Autumn Sage



Viburnum



Mexican Feather Grass



Lantana



Muhly Grass



Hill Country Palette

Evergreen Climbing Vines

- RV Red Wall Virginia Creeper
- CV Coral Vine
- PF Passion Flower
- CF Creeping Fig
- CH Coral Honeysuckle
- SL Scarlet Leatherflower Clematis
- IT Ivy Treebine
- HI Hibiscus

Shrubs & Ornamental Grasses

- AG Agarita
- AS Autumn Sage
- EP Esperanza
- TS Texas Sage
- SO Sotol
- AV Agave
- YU Yucca
- CE Cotoneaster
- TC Turk's Cap
- PP Prickly Pear Cactus
- PB Plumbago
- MG Muhly Grass

- SH Sacahuista
- CW Coneflower
- BD Blackfoot Daisy
- RM Rosemary
- SV Salvia
- RR Rock Rose
- LE Lamb's Ear
- PF Purple Fountain Grass

Groundcovers

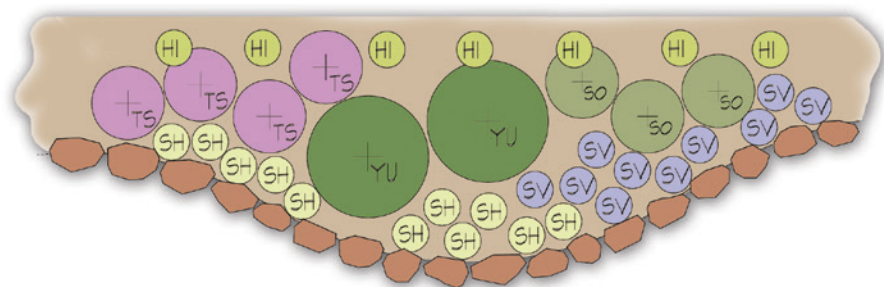
- LN Lantana
- AJ Asiatic Jasmine
- BV Butterfly Vine

Pros

- Disease Resistant
- Drought Tolerant
- Low Maintenance
- "Hill Country" Character

Cons

- Although drought tolerant, requires supplemental water and care to maintain aesthetic
- Not as lush or vibrant as tropical palettes



Texas Sage



Coral Honeysuckle



Plumbago



Rosemary



Prickly Pear Cactus



Flowering Palette

Evergreen Climbing Vines

- RV Potato Vine
- XV Cross Vine
- SJ Star Jasmine
- PJ Pink Jasmine
- CJ Carolina Jessamine
- CR Climbing Rose
- BG Bougainvillea

Shrubs & Ornamental Grasses

- EP Esperanza
- RY Red Yucca
- CS Compact Sensia
- SV Salvia
- PB Plumbago
- CP Coral Plant
- MH Mexican Heather
- CP Crepe Myrtle
- TS Texas Sage

- IR Iris
- AG Agapanthus
- TC Turk's Cap
- IH Indian Hawthorne
- PG Pampas Grass
- MG Muhly Grass
- MF Mexican Feather Grass
- DG Dwarf Pampas Grass
- PF Purple Fountain Grass

Groundcovers

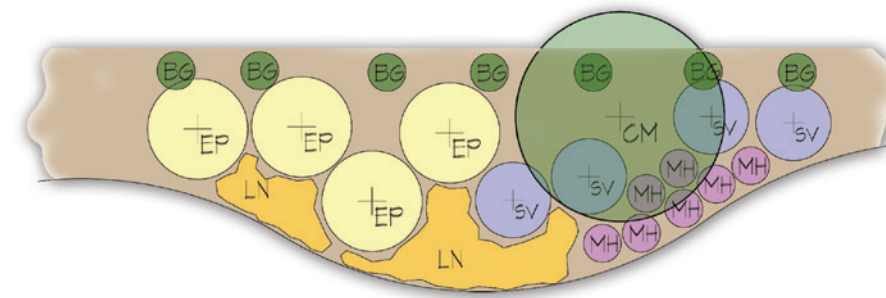
- LN Lantana
- AJ Asiatic Jasmine
- BV Butterfly Vine

Pros

- Seasonal color with lush/vibrant aesthetic

Cons

- Requires more fertilizer, water and maintenance



Salvia



Cross Vine



Agapanthus



Carolina Jessamine



Purple Fountain Grass



Desert Palette

Evergreen Climbing Vines

- HH Hall's Honeysuckle
- CH Cape Honeysuckle
- BG Bougainvillea
- LB Lady Banks Rose
- CC Cat's Claw
- TV Trumpet Vine
- CJ Confederate Jasmine

Shrubs & Ornamental Grasses

- YU Yucca
- RY Red Yucca
- SO Sotol
- SE Sedum
- CT Cactus

- AG Agave
- DY Dwarf Yaupon
- OC Ocotillo

Groundcovers

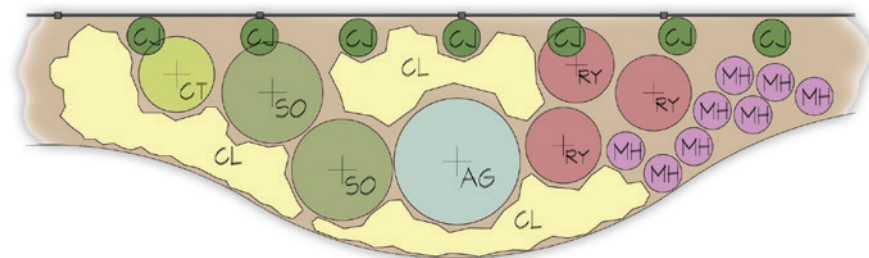
- PT Portulaca
- CL Creeping Lantana
- MH Mexican Heather
- VB Verbena

Pros

- Drought tolerant
- Low maintenance
- Low water requirements
- Minimal fertilization

Cons

- Less color
- Reduced plant selection



Yucca



Agave



Portulaca



Trumpet Vine



Lady Banks Rose