

Plants That Poke & Stick

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Many of us have had the experience of pruning or being around roses and can appreciate not only the beauty of these plants but also the fact that they can grab your attention. I am often perplexed why we put up signs or fences to direct traffic. Most of the time these signs are negative in their meaning. I think that using plants to encourage the path to take or to discourage ones is a much friendlier and visually pleasing method.

We have seen trees and shrubs used as windbreaks and sometimes as a fence, such as a row of lilacs. However I would like to discuss the realm of plants that can be used to keep people and pets on the sidewalk, or from crossing a green median or even the boundary of an open space. These plants are not new to us but they have been used in a traditional landscaping setting and they have functioned quite well in that role.

So as I started out with roses these come in all kinds of sizes and colors. We know that these have thorns which are quite sharp and tend to hang on to whatever comes in contact with them. A row of rugosa roses not only would look good but it will keep most everything from crossing them.

The other obvious plant to consider would be the family of cactus. These also come in many shapes and sizes with the most recognized in Wyoming being the prickly pear. A dense patch of these certainly would discourage most people and animals from crossing, and they do not need to be watered. The other native plant would be the Yucca or Soapweed. These plants not only have sharp points on the end of their leaves but do not need to be watered and offer some green color and texture in the wintertime.

My favorite plant of choice would be the family of Barberries. These plants do quite well in Wyoming, and come in a very wide selection of sizes, shapes and colors. These plants have small leaves and very small needle sharp spines. They grow quite dense and the leaves have a spring summer and fall color scheme typically. They also have very small berries typically a reddish color. This plant can stop everything but a Mac Truck. These plants depending on variety can grow in a wide range of soil types and ph ranges. There is lots of diversity of color, size and they can be pruned if necessary.

Then we can consider the thorny variety of Flowering quinces, Russian Hawthorn, native plums, Buffalo Berry, are some examples of shrubs which have thorns and also produce fruit. The hawthorn, native plum and Buffalo Berry can also be quite drought tolerant.

The other use of these plants would be strategically placed under windows, or in dark corners to discourage the use of these area. I would bet that they would even keep teenagers from sneaking in or out at night? A row of these kind of plants would also work to discourage deer from entering a landscape area. The use of these types of plants not only will add to the diversity and beauty of the landscape, but it can also positively guide people in a natural way and can create a safer more secure areas in our landscape design.

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