

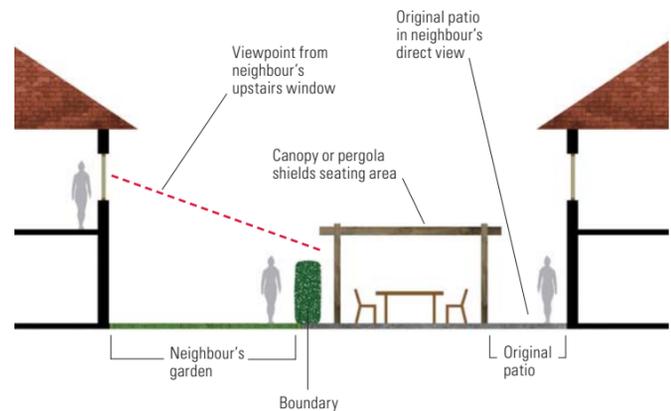
Designing boundaries

Boundaries create a frame for your outdoor space, and are among the most important elements in a garden. They may indicate legal ownership, help to create a microclimate, and provide privacy. Most disputes between neighbours concern

boundaries, and there are many legal regulations governing them, so before making any changes, first check who owns yours. If your neighbours have ownership, consult with them first and discuss any proposed changes to avoid conflict later.

EVALUATING PRIVACY

Before making changes to a boundary, especially if it is to be higher or removed, take time to evaluate the impact of the changes on your own and your neighbours' privacy and light. Check from all doors and windows, in particular upstairs windows, and assess what you can see now and what you will be able to see once the change has been made. Bear in mind that deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter, which will mean more light but a less secluded garden. Also, raising the ground level on your side – with a deck, for example – may intrude upon your neighbours' privacy.



NEIGHBOURS' VIEWS
Carefully chosen structures can create sheltered areas in your garden, reducing the need for high fences or hedging. A patio or seating area can be screened off from your neighbours' view with a canopy or pergola, allowing you to retain your privacy without loss of light to either side.

INCREASING PRIVACY

Increasing the height of boundaries may be illegal, so check with your local planning office first. However, it is possible to increase the privacy within your own garden without altering the boundaries themselves. Strategic positioning of new trees can help, but they will take time to grow. Tall, fast-growing evergreen hedges are now subject to planning control, as well as being high-maintenance, and should be avoided. Consider using trellises, which can support climbing plants and also help to create a sheltered microclimate by allowing air to pass through them (see p.57). Best of all, create spaces in your garden that are not overlooked by your neighbours (see diagram above).



^ PERGOLA COVER
Combined with climbing plants, this is an attractive way to create privacy without blocking light to the rest of your garden.

< SHELTERED PATIO
Well-placed planting forms a secluded site for seating areas – an umbrella can give additional privacy when the table is in use.

> TEMPORARY SCREEN
A makeshift cover like this one creates shelter and privacy wherever it is needed, and can be conveniently packed away.



KEEPING IN WITH NEIGHBOURS

Although we all want some privacy, it is important to establish good relations with neighbours. You could place tall screens around your patio area, and lower fences elsewhere to encourage conversation. When planning your garden, consider anything which could irritate your neighbours, intrude into their space, or block their light. Communal gardens, on the other hand, are designed to encourage friendship and cooperation. They need careful planning, and you should also consider who will be responsible for the garden's long-term maintenance.



^ > FRIENDLY DIVIDE
Low fences encourage communication and friendship between neighbours while also allowing more light into both gardens.

> SHARED SPACE
Communal gardens encourage community spirit and work well where there is shared responsibility for their care.

SECURITY ISSUES

Boundaries provide security, but it is best to strike a balance between imprisoning yourself and opening your garden to your surroundings. Police recommend that fencing, walls, or hedges at the front of your house are under a metre (3ft) in height, so your doors and windows are visible from the street. Use lights to illuminate your space, but ensure that you do not floodlight your neighbours' property. Spiky evergreen shrubs, such as *Pyracantha*, holly, or blackthorn can be grown to form attractive barriers that will deter most intruders.



∇ < THORNY SHIELD
Pyracantha is a good choice for a burglar-proof screen, but will take time to grow; combine it with a simple post and wire fence until it matures, then keep it to under 2m (6ft) in height.

∇ AUTOMATIC PROTECTION
Electronic gates maximize security for large properties, or where burglary rates are high. They can be unattractive, so look for well-designed gates that blend in with your garden.

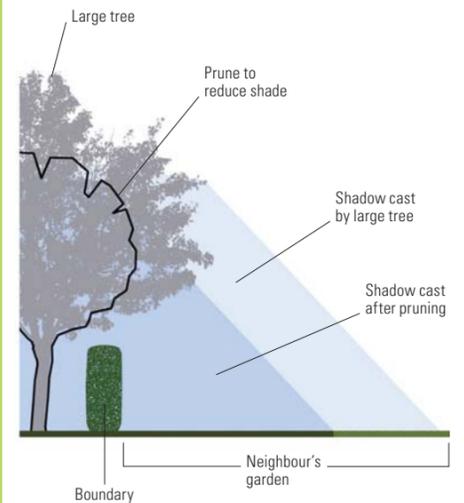


BOUNDARY REGULATIONS

Planning permission is needed to build a fence or wall over 1m (3ft) high next to a public highway or footpath, and over 2m (6ft) high on other boundaries, so check with your local planning office first. Fence posts should be on your side to ensure that the fence does not intrude on to your neighbour's property, and plant hedges at least 1m (3ft) away from the boundary, on your land. Your title deeds will show you where your garden boundaries lie.

CONSIDERING NEIGHBOURS' LIGHT

There are laws governing an individual's right to light. Most light is blocked from gardens by trees, although garden structures and poorly planned building layouts can also create dark zones. Before taking the law into your own hands, seek expert advice. It may be possible to remove part of an offending tree, or to negotiate changes to boundaries to allow your neighbours more light. When planning changes to your own garden, consider the impact they will have on neighbours' light at different times of the day and year, both now and in the future. This particularly applies to trees and hedges, as they will grow in height and width, and could potentially cause problems.



LIGHT IDEA
Think about how your boundaries, or elements within your garden, will cast shade on to your neighbours' plot. Here, a large tree could be pruned to allow much more light into the adjacent garden.