

Thorny flora makes a good-looking fence

If the old adage is true that good fences make good neighbors, then a natural, living alternative to the traditional wire, wood, or block fence may give you great neighbors.

This new idea in fencing is called the *Living Fence* and it's marketed by Barrier Concepts, Inc., of Oak Ridge, Tenn. It is a hardy, rapid-growing plant that requires minimal maintenance yet is capable of quickly becoming a formidable barrier fence.

The plant was introduced to the American market two and one-half years ago and has been successfully maintained in a wide variety of climates, including California, Idaho and Florida.

Nicknamed "PT" for "pain and terror," the plant is an import from China. Its exact identity remains a secret as the company seeks to protect its import rights.

Beware of its thorns

The *Living Fence* is described as a hedge-like plant that shows white spring blossoms every third to fifth year. It also offers aromatic fruit in the fall and year-round greenery. To date it has been marketed most successfully to military installations as

well as commercial, homeowner and low rental properties.

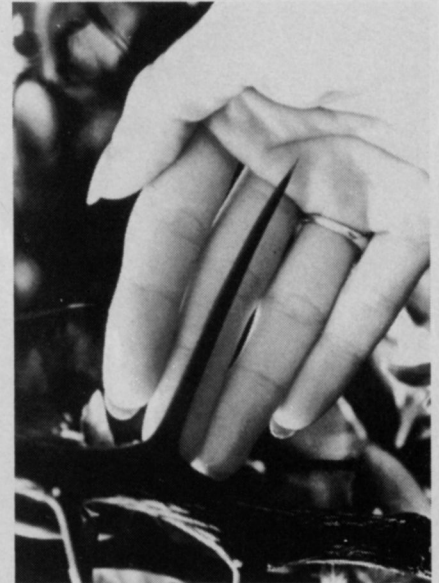
One of the reasons the plant makes an effective barrier is its three- to five-inch stout thorns, which are complemented by stems that are so tough an intruder would need a bolt cutter to get through them. In fact, a company spokesman said the plant is so strong that, in its mature state, it can actually

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The normal growth rate of the *Living Fence* planted in a warm climate is about 15 to 30 inches annually. In colder climates it will grow about 12 to 18 inches a year. It can reach heights in excess of 20 feet or, if trimmed regularly, will form a thick, virtually impenetrable brush.

The plant needs only three inches of water a year to survive, but additional water will contribute to its growth potential. It can be



Thorns as long as six inches are part of the reason why the plant is nicknamed "PT," for "pain and terror."

trimmed and shaped to be an aesthetically-pleasing barrier, as well as one that can stop people, animals and—if necessary—vehicles.

Data shows that the *Living Fence* can thrive regardless of heat stress, excessive moisture, drought stress or cold temperatures. In addition, the plant has proven to be disease- and insect-resistant.

Cheaper than chainlinks

The cost of the *Living Fence* will vary according to the maturity of the plant and the number needed, but as a rule of thumb, it costs about one-fifth as much as what you're likely to pay for a chainlink fence. A 12- to 18-inch plant is priced at \$5.50.

For that reason, this hardy, natural barrier appears to be a fair deal, especially if a pleasant appearance is as important a consideration as effective security. Therefore, it's a plant that is likely to prove popular wherever intrusion has to be controlled but where people want something nice to look at and enjoy.

For additional information about the *Living Fence*, write Barrier Concepts, Inc., at 701 Scarboro Rd., Suite 2020, Oak Ridge, TN 37830; or phone them at (800) 356-5021.

—Stephanie Slahor

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The *Living Fence* is a bushy plant from China that will grow up to two feet a year in practically any climate. It's stems will become so strong that a bolt cutter would be needed to get through them.