

Twig Privacy Screen



Materials:

- 2" x 4" cedar or redwood
- 3/8" or 1/2" cove molding
- Exterior grade carpenter's glue
- Lots of freshly cut branches
- Scrap of fairly thick oil-tanned leather
- 3" exterior grade screws
- 1" brass screws

Tools

- Drill and drill bits
- Knife
- Pruning shears
- Leather punch
- Scissors

Steps:



New growth is straight and flexible



Old growth is more rigid and has more joints

Find recently pruned or wind-downed tree branches and trim off half-inch diameter and smaller branches to use in constructing your garden screen. Depending on the season, you may also find freshly pruned piles of branches where utility companies have trimmed branches away from power lines. Always ask first before taking them. You never know if some utility person is thinking about mass-producing garden screens.

Trim all the leaves from the branches you've chosen, exposing the shape of the branch. New growth tends to be straight and more flexible. Old growth tends to have more bends and knuckles and it will be more rigid.



Cut the ends square



Peel the bark off the end with a knife



A cylindrical end will make a much better joint than a conical one

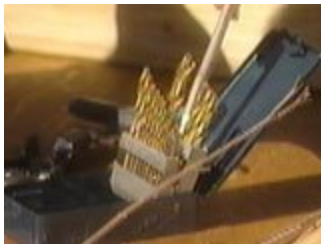
Prep the ends of the branches by cutting them off cleanly with your pruning shears. No smooshed ends. Remove one inch of bark from the end of the branch using a knife. Take a look at the end of the branch and if it's not quite circular, whittle it into a circular shape since you want it to fit nicely into a drilled hole. Be careful not to taper the end. It needs to be cylindrical, not conical like a sharpened pencil.



Screw the corners of the frame together



Mark the centre of the frame along the inside



Find the correct drill bit size by testing the branch in the drill

Design Decisions

Determine the size of the screen you want to build. Mine is six feet high with three panels (one three-foot wide panel, and two two-foot wide panels). There are rules though, so look at the proposed location and guesstimate the best size.

Cut to length your 2" x 4" boards and screw the corners together with exterior grade 3" screws. Mark a dotted line all along the inside of the frame right in the center of the boards; this line will guide you when you're placing the branches.

Lay out a few branches in their expected final position. They can intersect the frame at an angle or they can be perpendicular to it. Mark the spot where the branch will insert.

TIP: Use your drill index to help determine the size of the hole to drill. Pull out a drill that appears to be the correct size and try putting the branch end into the hole. Keep trying until you find a hole that fits the branch very snugly. Use the bit from that hole to drill into the frame.



Start the drill straight to drill an angled hole



Then move the drill to the proper angle



Fit the branch to be sure it's snug

ONE MORE TIP:

If you want your branch to fit at an angle, start by drilling perpendicular to the frame and, after the bit gets started in the wood, angle it in the desired direction.

Continue drilling holes and fitting branches. After dry-fitting about five branches, glue them in position using outdoor carpenter's glue. Work up one side of your panel, wiping off excess glue as you go. Switch sides and work up that other side in the same manner.



Continue along, filling in the space with branches



Glue the ends in place with exterior grade carpenter's glue



When finished, the branches will be very wild and rowdy

If some of your branches are really long, you'll need to peel bark from the tips and glue them into holes drilled in the opposite side of the frame. Gluing branches from side to side or even end to end helps stabilize the branches and the frame.



Weave them together to flatten and strengthen the structure



Then they all sort of pull together into a flat plane



When finished, the woven mat will be quite springy

After all the braches are glued in place, weave together the twigs that stick out coaxing them into the flatter plane of the frame. If your branches are green enough, they should bend easily around the others, making a springy mat.



Hold the cove moulding in place and mark the length

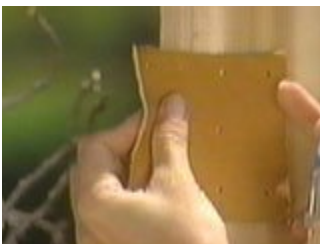


Cut it at a 45-degree angle at the mark



Glue the piece in place

Trim the inside of the frame with cove molding, mitering the corners. When all trim pieces for one side of the frame are cut to fit, glue and clamp them to the frame. Flip the panel over and repeat on the other side.



Cut a piece of leather in the



Use a leather punch to make



Set hinges about 11 inches

shape of a hinge



Pre drill for screws

holes for the screws



Attach the hinge with 'pan head' screws

from the ends, plus one in the middle

Install leather hinges on the frame. Leather hinges work well in this application because the screen is likely to be placed on uneven ground, so the flexibility of the hinges will help it remain stable.

Make the hinges so they look like a door hinge. Cut out three-inch squares of leather. Then punch holes with a leather punch where the screws go. (If you don't have a leather punch, an awl will work too. Pre-drill and screw the hinges in place using brass or other exterior grade pan head screws. Use small washers under the screw heads if the leather wants to pull away from the screw.



Finished screen - three panels



Finished screen - detail



Finished screen - cove and branches detail