

# What is a Living Fence ?



*A living fence along a path, Nepal*

A *Living Fence* is a fence made of living trees and shrubs. Made from thorny or non-thorny plants, it can also be called a green fence, or hedge.

There are many ways of using a barrier to prevent harmful pests from coming onto the land. Everyone knows that stone and mud, bricks, barbed wire, bamboo, or even cut branches can be used to make a fence. But the most productive form of barrier is the living fence, because as well as being a barrier, it can also produce many other benefits for the home.

In this chapter, information is given about making and managing a living fence.

# Why make a Living Fence ?

## Benefits of the Living Fence

- Crops are protected against harmful pests.
- The living fence can act as a windbreak.
- As well as protecting the land, various products such as fodder, firewood, medicines, timber, nectar, etc. can be taken from the living fence.
- Beneficial animals such as predator insects can also find a place to live in the living fence.
- The living fence saves money.
- It prevents soil erosion.
- It can prevent terraces from collapsing
- It can be used where materials for fencing are not found, e.g. plentiful rocks, barbed wire, large branches or trees, etc.



So, as well as using the live fence for protection, it can also be used to increase farm production. If a fence has tree cotton in it, for example, this is even a cash crop. Citrus varieties such as orange, lime, lemon, etc. can make very good fences. They also produce valuable fruit, and are good for bees.



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# How to make a Living Fence ?

## Where to make a living fence ?

According to your location and its climate, landscape, soil, etc. there are many plants that can be used for a living fence. Planted on the edges of the land, the living fence protects against harm from the outside, including the wind. Within the farm, living fences are useful along **edges** such as pathways and edges of fields or terraces. They can give shade and shelter, as well as other useful farm produce. The kitchen garden can be protected by a living fence, and even separate vegetable or nursery beds can have their own small living fences.

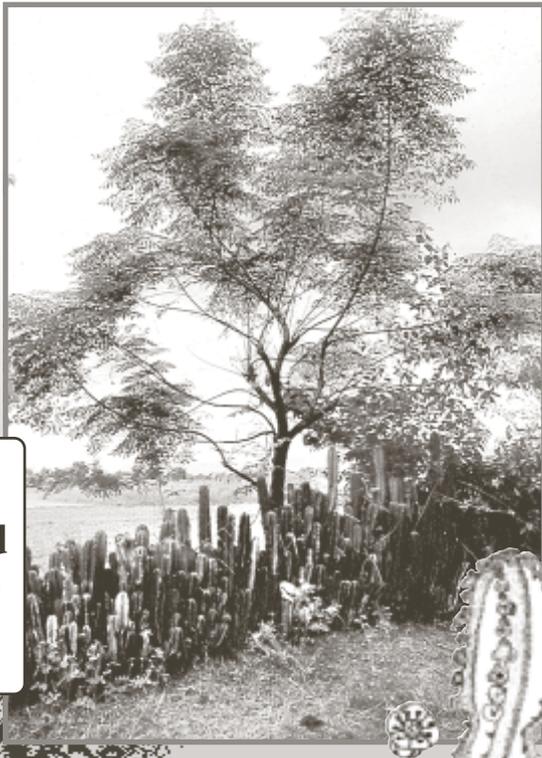
## Materials Needed to make a Living Fence



## Choosing what to plant in the living fence

Many types of plant can be grown in home-made nurseries and planted in the fence when they are large. Many species grow from burying branches in the soil like cuttings. The fence can also be planted with suitable seedlings collected from the forest. Different methods for growing seedlings are described in the *Home Nursery* chapter.

By collecting seed and cuttings from around the community and local forest, and making home nurseries, we can grow small, large, climbing vine, or any type of seedling. In the living fence it is good to have as many thorny plants as possible, such as blackberry, *Berberis*, babool (*Acacia nilotica*), baer (*Aeglis*), blackthorn, hawthorn, honey locust, mesquite (*Prosopis*), khayer (*Acacia catechu*), etc. Thorny plants are mainly useful around the boundary of the farm.

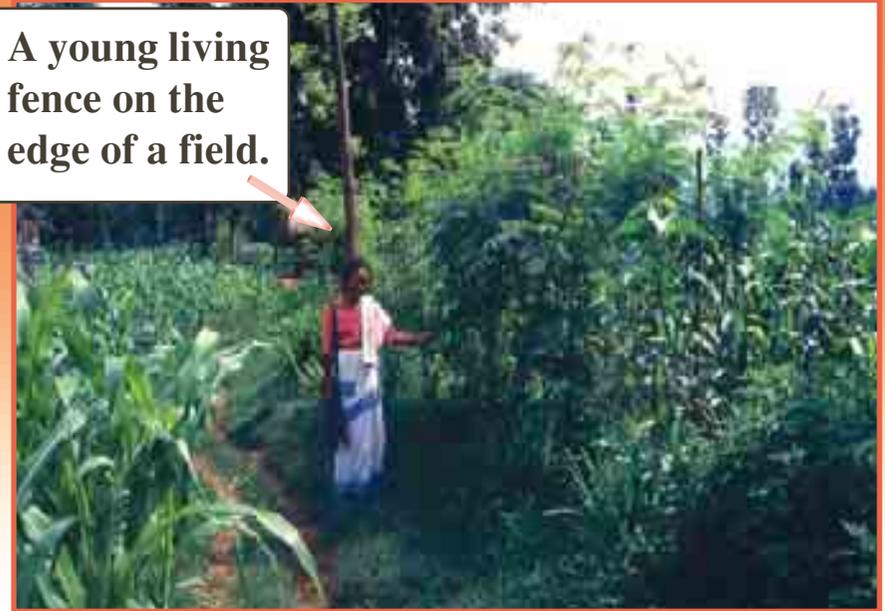


**Living plants make a fence and also give various other products**

## Let's See

## how to make a living fence

**A young living fence on the edge of a field.**



**At high altitude, castor in the fence produces lots of biomass.**





A fence can also be planted within the farm. Here, various useful trees are planted along the edge of a path.



The fence shades the path as well as giving other products.



Within the farm and on the edge of paths, useful plants like worm-wood, *Lucaena*, lemon grass and marigold have been planted.



*Ipomea* (morning glory) is grown easily from direct cuttings, and woven into a thick, strong fence.



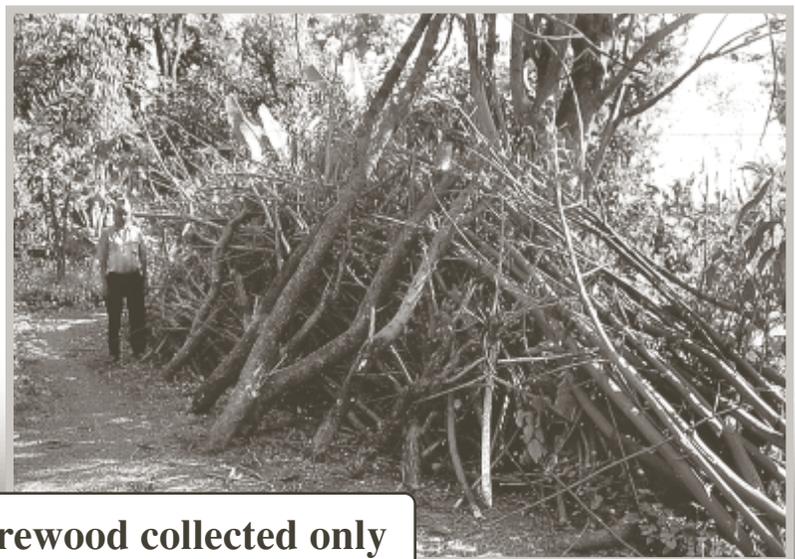
# Maintenance

## How to maintain a Living Fence

### Things to consider when making a living fence

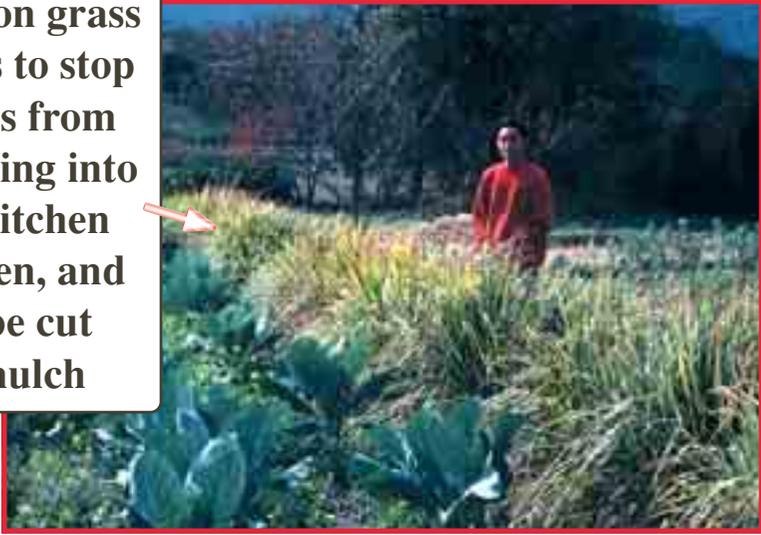
After planting seed, seedlings or cuttings in the living fence, mulch thickly with straw, leaf litter, etc. This controls the weeds, and allow the plants to grow well. Weeds need removing, and the plants should be watered if possible. Replace any plants that die.

Once the plants have grown, there is not much maintenance. Well planned harvesting of products from the fence is the only maintenance that is needed. Cutting or pruning branches will give yields of fodder, firewood, mulch material, etc. If there is too much shade, branches can be cut to let in more sun.



Firewood collected only from the living fence

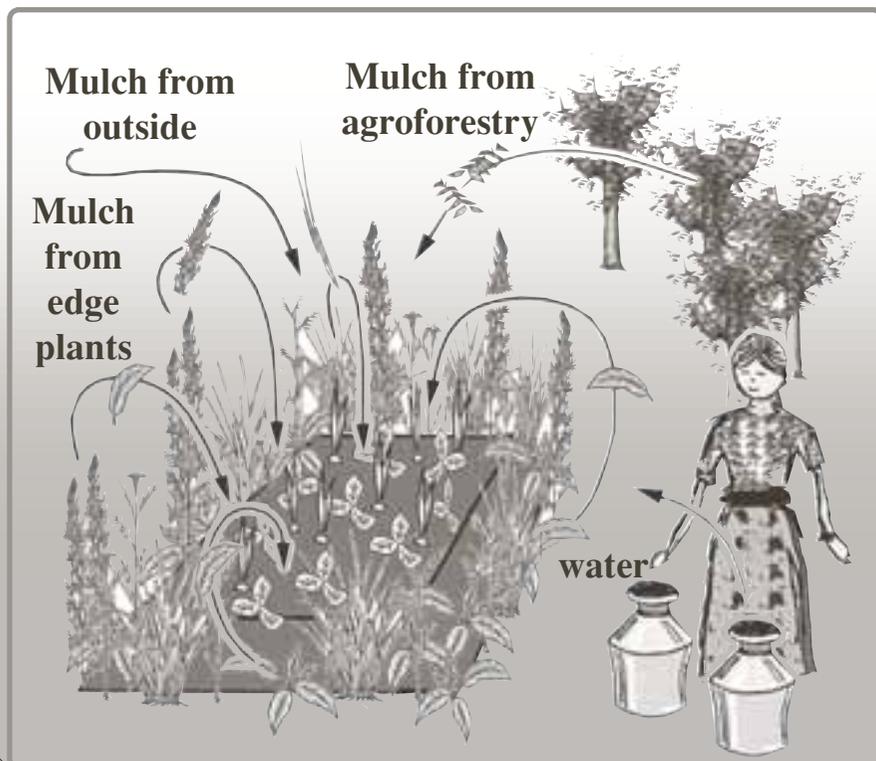
Lemon grass helps to stop weeds from growing into the kitchen garden, and can be cut for mulch



In Britain, willow branches are densely planted. They sprout and are woven together to make a strong fence

The kitchen garden needs a good fence around it to protect against strong sun and wind, livestock, weeds and other harmful things. Inside the kitchen garden, each vegetable bed can be surrounded by small fences of comfrey, lemon grass, basil, marigold, wormwood, and *Adhatora* which protect against invasive weeds and even flying insect pests. There are other beneficial yields of mulch material, fodder, flowers, etc. This can also be called **edge farming** or **companion planting**.

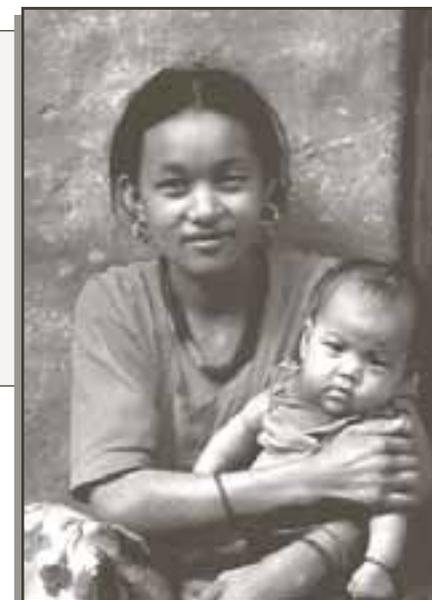
**Biomass cut from the living fence helps to increase yields from the land**



## Farmers' Experience

**Mrs Khagisara Gharti**

From Nepal, Surkhet district, Gumi - 3, Ratadada village, and a member of "Hariyali" women's group, Mrs Khagisara Gharti has planted her own living fence. Now let's hear what she says.



*Mrs Khagisara Gharti*

“ It's been 5-6 years since I planted our living fence. I learned it from the Homestead programme (JPP). There are many benefits from the fence. I'm always cutting fodder and bedding, firewood and so on from the fence. Leaves can be cut and mulched directly on the soil, or carried to the livestock and used as bedding or fodder. Because it's in your own fence, it's close and only takes a moment to cut and gather. It takes a few years to start producing well, but now this method has saved me a lot of time. I've planted mulberry, *Lucaena*, tree cotton, *Ipomea*, *Melia*, and the like in the fence. If any gaps appear, I plant something else to fill it straight away. ”





# Read On !



## Subjects Related to Living Fence

This chapter provides enough information for you to be able to make your own Living Fence. However, this information is also linked to other methods. For extra benefits let's read, learn and practice from other related chapters.



### Agroforestry chapter

Planting trees on farmland can bring farmers many benefits. But you can't plant just any tree, anywhere. This chapter gives information on how to plant trees without affecting farm yield.



### Chapters on how to make various nurseries

Different types of nursery are needed to grow a variety of different plants. Information on how to build and manage the home nursery, fruit nursery, air nursery, hot bed and leaf pots is given in these chapters.



### Mulching chapter

Mulch keeps the soil covered, keeps weeds down and conserves water. Information on how to mulch the soil is given in this chapter.



### Livestock Management chapter

In this chapter information is given about producing fodder near the house and other easy methods to improve management and health of livestock.