



*Gardeners Helping Gardeners Succeed*

2450 S. Curry Street, Carson City, NV 89703

Tel:775-882-8600 Fax:775-882-7285

License #16114

[www.greenhousegardencenters.com](http://www.greenhousegardencenters.com)

# All About Bamboo

by: Tom Copeland, Owner: Delhi Wind Bamboo

Bamboos are giant members of the grass family. They are evergreen and are divided into either runners or clumpers. In the Rocky Mountains there are very few clumpers that do well. Clumpers generally stay where you put them, but they are limited in size and do not easily provide the privacy or screening potential which the running types can. If you have a small or formal garden, consider either sticking with the clumpers, or put your bamboo in a large container. However, if you need screening, or want a large hedge, runners are definitely the way to go. They thrive throughout the Rockies, range in height from 12 to over 50 feet, fill in to make a hedge in two to three years, and are easily controlled with annual maintenance.

There are over 200 varieties of hardy northern running bamboos. No matter where you want to plant bamboo, from shady swamp to desert mountaintop, there is a bamboo that will grow there.

When designing a screen or hedge consider first the finished height. Most northern bamboos are large. If you want to stay under 20 ft, you must select an appropriate variety. For rapid growth do not purchase bamboos in less than 5 gallon containers. Plant these at 5 ft intervals and expect to see the hedge fill in in three to four years. Mature height will be reached in 5 to 9 years.

Bamboo sends up new shoots for about six weeks each spring. These culms grow very rapidly, reaching their full height during this six-week period. From that point on an individual culm does not get any taller, it just gets more and more leaves, doubling its leaf mass every year. Each year's culms are considerably bigger than the year before until the plant reaches mature size.

Very little soil preparation is required. Bamboo is a surface plant. Plant even with the surface you see in the pot. It is very important to keep native grasses from competing with the newly planted bamboo. Fertilize with any sort of high nitrogen mix. Lawn fertilizer is perfect. Relax, the first year, nothing much will happen—the second spring will be interesting—the third spring, stand well away from the plant.

Control is not a problem if you consider bamboo to be the equivalent of a large tree. It wants to be a grove, a grove thirty or forty feet wide. Thinned and maintained this may surround a hot tub or gazebo. It will dominate a small yard—much like a large tree.

If, on the other hand, you want to maintain a narrower shape to your hedge, there are several methods available to achieve this. First, bamboo hates to grow downhill. Consider planting on a mound or berm a couple of feet high. This works great and most times this is all that is necessary. Large containers such as half barrels work very well as do strongly constructed planter boxes. Annual root pruning is another sure way to keep the plant under control. Each winter simply cut down one spade depth all around the plant, cutting the rhizomes. One year old rhizomes are not viable away from the mother plant. If you miss a year, or a rhizome, just wait for a wet day, dig down to the rhizome (4 to 6 inches) and zip it up out of the ground. It's a surface plant. You can replant what you pull up.

Of course, if you want the high-tech solution, there is barrier material. Get the real stuff, high density plastic, at least 2 ft deep. Make sure that you lean it away from the plant. It is essential that the rhizomes turn up when they hit the barrier, not down. The barrier should extend several inches above ground and tacked to the inside of a 2x6 planter frame.

Old canes should be removed from the grove or hedge each winter. Do not allow any cane to stay in the grove longer than three years. This opens up the grove to light and stimulates the plant to send up new shoots.

Bamboo sheds its old leaves in July. Occasional leaves first turn yellow and then drop forming a beautiful mulch in the grove. By August the plant grows two new leaves for every one shed and is greener and fuller than ever. Bamboo looks its best November through March.

*Due to the uncertainty of wholesale grower stock, trucking, and weather, all varieties will not be available at all times. Although we do have the ability to special order some stock, we make no guarantee of its arrival and cheerfully encourage alternate selections.*

*Phyllostachys atrovaginata* **Incense Bamboo**

Very upright, good hedge. Tolerates wet conditions. Stems are fragrant when broken. Sweet shoots. Large diameter culms. To 25 ft. Hardy to -15F

*Ph. aureosulcata* **Yellow Groove**

Dark green with striking yellow grooves in canes and occasional zig zag pattern. To 25 ft. Sun to partly shade. Very hardy to -20F.

*Ph. aureosulcata* 'Aureocaulis' **Golden Crookstem**

Dark green leaves with striking yellow canes. To 25 ft. Occasional green stripe. Zig-zag habit. Sun to partly shade. Very hardy to -20F.

*Ph. aureosulcata* 'Spectabilis' **Spectabilis**

Vigorous, large timber bamboo, to 35 ft, with a zig-zag habit. Prefers full sun. Hardy to -15F.

*Ph. bissetii* **Bissetii**

Dark green, vigorous, good in a pot, to 20 ft. Prefers full sun. Hardy to -15F.

*Ph. decora* **Decora**

Masses of leaves and arching culms produce a beautiful fountain effect. Vigorous, tolerates hot, dry, windy, and cold conditions. To 25ft. Full sun. Hardy to -15F.

*Ph. nuda* **Green**

Dark green culm with white ring at internode. Does well in part to full shade. To 20 ft. Wind tolerant. Extremely hardy to -20F.

*Ph. rubromarginata* **Rubro**

Large straight timber bamboo with culms to 40 ft and 3 inches in diameter. Excellent wood. Sun to part shade. Hardy to -5F.

*Ph. vivax* **Vivax**

Largest of the hardy timber bamboos. Culms to 50 ft and 5 inches in diameter. Prefers full sun. Hardy to -5F.

*Ph. vivax* 'Aureocaulis' **Vivax Aureocaulis**

Largest of the hardy timber bamboos. Culms to 50 ft and 5 inches in diameter. Cream colored culms with narrow green stripes. Prefers full sun. Hardy to -5F.

*Semiarundinaria fastuosa* **Red Fastuosa**

Very erect, straight culms which turn reddish purple with full sun. Large dark green leaves. Makes excellent narrow hedge (with barrier). To 20 ft. Full sun.

Hardy to -5 F.

*S. fastuosa* 'Viridis' **Green Fastuosa**

Very erect, straight culms. Large dark green leaves. Makes excellent narrow hedge (with barrier) To 20 ft. Full sun. Hardy to -5 F.

*Ph. aurea* **Golden Bamboo**

Light green, very upright. Makes a good hedge plant. Sun or partial shade. To 15 -18 ft. Hardy to 0F.

*Ph. nigra* **Black Bamboo**

Beautiful well-behaved bamboo with black culms, fine dense foliage. To 25 ft. sun or partial shade. Hardy to 0 F.