



VITACARE CLIENT

E-mail: morgantreeservice@morgantreeservice.com
 Phone: (901) 756-9893
 Fax: (901) 737-2986



10548 Latting Rd.
 Cordova, TN 38016

THE "VITACARE" COMPANY, INC.

Bamboo??



Bamboo! Wow! And it's a grass too! But all I'd ever heard about bamboo is that keeping it under control . . . think "Kudzu" here . . . is a real pain, a full-time job. I'd even heard horror stories of how it can get away from you. I knew I didn't need that because I've got plenty else to do without fighting a runaway plant from Hades.

But last year my wife and I began an on-going discussion about how best to create an approximate 200' long privacy and noise screen along the west side of our property. On that side is a stand of mostly oak trees about thirty to forty feet wide. But in the winter you can see right through to the property next door. So all that led to asking a few more questions and then going to Google . . . what would we do without Google? We learned that per dollar invested there may be no better and quicker privacy screen in an understory shady area. And we learned that there are also two basic kinds of bamboo: the clumping kind and the running kind. Within those major classes are many cultivars with different sunlight requirements, cold hardiness, maturity height, and foliage characteristics. So what about these two main types? Turns out they behave very differently that begs for a decision at the very front end of the project. Clumping types do just that; they clump and stay confined to a relatively small area without posing the

invasive dilemmas into surrounding areas where it may not be desired. While usually cheaper, they don't screen as much area. Clump types usually spread only a few inches a year and they come in a variety of profiles and maturity heights, even up to thirty feet.

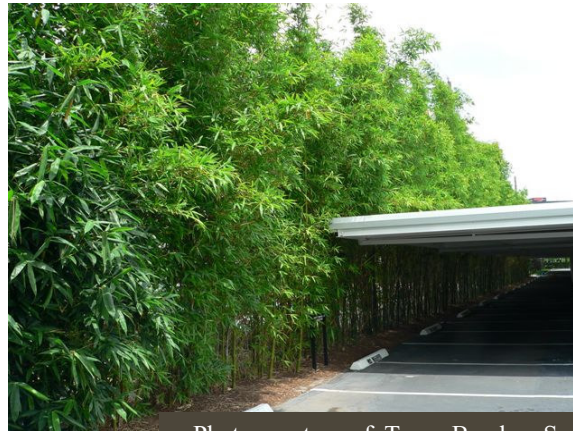


Photo courtesy of Texas Bamboo Society

The second type, running bamboo, can spread rapidly in every direction by way of their rhizome root systems. Running bamboo will provide a visual and noise barrier much faster with less cost, even though the per/gallon price from the supplier may be higher. The downside to the running type is the need of a well placed rhizome barrier to control the lateral invasion. The people who tell those horror stories about out-of-control bamboo are probably the same ones who neglected to install those necessary rhizome containment barriers. Such a barrier entails (usually) a trench

to about 24" to 28" depth into which a root barrier is installed vertically. Bio fabrics can be used for this purpose. Also plastic, when properly installed and intact, will work. Jim Crowder of Dan West Garden Center also cited the success of 24" wide aluminum roofing flashing. Install the material in the trench sloping away from the plantings and backfill. Leave an above ground "lip" of two (2") inches to prevent the rhizomes from "leaping over."

So if I want a fast growth along my 200 linear feet I will have to do a little extra work . . . okay, maybe a little more than a little. But in short order (two years?) I can accomplish my objective of a visual and noise barrier a lot faster with the running type. Guess I'll just have to rent a trencher and buy a big roll of aluminum flashing along with my "psychotic grass." Oh . . . and maybe get a good muscle relaxer too.

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