

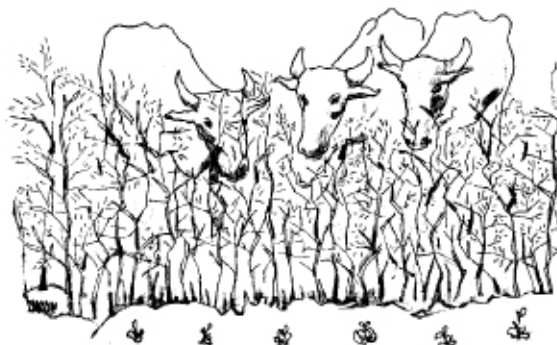
LIVING FENCES

What is this Action Sheet about?

Does your area have fences to keep livestock out of crop areas or away from fodder banks? Or would crop fields benefit from a miniature wind-break to stop soil blowing away? This Action Sheet is about fences made from growing plants – known as Living Fences!

Why grow living fences?

By planting a line of trees and vegetation to serve as a fence, you don't have to cut down natural vegetation or use up the left-overs from crops which, if left on the ground, help add organic matter to the soil. As well as providing a fencing service, trees can provide many valuable services, such as enriching the soil with nitrogen, and valuable products, too.



Advantages of living fences

- They prevent repeated harvesting of thorn branches for dead fences
- They are cheaper and more permanent than other fencing
- They require little management once established
- Closely spaced thorny plants or plants with intertwining branches can help keep wild and domestic animals off farm fields, gardens, plant nurseries, young orchards, or fodder banks
- They can discourage access, around a home or around areas like river banks that are vulnerable to erosion
- They can be used to keep livestock in an enclosed place
- They can shelter crop plots from wind
- They can be used to mark property lines
- They reduce soil temperatures, which can help some kinds of crop to grow
- They can enclose fields used for different crop rotation or for pasture management
- They can provide other tree products like sisal for basket-making, gum, fuelwood and pods for cattle and goat fodder, and mulch

Are there any disadvantages to living fences?

It's worth considering the following points before starting to planting:

- They take time and effort to plant
- They take a few years to establish
- They may deprive people from access to common or free-grazing areas or block access to water sources
- They may require regular pruning to keep thick and low so they do not shade crops too much
- If the species chosen are 'weedy' - that is, they tend to escape into the wild - planting them as a fence may lead to unwanted trees growing elsewhere

Do you have any more advice for farmers considering living fences?

See Action Sheets 35: **Agroforestry** and 50: **Multipurpose trees** and get local advice about which tree species to choose. As with all agroforestry techniques, tree planting is hard work. Take a small risk not a large one, then you can build on your newfound knowledge!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: This Action Sheet is based on the Living Fences activity on page 44 of Outreach/TVE Soils Education Pack Trees for Soils and People. Illustrations are from Outreach pack.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTACTS

World Agroforestry Centre: www.agroforestry.org