

Bamboo Screening for Tight Areas



Although many gardeners are frightened by the thought of bamboo running out of control, gardeners in South Carolina are fortunate to be able to use many of the subtropical varieties known as clumping bamboo. Unlike the more aggressive temperate running bamboo which can withstand northern winter's most clumping bamboo need milder winters to survive. Clumping bamboo will stay in a tight clump and does not need a protective barrier like running bamboo.

The Columbia Zoo has used a clumping bamboo called Alphonse Karr as a screen at the botanical garden with great success. This bamboo will grow to a height of 20-30 feet while staying in a tight row or clump and withstands temperatures down to 13 degrees. Amanda Segura (Garden Specialist at Riverbanks Zoo) said the Columbia SC winters have not adversely affected the Alphonse Karr and has remained evergreen all ten years it has been at the zoo. Amanda commented that she enjoyed the bamboo and its unique green striped cane so much that she has planted Alphonse Karr in her own garden.

Although there are over 1,000 varieties of bamboo, here are some things that are common to most clumping bamboo:

- Bamboo is a member of the grass family and likes fertilizers similar to those used for the grass in your yard.
- Bamboo likes fertile soil and does well when composted manure is added.
- Bamboo is tolerant of moderate salt water spray but may have issues with heavy salt spray on front beach locations.
- Bamboo prefers well drained soils but likes a deep root watering once a week if ample rain does not occur.
- Bamboo will curl its leaves to let you know when it is beginning to dry out.
- Bamboo is usually propagated through division since production of seeds are usually unreliable.
- Bamboo like Alphonse Karr can provide a quick screen for the garden.

The three photos demonstrate the growth rate of Alphonse Karr bamboo over a three-year period in Charleston, South Carolina. As you can see from the three photos the bamboo has stayed in a tight clump. The original plants were planted 6 feet from the concrete driveway and after three years of growth the edge of the bamboo is now 4 feet 3 inches from the driveway.

