

Equipment Screening Requirements

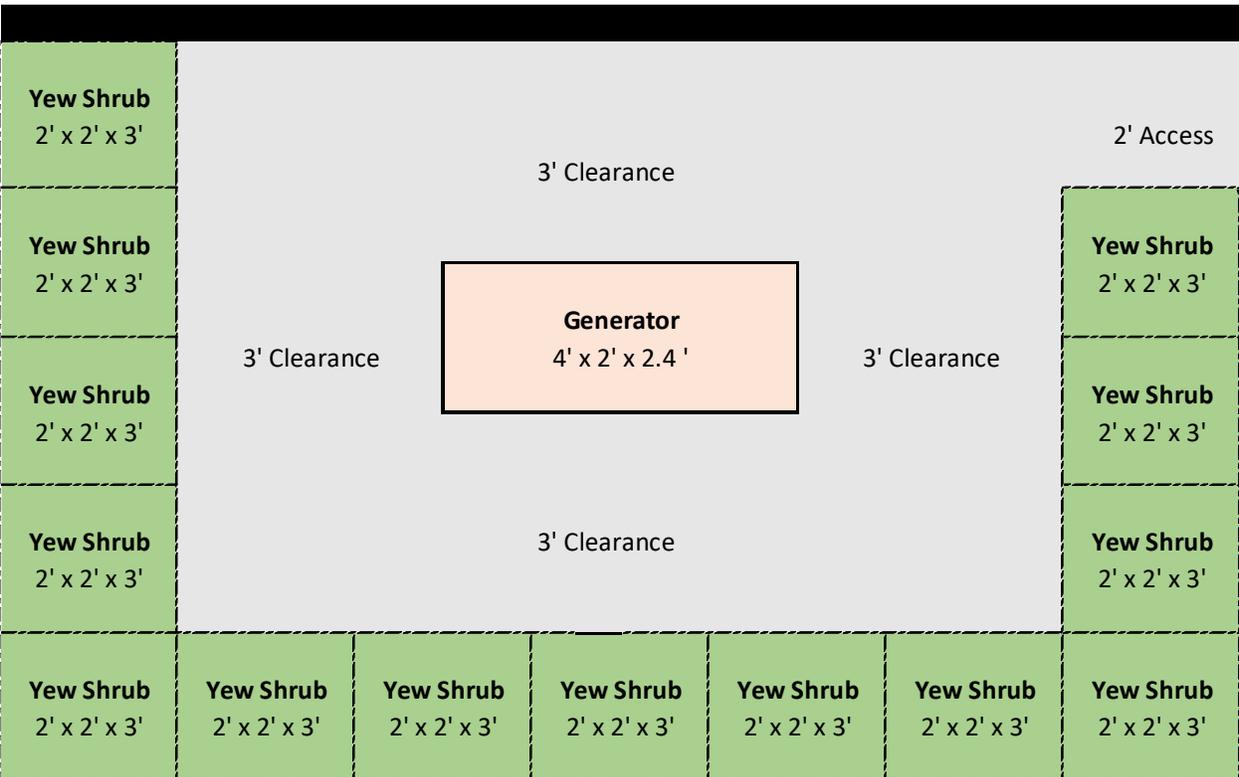
The CC&R's require screening in a number of instances; however, the ACC receives the most questions regarding AC units and stand-by generators. The CC&Rs state:

Air Conditioning Units (includes Stand-by Generators) – No compressor or other component of a central air conditioning system (or similar system, such as a heat pump) shall be so located on any Lot so as to be visible from the public street on which the Lot fronts, and, to the extent reasonably possible, all such external equipment shall be so located on any Lot so as to minimize the negative impact thereof on any adjoining Lot, in the terms of noise and appearance. In general, **such equipment shall be completely screened by an evergreen landscape screening.**

Since privacy fencing is prohibited, continuous evergreen hedges are required to screen equipment, not only for unsightly conditions, but also to reduce the noise generated by the equipment. On a hot summer night, some of your neighbors may be trying to sleep with the windows open or enjoy a peaceful evening on their deck or patio. This is why noise reduction is required.

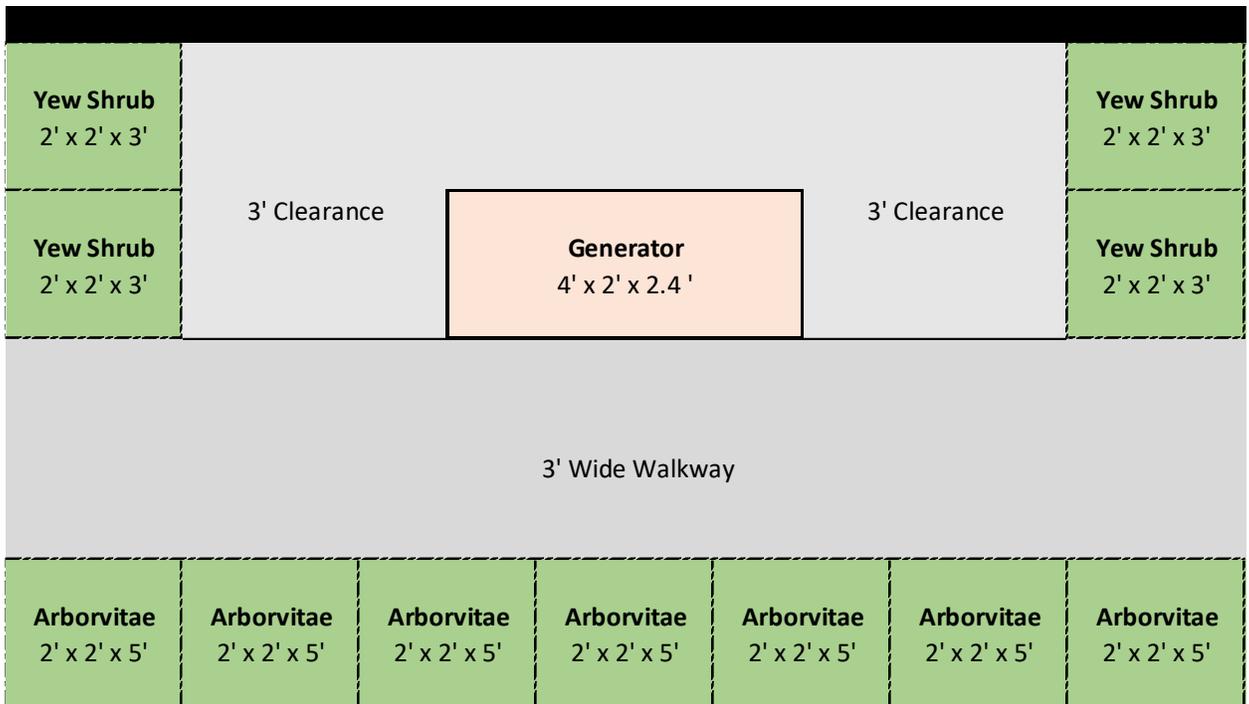
What You Need to Know

Before preparing your landscape screening plan consider the following steps:



Example of a generator landscaping plan

- 1) **Review your owner’s manual** (most are available on the web) to determine the necessary clearance for equipment ventilation or cooling airflow and any area’s that require more space for maintenance. This will determine the inside perimeter for your hedge and access point. The access point should not exceed 2 foot wide. Also note than screening is not required behind the equipment if installed next your home and screening will only be required on the other three sides.
- 2) **Measure the planting area** outside this perimeter to establish how much planting space remains for a hedge installation.
- 3) **Identify any existing obstacles**. Your landscaping plan should place all hardscaping outside of the required planting area and AC units and generators should not be located in the front yard or next to the driveway for this reason.
 - a) In some cases, homeowners have installed hardscaping which no longer leaves adequate space for planting the hedge. If the hardscaping or relocation of the equipment was not ACC approved, the hardscaping will likely have to be relocated at the homeowner’s expense.
 - b) The ACC will consider an alternative option on a case-by-case basis; however, the design must provide noise reduction and hide the appearance from all sides.
 - c) In cases where a small walkway already exists up against the equipment, the ACC has provided a deviation for planting taller shrubs on the opposite side of the walkway.



Deviation example of a generator adjacent to a walkway landscaping plan

- 4) **Select the type of evergreen screening** that is best suited to your situation. The planted height must be as tall as the highest point of the installed equipment (but no case shall be

lower than 36 inches). Also take into consideration the growth rate and the amount of pruning required to maintain the hedge within the space and maintain adequate clearance for the equipment.

- 5) **Compute the number of shrubs required**, understanding that an evergreen continuous hedge should have at least some adjacent shrub branches touching to form a continuous hedge. This hedge must be functional upon installation, with the height meeting or exceeding the height of the installed equipment, but no less than 36 inches tall. Width will vary based on your plant selection, but 24 inches is a reasonable estimate for these taller shrubs.

Recommendations on Plant Selection

The ACC has found that Boxwoods and Yews are usually the best option for screening AC units and generator equipment. These are easier to prune to maintain the required equipment clearance. These work well for both concealing the equipment, and reducing the sound. They are also compact and work well in smaller planting areas.

The ACC has allowed homeowners to use certain varieties of Arborvitaes for taller equipment, such as the newer upright AC units. The issue with Arborvitaes is that they are actually fast-growing trees, with a conical shape. This means they must be planted close together in order to provide sufficient coverage, both appearance and sound reduction. These also require more maintenance to keep them from encroaching on the equipment and the rest of your landscaping. For these and other reasons, the ACC does not list this option directly on the checklist. If you decide to go this route, we will need to know the exact variety being planted. Emerald Green is widely available and is an acceptable variety, however Green Giants will not be approved for use in this application.

Since more mature shrubs are required, these larger varieties usually come from wholesale nurseries and are only supplied to professional landscapers. However, Lucas Nursery in Superior Township will sell to the public and is the best option if you need to replace a small number of shrubs. For this reason, homeowners should hire a professional to install their evergreen screening.