



Fencing Factors:

Costs, Materials & Upkeep

Looking to replace an existing broken-down fence?

Interested in increasing the privacy of your front or back yard?

Concerned with adding security and safety measures for your kids and pets?

Whatever the reason behind building a new fence, there are a few factors that you'll want to consider. In this guide, Fencing Factors: Costs, Materials, and Upkeep, our fencing experts share insights into:

- Budgeting for a new fence
- Estimating how much board fencing is needed
- Increasing the lifespan of your fence

If you aren't sure where to start, a call to your local J&W Lumber store will set you on the right path. Our locations are listed on the back page of this guide.

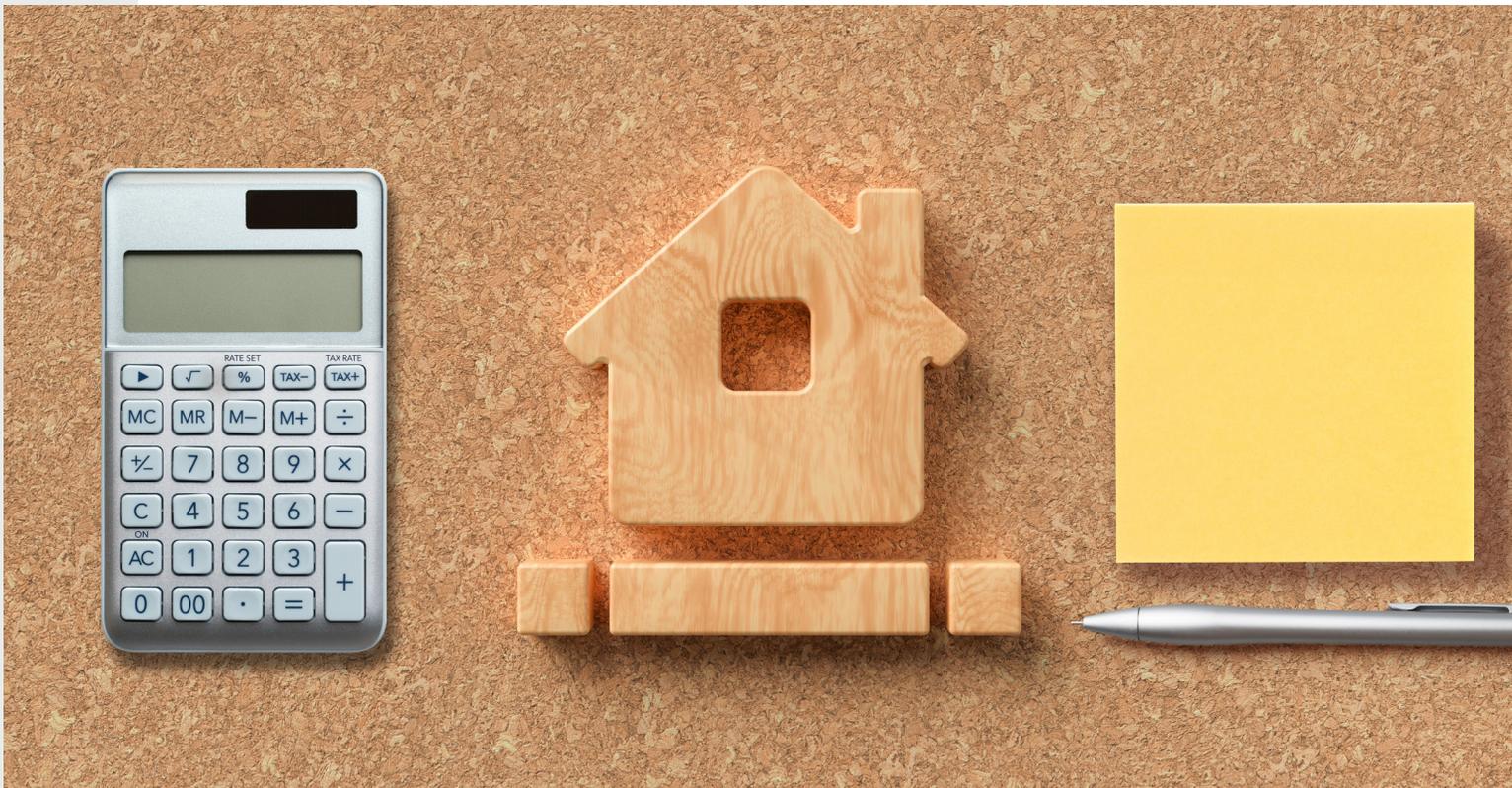


How Much Will a New Fence Cost?

It's easy to get excited by the idea of transforming your yard by installing new fencing.

But what if your ideas are outside of your price range? Or what if your budget will go further than you realized and you miss out on upgrades you didn't know you could afford?

Pricing a new fence depends on many variables, but by taking a look at the major costs associated with installing or upgrading your fence, you can get a better idea of your own final price range.

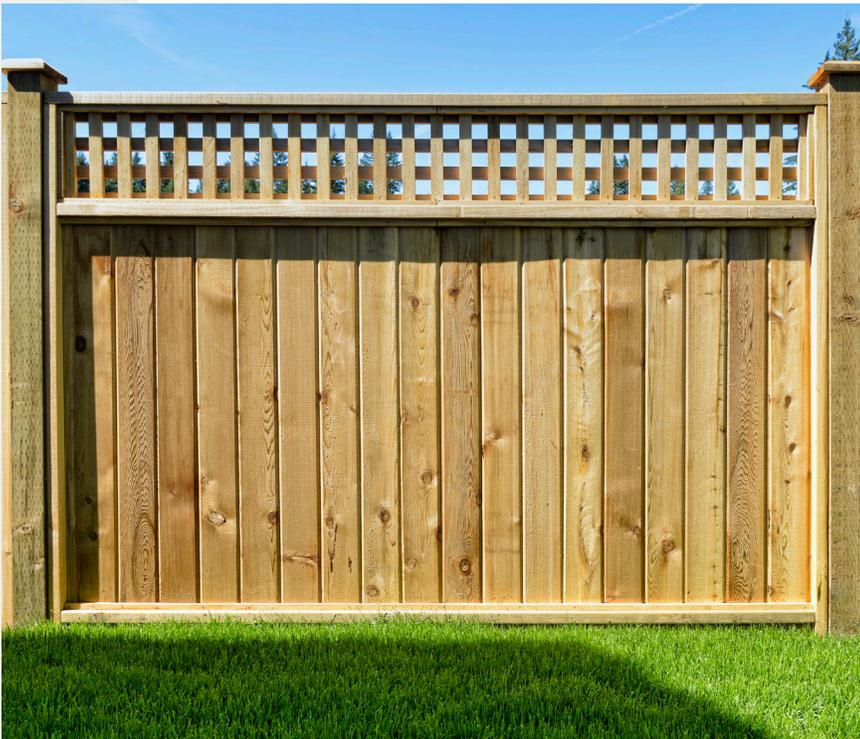


How fencing costs are calculated

Fencing is calculated by the lineal foot (also called “linear foot”). A lineal foot is simply a straight line measurement from point A to point B. When calculating your new fencing investment, always think in terms of costs and ratios as they relate to a lineal foot.

To determine a basic starting point for your fencing costs, head out to your yard with a long measuring tape. Start by measuring a single post plus one section (the distance to the next post), then calculate how much material will be used in that section. Divide the cost of the section by the lineal feet of that section and you’ll have an estimated cost per foot.

Once you have the materials selected and the costs for the materials, you can get a ballpark of what it will cost.

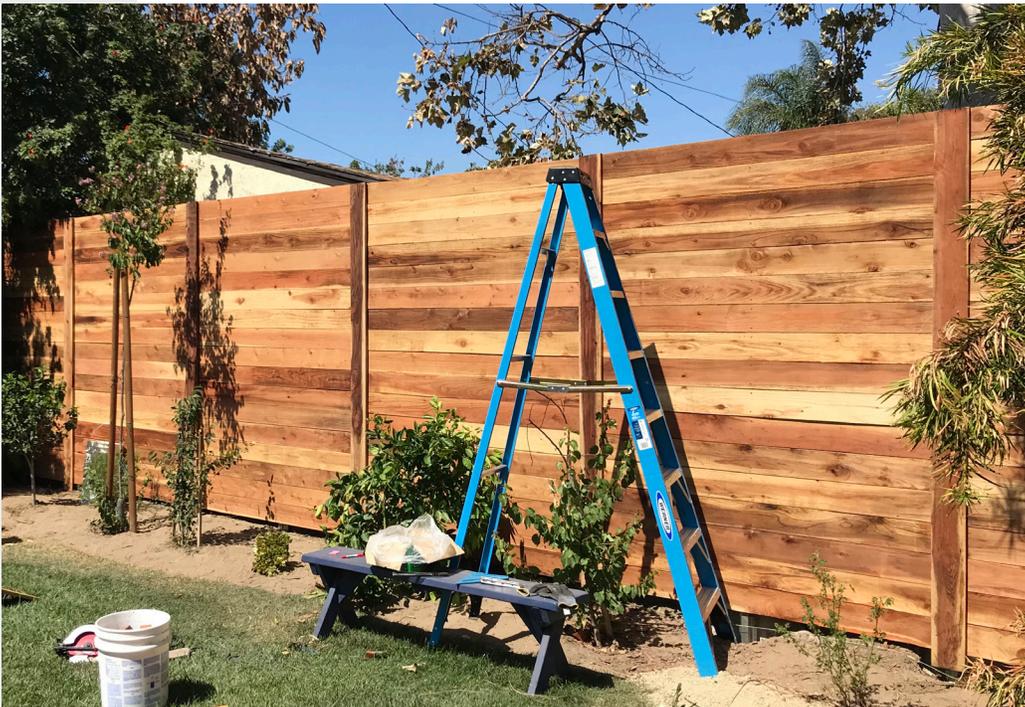


Materials matter

As with any construction project, the materials you use will affect your final cost. On the less expensive end of the spectrum, classic cedar fencing is more durable than softer woods like pine (which you shouldn't use, unless you want to replace your fence often). Cedar's natural oils also repel insect damage and resist rotting.

If you're looking for more curb appeal, redwood and Western Red Cedar are an attractive, longer lasting option. Finally, if you want to splurge on gorgeous fencing that will resist wear and tear for decades, invest in hardwoods like IPE and Mangaris.

A standard white or tan vinyl fence is also an affordable option, since it will compete with hardwoods for longevity, but with a sticker price that matches less expensive woods.

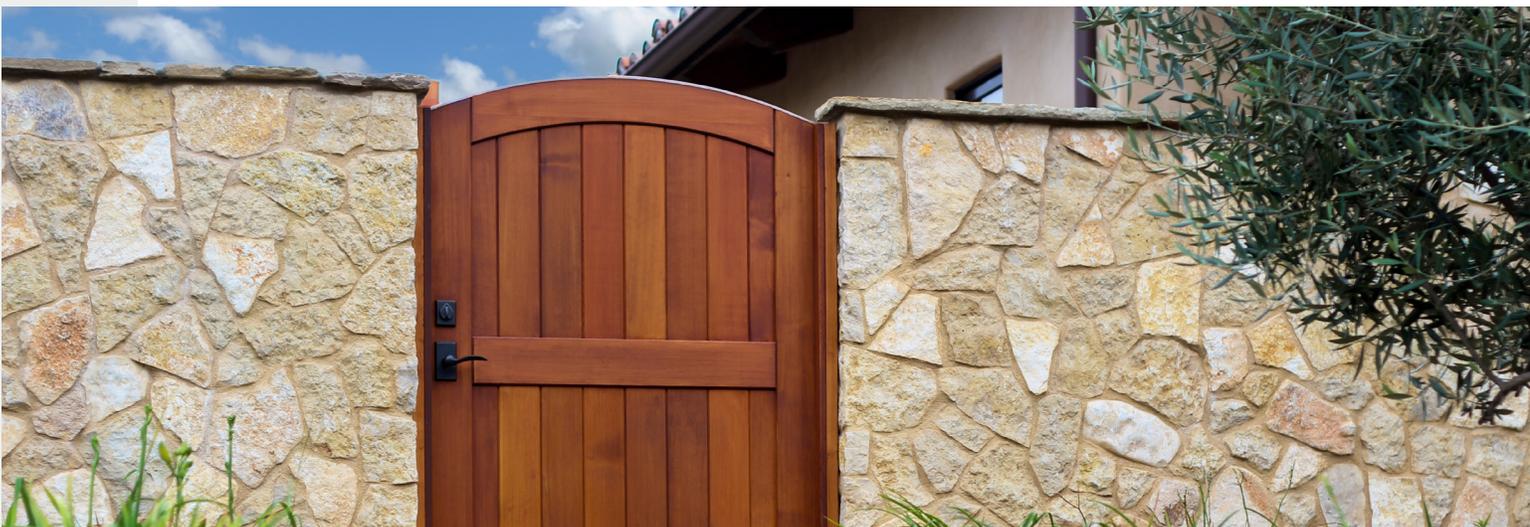


The gate makes a difference

The type of gate you choose impacts the design and feel of your yard, and also your final cost. Basic wood gates are much more affordable than, say, a custom electric gate with a built-in door.

Pre-fabricated gates take the design burden off your shoulders and feature a variety of attractive options that match your aesthetic. Sederra has a great line of ready-to-install gates that look stylish and are built to last. ActiveYards makes an affordable, easy-install gate kit that slots right into your ActiveYards system. GateMate manufactures both standard and heavy-duty kits to frame out your gate in the same lumber that you bought to build your fence.

If you really want your gate to deliver a “wow” moment, go for custom. High quality wood like clear cedar and professional mortise and tendon construction techniques demonstrate craftsmanship in a stand-out decorative gate. Custom-designed gates can be adjusted with fine details to match your exact specifications—but your budget will reflect this.



DIY or hire a contractor?

Will you be installing the fencing yourself or will it be more efficient to hire a contractor? Of course, if you decide to DIY, your labor costs fall to \$0. However, you'll need to evaluate whether or not you have the time and experience to install your fence correctly.

If you do decide to hire a fencing contractor, your labor costs will roughly equal your materials cost. Once you know your materials price per lineal foot, doubling that cost will put you in the ballpark of what you can expect to ultimately spend on your fence.

Unique variations

Unique variations in your project require adjusting your cost. Factors that may impact your budget include:

- **Sloped ground**
- **Complicated materials**
- **Special designs**
- **Challenging soil types (ex. granite vs. dirt)**
- **Gate type (pre-built vs. custom, metal vs. wood gates)**



Installation vs finishing

Many contractors quote only the installation price, not finishing labor like sanding and staining. These final touches usually require applying stain on two separate days to ensure moisture extraction, with associated labor costs. Ask your contractor to specify exactly what is covered in the estimate.

Every project will have its own unique specifications, challenges and installation requirements, so there's no way to tell what your final cost will be until you actually price out your materials per lineal foot and start getting bids from contractors. Once you begin roughing out the cost using the steps above, you can start to plan (or start saving up) for an eye-catching new fence that will stand up to the elements.



Expert Tip: If you share a fence line with your neighbors, it never hurts to reach out and ask them to split the costs in exchange for installing a “good neighbor” fence that looks great from both sides.

Estimate How Much Board Fencing Is Needed

Here are 12 steps to determine how much board fencing you'll need, so you don't come up short.

1: Measure length

Break out the tape measure and get a sense of just how many lineal (or "linear") feet comprise the perimeter of your fence.

Another option is to take advantage of tech to measure distance. Instead of walking the perimeter of your fence line with a measuring tape, use the Google Maps Distance Tool to view your property in satellite mode and trace the part of the fence you want to replace or install. The map will provide a rough estimate of your lineal footage. This option is especially useful for large properties.



2: Measure height

Determine if you want a short fence — which has a height of approximately 3 feet —or a tall fence, which can range from 3 to approximately 8 feet. Short fences require less material while tall fences create more privacy.

3: Count the gates and corners

Determine the number of gate openings your fence will need. The number of gates has an impact on the number of posts in your materials order. Also, decide if you're going to build your gates yourself or install a pre-fab gate kit. Pre-fabricated gates are a fantastic way to include a professionally-crafted focal point without having to hire a contractor. Either way, don't forget to measure the width of the gate opening(s) itself.

4: Draw it out

Make a rough sketch on a piece of paper of the shape of your yard. Don't worry if it's to scale or not. The main thing is to include the number of corners or any unusual angles and write down lengths of each fence section. This will help you determine the final number of posts you'll need.

5: Take note of slopes and hills

Are any areas of your yard higher or lower than the rest? Make a note of this on your drawing, since it may have an impact on the final amount of lumber your project will require.



6: Determine if your fence will be free-standing or attached

Consider whether your fence will be attached to your house or will stand on its own supports. This information affects how many posts you will need as well as if you'll need specialized hardware to bolt the fence to the exterior of your home.

7: Pick a style

You may have a general idea of the fencing style you're looking for – from short picket fences to tall dog-ear board fencing, or even an attractive horizontal fence. Keep in mind that each of these will require a different amount of materials, depending on your desired length and height.

As you drive around town, start paying attention to various fence styles that you like. Bring some reference pictures down to the lumber yard. The team will provide suggestions on the sturdiest and most attractive wood options for your budget.

If you're not sure where to start thinking about design, stop by your local lumber yard to see displays and get inspiration.



8: Know your widths

Once you have decided on the final look of your fence, you'll have a better idea of the individual widths of your board fencing planks. Also keep in mind the size of the gap (if any) between boards. This will play an important role in the final amount of lumber you'll need.

9: Do the math

Now that you're equipped with all the important information (lineal feet, height, fencing style, board width, gap between boards), all you need to do is multiply. For example, if your vertical short fence will be 100 lineal feet long and your boards are 6 inches wide with no gaps, this means that you'll need two boards per foot = 200 boards. Examine the length of each plank in relation to the height of your fence. If the planks are 12 feet long and your fence will be 3 feet tall, you'll get 4 usable fencing boards out of each plank. Remember to add an additional 10% onto your final quantity in order to cover the downfall (the occasional plank that is warped, weak, too knotty, or otherwise unusable). This extra wood also comes in handy if you need to repair your fence down the line.



10: Add up the posts

Determine the amount of space you'll need between your posts. Six foot spacing is typical for most state codes but be sure to check city requirements or architectural guidelines if you live in an HOA. We never recommend trying to space out posts wider than 6 feet. Doing so can not only compromise the integrity of the fence, but – especially in the case of horizontal fencing – a too-long span will lead to your fence planks bowing outward over time.

To calculate the final number of posts you'll need, divide your lineal feet by 6 (due to a 6-foot distance between posts). Add in any additional posts to outline irregular corners (this is where your drawing comes in handy!) and one final post for the end.

11: Calculate the rails

The final piece in determining the amount of board fencing you'll need is to factor in lumber for rails. Horizontal fences don't require rails since the planks themselves act as structural support. For tall vertical fences, we recommend three rails, although for short (approximately 3 feet) fences, two rails will suffice. To determine the amount of number you'll need for your fence rails, compare the length of your rail board to the amount of posts. If your rails are 12 feet long and your posts are the recommended 6 feet apart, you'll cover two posts with each rail.



12: Share all your calculations with the lumber yard team

Remember that you don't have to figure everything out on your own. Even if you're installing your fence yourself, the specialists at the lumber yard can help you with every step of the process. Talk to them about your ideas. Don't hesitate to ask questions or solicit suggestions. They're experts in calculating materials and can double-check your work or point out things that you may have missed.

Estimating the amount of board fencing you'll need for your project sounds more complicated than it is. It doesn't take geometric wizardry or a detailed CAD drawing for you to get started. With accurate measurements, a rough drawing and a solid idea of your desired fence style, you'll quickly be able to determine the amount and cost of the materials you'll need.



How to Increase the Lifespan of Your Fence

Your fence is asked to stand up to some pretty strenuous conditions. Heavy winds, harsh sun, corrosive salt air and moisture from the ground are all conspiring to bring down your fence. However, today's fencing materials are more innovative than ever and stay strong in the face of day-to-day abuses.

By putting some thought into your fencing choices, you can reduce the amount of wear and tear on your fence and get more life out of it before repairs and replacement are needed.

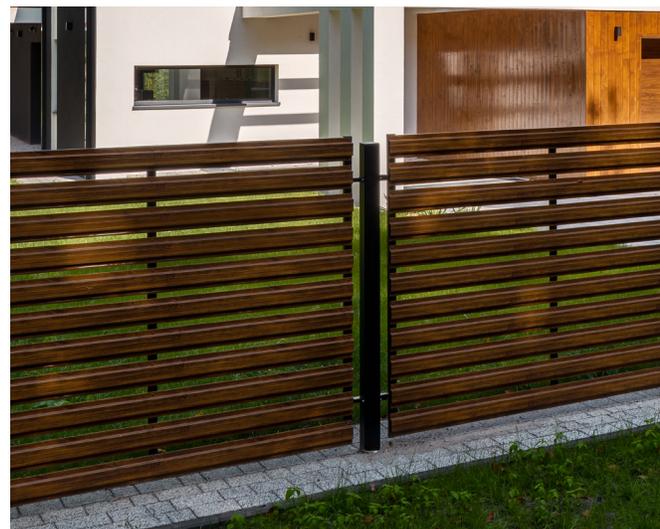


Moisture and decay resistant posts

Fence posts provide the structural support for your fence, so if their integrity is compromised, the whole fence suffers. Therefore, the type of posts you select have a huge impact on how long your fencing will last.

Since the fence post makes direct contact with soggy earth, moisture is its number one threat. Instead of rough lumber which absorbs moisture like a sponge, use pressure treated wood fence posts that are intended to have direct contact with soil. Ground contact treated lumber meets ICC building codes for outdoor project use by blocking absorption of moisture from the earth and resisting termite damage and fungal rot.

Another option is to install a metal post made of galvanized steel. Master Halco's line of PostMaster® fence posts are made from structural steel coated with a heavy galvanized layer, designed to support wooden fences. They allow you to achieve the aesthetic beauty of a wood fence with the strength, support and longevity of galvanized steel.

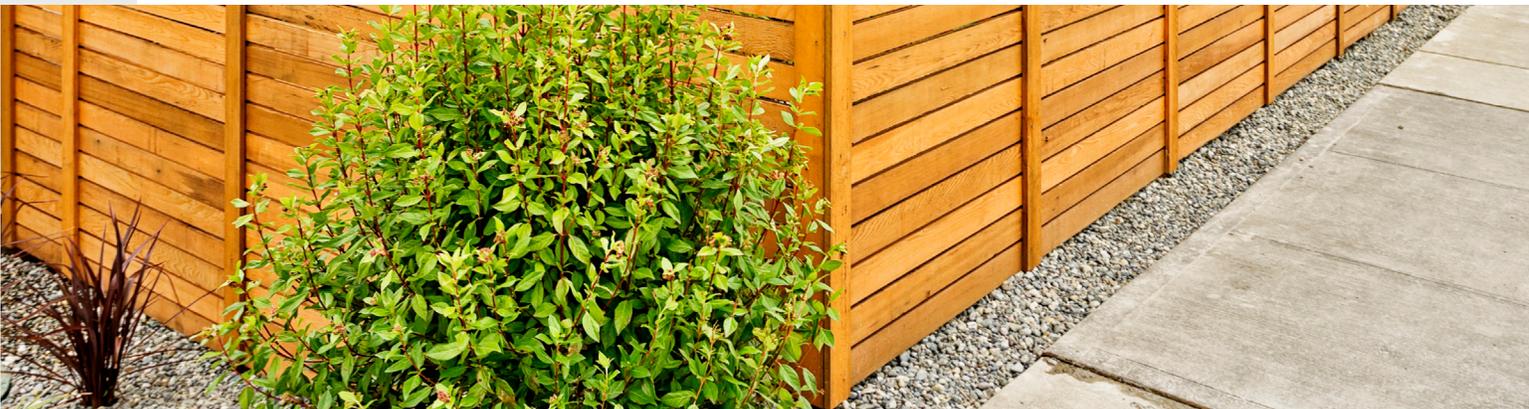


Create an extra barrier with asphalt emulsion

If you're using regular wood fence posts or pressure treated lumber, you can add an additional layer of protection between the post and the earth by painting the bottom of each post with asphalt emulsion. Sealing the tips of your posts can extend your fence's lifespan by years. The asphalt, water, and emulsifying agent combo seals off the pores of the wood to ward off invasive moisture and pests. To use, dip the end of the fence post to slightly above your concrete line to ensure that the area of the wood closest to the ground receives adequate cover.

Check your footings

How you set your posts also has a big impact on how much moisture comes in contact with your fence. To protect your posts from rot, reduce prolonged contact with moisture. Use a galvanized column post base to keep each post itself up off of the ground. Or, line your post footing hole with gravel or rock to drain water away from the fence post and keep the end of the post from directly resting in the dirt.



Vinyl fencing: long-lasting and low maintenance

To avoid the problems that arise when nature attacks wood, eliminate wood altogether by installing a vinyl fence. Gone are the basic, plastic looking “white picket” vinyl fences of yesteryear. Vinyl fencing has come a long way. Not only does modern vinyl fencing mimic the look of wood, it’s been carefully developed to withstand heavy winds, sun, and moisture, year after year. Not only is vinyl durable, but there are many creative options to build a fence that complements your home’s unique style.

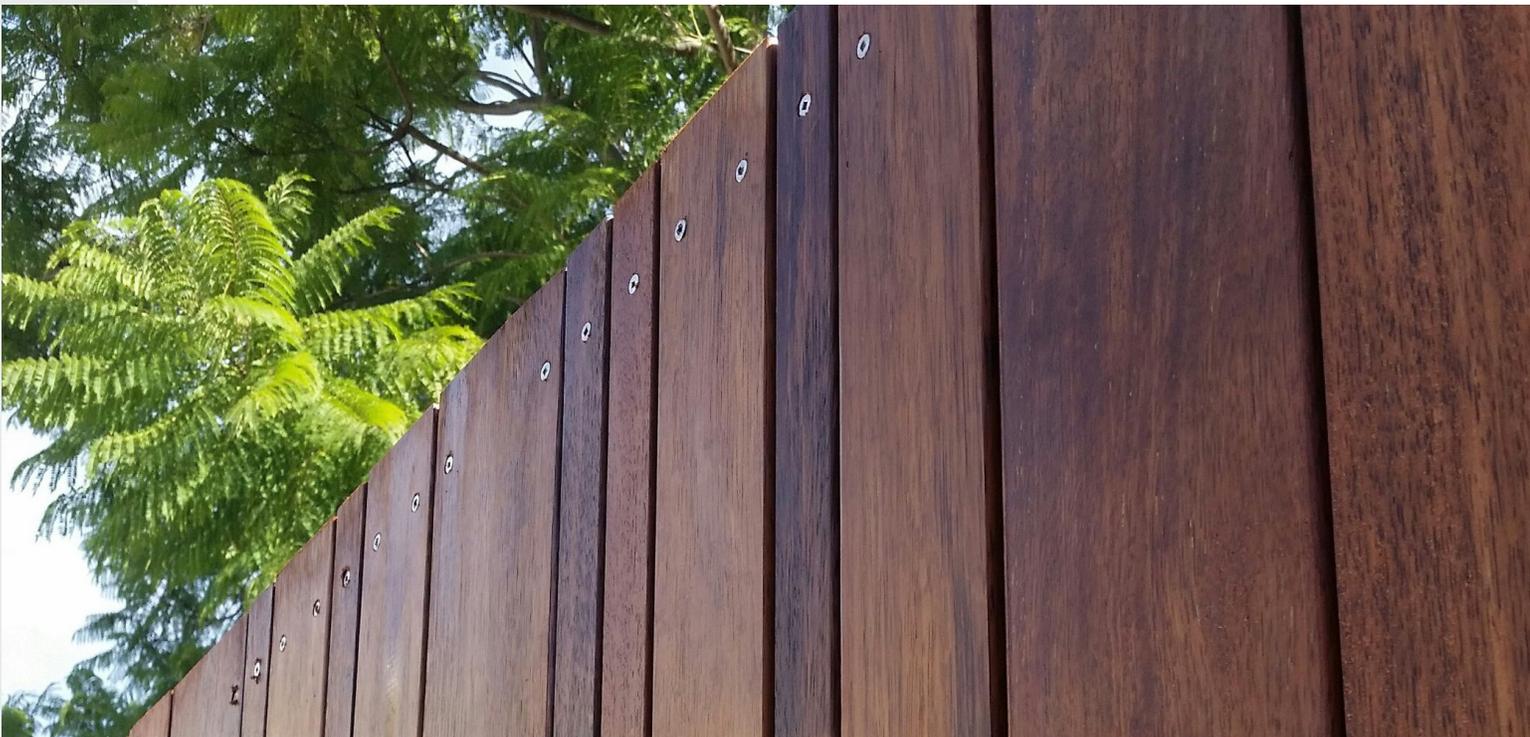
Though vinyl fencing may be a slightly higher initial investment, built-in UV protection means you don’t have to paint or replace the fence as often. ActiveYards has several lines of fencing that feature a wood-like texture, come in variety of colors, and have a high degree of customizability (ex. horizontal, mixed materials, flexible). If you’re looking for a fence that lasts a long time with minimum maintenance, vinyl is a strong contender.



Invest in hardware intended for outdoor use

Skimping on fencing hardware puts your whole fence at risk for an early demise. The telltale signs of incorrect hardware are rust streaks that appear over time, which means that the hardware is not intended for outdoor use. This is an easily avoidable issue that will help you add years onto the lifespan of your fence. Use galvanized fasteners, coated screws or stainless-steel screws that are intended for outdoor use.

Your fence adds the finishing touch to your property, so don't take it for granted. Investing in quality materials and remaining vigilant about protection will help you install a fence that is set up to stay strong and look good for years to come.





Is it time to build a new fence? Chat with the experts at your local J&W Lumber and let's get to work.

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