



A Beginner's Guide to Building a Fence

What you need to know about options, trends, and terms.

Homeowners are investing in backyard design now more than ever to create a welcome gathering spot that expands their home's functionality while also improving its appearance. An easy way to upgrade the area is with fencing, which offers plenty of room for personalization.

Fencing offers more design possibilities than you might realize, giving your outdoor space a refreshed, customized look. Between materials and hardware and board spacing options and height variations, there are multiple ways to customize your fence.

In this guide, our fencing experts share what you need to know to get started.

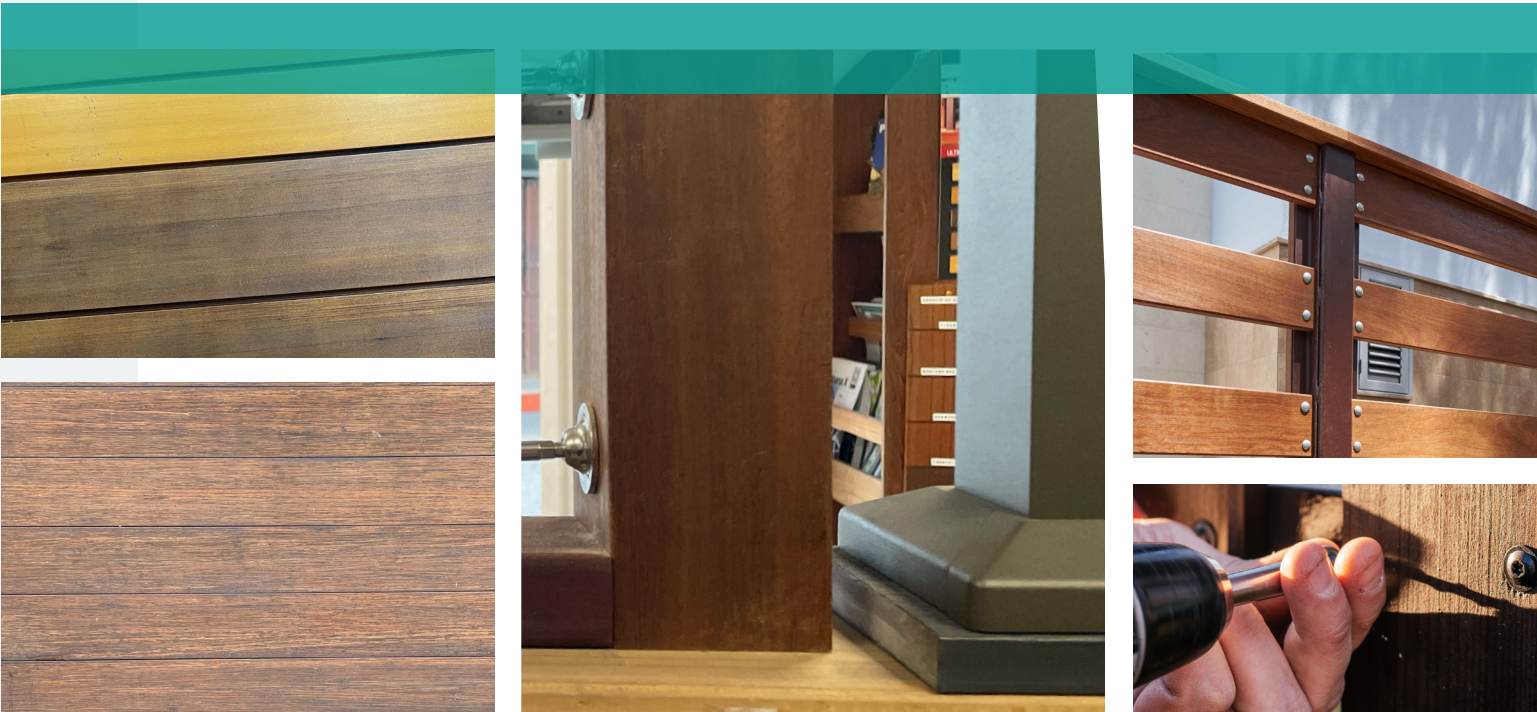


Know Your Fencing Options

Hardwoods and Hardware

One of the first factors homeowners consider when building a new fence is the type of materials they'll want to use. Two of the top trending ones are Borneo Mahogany and Red Balau. These high-end hardwoods recently became readily available following material shortages from the past two years, making them heavily sought out for fencing design.

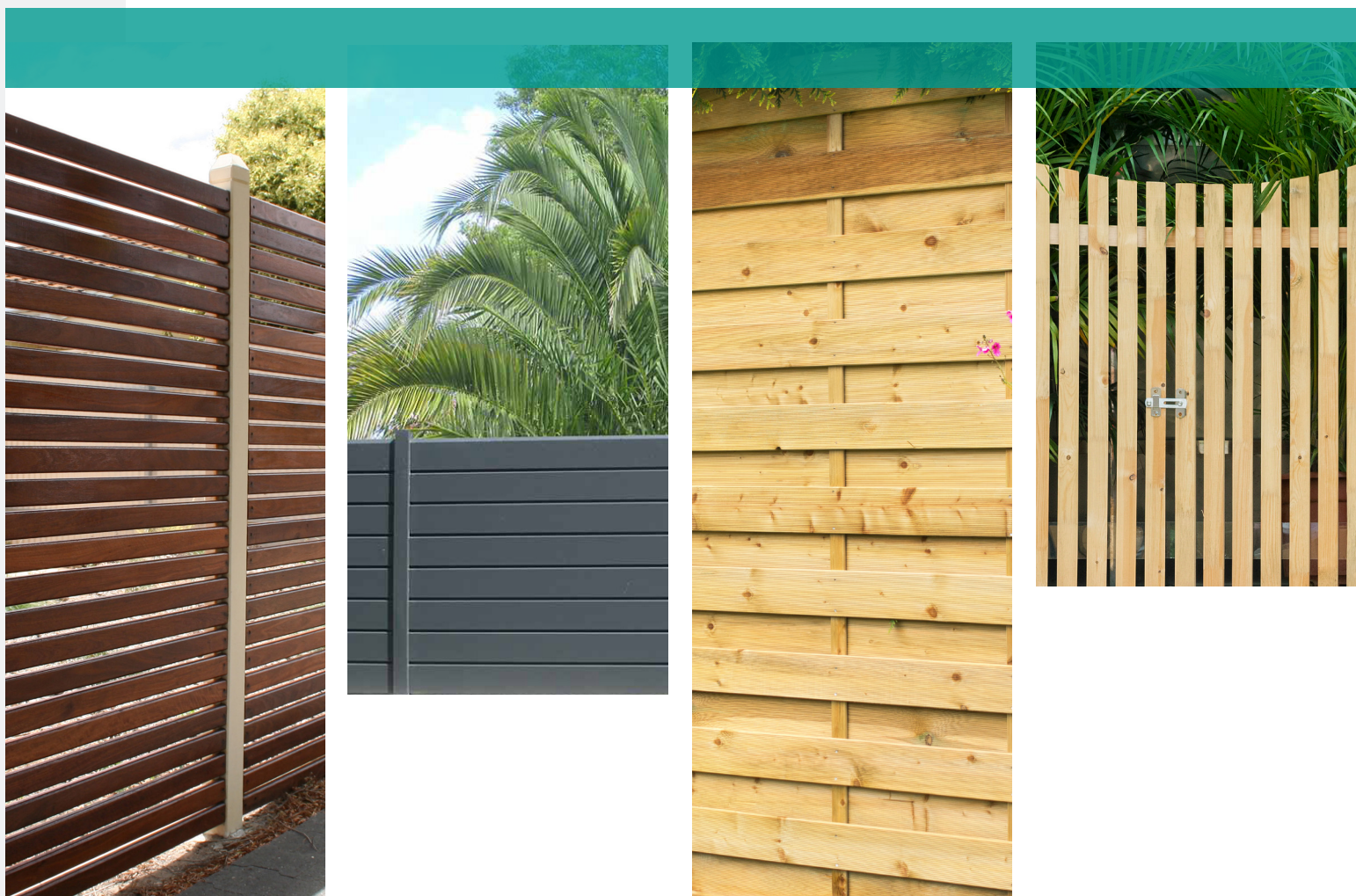
J&W Lumber carries all the specific fencing hardware, such as structural screws and ornamental connectors, needed for each particular project. There isn't universal hardware that applies to all fencing. Choosing it depends on the type of wood used and the style of fence you want.



Spacing Between Boards

Once materials are chosen, homeowners can get creative with spacing. A standard fence has vertical boards, all the same height, and limited spacing in between. However, to design a contemporary look, homeowners often opt for a horizontal fence with a half-inch gap between boards.

Another option is to establish a solid bottom to the fence and as the boards reach the top, there can be different board sizes and spaces with a repeated pattern for an artsy appeal.



Choosing the Right Fencing Height

A six-foot fence is the most common city regulation for fencing. Anything higher typically must meet city approval but may be helpful if you want added privacy. However, the lower height of ranch-style fencing is popular for larger properties. It's designed as a property boundary versus a privacy structure, which is commonly found inland near ranches and wineries. Whereas, taller, modern-style fencing is typically popular along the coast.

Determining the “Good Side” of Fencing

A good neighbor fence is shared between two neighbors and looks decent on both sides. The traditional wood fencing design includes rails on one side and is solid on the other, leaving one neighbor left with the more attractive side. However, even with this standard style of fencing, it can be framed to keep rails at the very top and very bottom of the fence so it looks good on both sides.



The Latest Fencing Trends to Consider

While traditional fencing remains a popular choice, homeowners are opting for these new fencing trends to give their space a sleek, new-and-improved style.

Horizontal Fencing

Horizontal fencing continues to be one of the most sought-after trends with growing popularity in recent years. Redwood, cedar, or hardwood all work well to add a beautiful design element with a minimalistic feel.

Rather than traditional vertical fencing, often used strictly for functional purposes, a horizontal fence allows homeowners to get creative with board spacing and mix-and-matching colors and dimensions to match their home's style while still fulfilling the fence's primary function of privacy.



Mixed Material Fencing

Mixed material fencing is also a new trend homeowners are leaning towards when upgrading their outdoor space. The ActiveYards® fusion boards create a solid metal framework that homeowners can slip over vinyl or wood boards to create a cool, contemporary look. However, the mixed material trend also works for a classic or craftsman-style home.

Adding a four-foot Silverbell Scallop vinyl frame delivers a white picket fence appeal when used in combination with wood fence posts. Additionally, homeowners with classic wood cedar fences could add Master Halco metal posts, which allows board fencing to last longer than standard wood fence posts.

Investing in the quality of materials versus design alone to implement durable, low-maintenance options is also part of today's top trends.



Vinyl Fencing

An ornamental spin on vinyl fencing is adding solar post caps. Solar post caps softly illuminate the backyard without the need for electrical wiring, adding a complementary way to create an inviting aesthetic.

Also, when upgrading an existing fence, there's the option to make it taller with decorative screen panels or a traditional redwood lattice. This extends the fencing height and creates a beautiful, modern look to build upon what's already in place.



Accessories and Staining

A fence gate adds another distinctive design element and a connector between spaces. J&W Lumber stocks a premade, 42-inch wide, 6-foot tall cedar gate making it easy for homeowners to incorporate it into their fencing projects.

For special types of fences, there's also a growing trend of using cable railing or glass panels to add a decorative touch and preserve a pretty view.

Also, instead of structural additions, simply staining existing fencing automatically gives it a fresh look. Once a fence begins to fade to a grayish hue, an oil-based stain like Penofin® or Messmer's conveniently combines a sealer and stain into one to give life back to the fence. It's available in Natural Cedar, Transparent Redwood, Mission Brown, and Dark Walnut to match the desired look and feel of the fencing.



Lumber Terms to Brush Up On

When visiting your local lumber company, there's a lot of jargon that may float your way. Some of it may sound familiar, while other terms may leave a trail of questions marks behind. Take the opportunity to learn about what this lumber lingo means so you can start to feel more confident as you're sourcing materials for your fencing project.

Here are the most commonly used terms we hear and use around the lumber yard to get you started.

- **Green** – Newer lumber that's still "wet". There's a higher moisture content because the wood has been cut down more recently. Over time, as the moisture evaporates, it becomes dry.
- **Kiln-dried or KD** – Lumber that's been dried in a kiln to speed up the drying process. Kiln drying benefits the wood because its moisture content is reduced in a more controlled environment, often making the board more stable.
- **Free of heart center** – Wood that does not include the very center of the tree. Visually, it won't have a bulls-eye at the end of the board, and it will typically perform better.
- **Exposed** – Material that is intended to be seen. After the final steps of installation, the material will not be wrapped or covered by some other material, hence it is exposed. Exposed material should be more attractive than material that will be hidden.
- **Tongue and groove (T&G)** – With T&G boards, the tongue is in the middle with an interlocking groove on the other side making for easy installation and a seamless look.

- **Shiplap** – Similar to tongue and groove, shiplap boards consist of a notch on the top of one side with another notch along the bottom of the other side. The board is then laid flat against the wall interlocking on top of each other.
- **On center (OC)** – On center is a measurement to determine spacing. For example, with patio covers, measuring the center of one post to the center of another is used to frame the construction, regardless of the size of each of the posts.
- **Rough** – Rough lumber planks typically have a thicker size that can also vary from board to board. The texture is rough to the touch. They deliver a more rustic look for fences.
- **Resawn** – Wood that's resawn to a specific dimension and texture to create uniform planks and brighten up the appearance of the wood.
- **Surfaced 4 Sides - S4S** – Finished lumber surfaced on four sides that are uniform in thickness and smoothness.
- **Fire-rated** – Designation for materials that have fire resistance built into the construction, a term commonly used for building projects in Southern California.
- **WUI** – An acronym that stands for wildland-urban interface and is defined by an area where a home and wildland vegetation intermingle. When sourcing materials that are WUI-approved, they must be specifically designed to mitigate the risk from wildfire to life and property.

Talk to the Fencing Specialist

Fencing helps to frame your property, whether you want added privacy, a decorative upgrade, or a combination of the two. There are various styles, materials, and accessories to choose from to customize it and create your ideal outdoor space. We invite you to stop into one of our stores to chat with our specialist about your fencing project.

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