



Everyday Environmental Stewardship

Wood Fencing

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Key issues:

Material; Transportation; Durability;
Waste Management

Stewardship Opportunity

Green and Appealing

Fences are everywhere — backyards, property lines, parking lots, and in recreation areas. Most of us are able to determine what kind of fencing we use at both our houses and our houses of worship. When making a decision about fencing, considerations include: material, toxic contribution, cost, waste removal and aesthetics.

Much of the information in this report comes from a project conducted at All Saints Parish, our house of worship, located in Brookline. The fence that we sought to repair was a wood stockade fence that was over twenty-years-old and held in place by wooden poles. (Pictured at right.) Not a pretty sight! Our final product was a wood fence similar to the old one. The new fence was constructed through a process that ensures good environmental stewardship. The fence is consistent with US Green Building Council standards and it meets LEED-Existing Building standards.



Wood Fencing

We did not use pressure treated lumber because it leaches toxins to the ground. Similarly, we did not want to use preservatives that leach dangerous substances into the ground. Leaching from fencing is unlikely to cause direct harm to humans, but it causes indirect harm to humans by tainting the water table. The toxins can also harm the animals that live there. Thus we used unfinished (not pressure treated) 3/4" stockade fencing panels of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified white cedar. (See the photo at the top of this page.) We did not use bamboo as a fence material because it isn't durable in cold weather. We looked into recycled wood, but we found it to be overpriced and unattractive, so we decided to stick with untreated lumber. The white cedar we used came from New Brunswick, Canada and was purchased from Ideal Fence in Watertown, MA. After installation, the fence and wood posts were treated with a non-toxic sealant that penetrates and protects the wood. The product we used was *Seal-Once Waterproofer*. The non-toxic sealant tends to be slightly more expensive than the standard brands, but it is worth it because the sealant lasts a long time. The wood is the same price as other cedars and can be used for railings and decks as well.

Disposing of Old Fence

The process of disposing of the old fence is as environmentally important as the selection of a new fence. Old fencing that is in good condition can be sold for re-use. For us, most of the fencing was not suitable for re-use. Instead it was taken to a recycling center and ground up for mulch. To find a recycling center near you, visit www.earth911.com and enter your zip code.

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