

Fence.....

People install fences for a variety of reasons. With folks now using the internet early in the buying process as a research tool, it's easy to track purpose. When looking at the search terms for types of fences – Rover rules! 'Dog fence' is in the number one spot for search volume. 'Picket', 'privacy', 'pool' and 'horse' made up the balance of the five most searched fence type/use terms. Curiously, despite the abundance of 'modern materials' the top two searches are for things that have been around for quite some time. 'Chain link' was by far the most 'searched' for fence product term with 'wood' coming in at a close second. Rounding out the top 5 materials were; 'vinyl', 'cedar' and 'aluminum'. Regardless of what the Google statistics tell us, there are several other motivations for a fence. Very often, fencing is used simply as an attractive yard addition. It may be that it is going to help fulfill the dream of the 'house with the white picket fence', provide a structure for a climbing plant or be the focal point of a landscape. Defining the property line is another popular driving force for fence installation; screening off that old Studebaker, privacy from a nosy neighbor or as a sound barrier might be a few others.



Most often the purpose of the fence is known before the material used to build it is identified and selection is based on several factors. As usual, budget is a consideration along with lifestyle, environment and future plans. If a particular item is warranted to last 20 years or a lifetime and there are no immediate plans for change, it makes sense to spend a bit more. However, it is important to consider where it's being used. For instance, many ornamental aluminum fences have a significant lifespan under normal circumstances but, placed next to the teenager's basketball hoop they wouldn't last long. The architecture of the



residence can also be influential. A galvanized chain link fence with PVC privacy slats and barbed wire at the top might look a tad out of place enclosing the backyard of a Saltbox Colonial. Similarly, it is helpful to know if there is going to be time for maintenance. Many of my father's vacations were spent scraping and painting. You don't see that very often anymore. The single biggest complaint about vinyl is that it looks ...well, that it looks like plastic. With advances in technology matte finish color vinyl fencing is available that gives the appearance of painted wood without the traditional upkeep issues. The manufacturer also offers an online design tool to help you visualize your new fence and the same company produces a wood grain finished vinyl that is incredibly lifelike.



Whatever the style, material and reason for the fence, there are several things that should be considered before the digging begins. First and foremost, you must know the



exact property lines. Be sure that you are aware of the various types of surveys and if they are useable for the construction of a fence. Encroachment is a serious issue that could lead to added expenses in material and labor and a possible lawsuit. The old adage "Good fences make good neighbors" may not apply if you find yourself in this situation. Even if you place it correctly, you could spend a bunch of money on a beautiful fence to make your backyard a retreat from the rat race only to find

that your neighbor now hates you. Despite getting the benefit of the privacy for themselves at no cost, all too often the people next door are actually insulted. It's best to speak with them first and explain why you want or need the fence and that it in no way implies that you are changing or discontinuing your relationship with them or that they have done anything to offend you. Unless of course they actually have. If there is some sort of a 'problem' it would be that much more important to have your property lines staked. Installation techniques of vinyl fence (as described in ASTM Standard F-1999) call for a hole diameter that is 3 times the width of the post. Professional grade vinyl fence posts are usually five inches wide (hollow and are **not** placed over wood). This means that part of the concrete footing will be on the adjacent land if the fence were to be positioned right on the property line. When using concrete, hole diameters

'three times the width of the post' is a pretty good rule of thumb when you're installing a taller, solid panel because of 'wind load'.

In addition to property lines, local ordinances and homeowner's association covenants should be researched. Different areas have different zoning laws and a building permit may be required for fence construction where you live. A call to the local building inspector should be at the top of your 'to do' list. Many towns will only allow a six foot tall fence from the front (corner) of the house to the rear property line. A four foot tall fence would then be allowed from the front of the house to the street. There may be 'set back' requirements at the road and material 'type' prohibitions on corner properties; a solid 'privacy' fence panel may obstruct the vision of drivers approaching an intersection. State and county owned and or maintained roadways usually have some sort of guidelines. On the other hand, pool fences almost always have standards. The BOCA Code (**B**uilding **O**fficials and **C**ode **A**dministrators) serves as the model for the pool fence code of virtually every state but local jurisdictions may impose additional imperatives. State codes are generally a minimum standard and your community may have more restrictive ordinances. A copy of the code is usually supplied with the issuance of the building permit for the pool or it is available through the link below. In areas where no permit is required for the pool or its enclosure; careful review of drowning statistics and insurance requirements is suggested before opting for no fence.

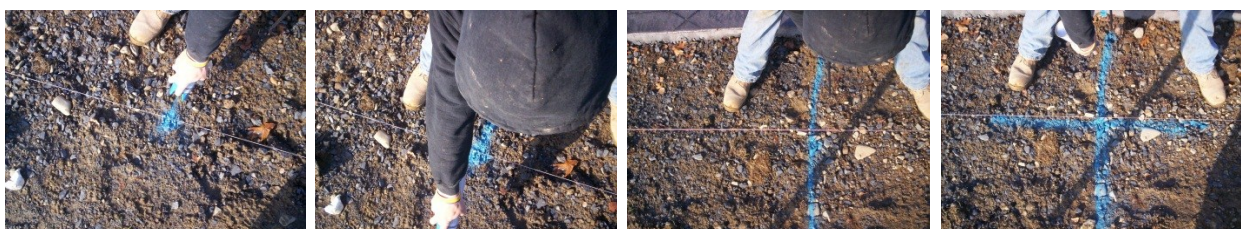
Another issue is the possibility of what the insurance companies refer to as 'underground perils'. The PIPES Act of 2006 (**P**ipeline **I**nspection **P**rotection **E**nforcement and **S**afety) required the establishment of a national three digit toll free phone number to request identification of underground utilities. 'Markouts' of company owned service are provided at no charge and within 72 hours (3 business days). Be sure to ask about the accuracy of the mark when you call into 811.



Once the fence style and type have been selected and the permit and digging issues have been addressed, it's time to consider how the labor will be handled. For installation longevity in areas prone to freezing, it is often best to dig to the frost line and add 6 inches. This has little to do with wind load and more with the problem of heaving. This can mean a lot of digging. It would be wise to investigate the rental of a machine mounted auger. Many rental houses offer a 'Dingo' or similar piece of equipment and it is well worth the expense. When looking for a suitable unit, it's important to examine the power head to insure that it has the ability to move left and right as well as forward and back. This will allow you manipulate the bit around rock to dislodge it. Augers are not intended to drill through rock. A common misconception is that when digging difficulty is encountered due to large rocks (not boulders) a smaller bit should be used. However, it is just the opposite. A larger bit offers more surface area at the teeth to dislodge those obstructions which is why it's important to examine the teeth, the pilot (at center of the bit) and the overall shape of the bit. Bits that are shaped like a screw indicate poor teeth changing habits and will present problems when digging. Hole centers should be marked with a very big X and it's best to have the job laid out completely before you pick up the machine.



Using a large mark will give orientation and help you get back on track if your bit wanders a little.



Fence installation is no different from any other construction project. Fence posts require a solid base so there is no settling. Weather the hole is dug by hand or with a machine; always remove the loose soil from the bottom and tamp it firm.



While shopping for your new fence, ask if the salesperson has any hands on experience with the product and if they'll be willing, able and available to answer questions and provide guidance if the need arises as you install. Survey the installation and see if it can be done in small increments. Investment grade, professional quality fence materials purchased from a reputable dealer are usually available in smaller 'job lots'. Starting with a reduced portion of a larger project can allow for more control and help you feel less overwhelmed than if you had a mountain of fence sitting in your driveway. Likewise, when working with a product you're not familiar with, a lesser segment affords the opportunity to become accustomed to it. Assistance from family or friends can make the project move more quickly and everyone involved can have the satisfaction of a job well done. No matter what type of fence you're going to install, it is possible to achieve professional results with proper planning, some simple instructions and few basic skills.

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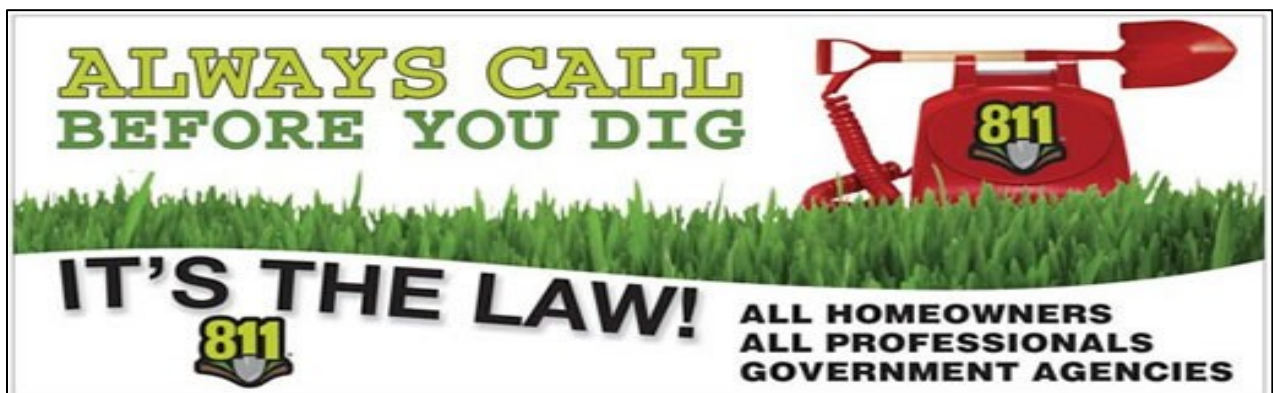
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- FAQ's on Land Survey Issues - http://www.landsurveyor.us/learn_c1.htm
 - Types of Surveys - http://www.landsurveyor.us/learn_b1.htm
 - Fences and Neighbor Disputes - <http://www.videojug.com/interview/fences-and-neighbors>
 - Know What's Below; Call 811 Before You Dig. It's The Law! - <http://www.call811.com/state-specific.aspx>
 - PIPES Act – Top 10 Priorities – <http://www.profencesupply.com/files/47714120.pdf>
 - Grand Illusions Fence Design Center - http://tools.diyonline.com/servlet/GIB_Base/estf_fence_startpage.html
 - BOCA Code for Pool Fence - <http://www.profencesupply.com/files/42072666.pdf>
 - ASTM and Pool Cover Specifications - http://www.astm.org/SNEWS/MARCH_2003/stoner_mar03.html
 - United States Frost Line Map - <http://www.profencesupply.com/files/47322995.pdf>



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