

Garden Fencing

Community and School Gardens

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Fencing in a garden may be useful to keep out animals, to protect a garden from vandalism, to define garden boundaries or just to help organize a garden area. However, fencing can be expensive, and the purpose and design should be considered carefully to avoid wasting money.

Purpose

Surrounding a community garden with a fence makes sense for many reasons. A properly designed fence can help keep out animal pests like rabbits, dogs and deer, which are a major garden pest in Georgia and are just as likely to be found in urban gardens as in a rural setting. A garden fence can also help deter minor vandalism, though no fence will prevent serious vandals. Fencing will also help redirect foot traffic in public areas.

Animal Fencing

Deer: There are many opinions on proper deer fencing and even more products sold to keep deer out of a garden. There are some basic facts about deer worth noting when planning a garden fence. Deer can jump very high and will also go under a fence if given the opportunity. To keep deer out, a minimum fence height of 6 to 8 feet should be considered. Be sure to anchor the fence to the ground. A mesh, solid or electric fence can be effective, and there are many design options available. Deer are creatures of habit and can be “trained” to a certain extent to stay out of an area. There are almost as many home remedies and repelling products that work as those that don’t. If deer are a serious problem, it is best to consult with a wildlife expert.

Cats and dogs: A 3-foot-high wire fence can be very effective for keeping out dogs and cats. Use a 5-foot roll and bend the bottom 24 inches of the fence toward the outside of the garden to form an apron to discourage digging.

Rabbits: A 2-foot-high chickenwire fence with 1-inch hexagonal mesh openings is recommended for keeping rabbits out of the garden. Buy a 3-foot-high roll and bend a 12-inch apron of the fence mesh toward the outside of the garden. Bury it several inches deep to prevent digging.

Raccoons and Opossums: To keep out raccoons and opossums, you need fencing that provides an underground barrier and is difficult to climb. Consider using a 60- to 72-inch fence. Bury a 24-inch horizontal apron several inches underground on the outside of the garden. Leave the top 18 inches of the 36- or 48-inch-high fence unattached. This section will bend over as the animal climbs, preventing it from getting over the top. If you have difficulty finding 60-inch or 72-inch fence, the apron and vertical parts can be made from two different rolls. Be sure to fasten the two edges together with hog rings or tie wire. For further security, electric fence wire can be run along the top. Spreading lightweight netting on the ground around your garden may discourage these animals from approaching the fence.

Fence Materials

A wide range of fence materials is available. Depending on the garden site, purpose of the fence and budget, it is possible for community volunteers to build a strong and durable fence.

Plastic fences tend to be light and flimsy, but are the least expensive. When properly supported, plastic can be a cost-effective way to keep animals out. With some creative construction, a plastic fence can even be made to look attractive.



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Metal (wire) is a good material for fences because it will last for a long time. Wire fences are either welded or woven in some way to hold them together. The thickness of the metal is called the gauge; the lower the gauge number, the thicker and stronger the wire. Wire fence material is often galvanized to increase the life expectancy. Fencing treated AFTER manufacturing will last even longer.

Wood can be used for posts, fence panels or both. Wood fencing typically costs more than wire but is considered more attractive by some people. There are many different styles of wood fences, from pickets to privacy panels. The height and spacing will likely be determined by the need to fence out animals. In some situations, wire fencing is attached to the lower portion of a wood fence to have the appearance of a wood fence and the animal control of the wire. Little information is available on the life of wood fence panels, but the following information is available on wood fence posts.

Life Expectancy of Wood Fence Posts (in years)		
Type of Wood	Untreated	Treated
Birch, Maple	2-4	15-20
Bald Cypress	7-15	20-25
Oak (White)	10	15-20
Oak (Red)	5	15
Beech	3-7	15
Black Locust	20-25	Not necessary
Redwood	10-15	20-30
Pine, Poplar, Sycamore, Sweet Gum	3-7	25-30
Cedar	15-20	20-25
Black Gum, Hickory	3-7	15-20

Fence Types

Chain link fencing is one way to enclose an area and keep unwanted creatures out. Chain link fencing comes in rolls from 25 to 100 feet long and 4 to 6 feet high, with prefabricated gates up to 5 feet wide. Although a chain link fence can be installed with semi-skilled labor, it takes considerable time to install correctly and the components are fairly expensive.

Welded wire and **woven wire** fencing is perfect for keeping larger animals out of gardens. Like chain link fencing, it is also available with a vinyl coating, usually green or brown. This material comes in various gauges, with openings from 2" x 2" up to 36-, 48- or 60-inch widths.

Electric fencing is normally used to contain livestock. With low-output chargers, electric fencing can be used in residential settings for pet containment or keeping animals out of garden areas. Power for the fence is typically from a battery, but solar-powered units are becoming increasingly popular.

Hex netting, or **poultry fence**, is a lighter, inexpensive option for protecting a garden. This woven product is made with galvanized wire, which makes it pliable, easy to handle and weather-resistant. This type of fence is available in 18- to 22-gauge with a hex opening of 1 or 2 inches. It is available in heights of 24-, 36- and 48-inch in rolls of various lengths up to 150 feet.

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