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Fantastic Fencing

...From the pages of Suburban Home and Garden Resource Guide...

Details make the difference when it comes to custom fence design.

You've been wanting to install a fence for quite some time, but can't quite figure out how to make it look different from the fences in your neighbors' yards. Turns out the difference is in the details like finials, finishes, form and materials. If you're in the market for a fence that stands out from the pack, here's how to make it happen.



The Basics: Form, Function and Maintenance

Fencing design is essentially about form, function and, of course, maintenance. While many homeowners opt for function over form by choosing a standard six-foot-high plain-panel privacy fence, plenty of homeowners are looking for something a bit more stylish to reflect their home's character or even their own personalities.

Burger Fence Company in Barnsboro, NJ, is one company happy to accommodate clients who prefer custom fence designs. While many of its standard fences, including vinyl ones, sport the traditional look complete with pickets and finials, the company understands that some homeowners are looking for something more unique.

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"Estate gates, garden gates, privacy fences, entrance gates, we can handle just about any request," says Mike Liguori, residential sales manager at Burger. "One client brought in a picture from the back cover of a magazine and we were able to fabricate it." Liguori also recalls a client who had spotted a wood fence in a neighboring town that she thought would complement her colonial-style home perfectly. The catch was that she wanted her fence to be made in vinyl for easy maintenance. "We were able to make it happen for her," he says, adding that Burger Fence does all the vinyl fabrication itself.

Liguori says that about 75 percent to 85 percent of Burger's clients prefer vinyl and aluminum because of their low maintenance factor. Aluminum has a powder-coat factory finish that requires no maintenance, and vinyl never needs repainting, requiring just periodic hosing off. John Digianivittorio of American Discount Fence in Marlton, NJ, agrees. "The six-foot-high white-vinyl-panel privacy fence is our most requested fence style," he says, adding khaki and almond are two other vinyl fence colors that are popular with customers.

The Details: Take Your Fence from Boring to Wow

While many homeowners request privacy fences without fancy details, it's usually not the case when it comes to entrance and estate gates. "Most of the entrance and estate gates we do are arched using [graduated] spindles," says Digianivittorio. Fences can curve horizontally, too, such as the vinyl fence that Burger Fence custom fabricated that was previously mentioned. "We had to bend the vinyl in two directions to make a compound radius," says Liguori, who has been unable to locate another vinyl fence like it anywhere else in the country.

Digianivittorio says six-foot-high cedar privacy fences are also in high demand, but customers who want a personal touch can add a decorative top. "Latticework, stepped pickets, a closed bar with a middle spindle, or a scalloped top are a few of the options," he says.

While not as popular as vinyl, aluminum fences are another option, particularly if privacy is not the main objective. He says customers with small children who need a pool fence often prefer using aluminum. It's easy to see through, making it ideal for keeping an eye on the kids. But sometimes aesthetics drive the decision behind an aluminum fence. "Aluminum basically replaced the old wrought-iron fences, so when clients want a look of beauty and elegance they go for aluminum," says Digianivittorio.

Liguori of Burger Fence says there are many ways you can give some flair to an aluminum fence, including finials and curves. "We have a client right now that we custom made a curved railing for to follow the curved lines of the patio," says Liguori. The bottom line is that if you're a homeowner who doesn't want a cookie-cutter fence that looks just like your neighbor's, skip the big box stores and instead head for your local fence company. As Liguori says, "Any idea a customer brings us, we are able to come up with a practical design and implement it for them."

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