

# DAY'S END

Focus on good design and clever construction



## Updating a Formal Fence

by Kyle Diamond

We've done quite a bit of work on a client's 1847 Greek revival house, which is located in New York's historic Hudson Valley. Recently, the client asked us to replicate the unique fence surrounding a 30-by-30-foot English-style formal garden. Though not historic, the 12-year-old red-cedar fence was already starting to deteriorate.

We originally wanted to use locust posts, but couldn't find any that would take a smooth paint finish. Instead, we used clear red-cedar 4x4s, and tried to give them a little more durability by setting them in plastic sleeves filled with stone, so that water would drain away more easily. We dug 10-inch-diameter 40-inch-deep holes for the posts with a two-man auger, and then set 6-inch-diameter triple-wall drainage pipe into the holes and backfilled. Before placing the posts in the pipe-lined holes, we brushed on plenty of Copper-Green Wood Preservative ([coppergreen.com](http://coppergreen.com)), taking care to soak the end-grain thoroughly. Then we primed, painted, and installed the posts and backfilled with 1/2-inch stone.

We rebuilt the rails using Boral TruExterior trim, a fly-ash-based product that we've used a lot lately for house trim ([boralamerica.com](http://boralamerica.com)). Unlike cellular PVC and other synthetic materials, it's available in the 2x4 and 2x6 dimensions that we wanted to use to frame the fence, and it's much more rigid. It's

also rated for ground contact, giving me confidence it would work well in this application.

Like much synthetic trim, Boral has one smooth and one textured face. Since both faces would show in places, we planed the textured face smooth prior to installation. We also cut a slight double bevel on the 2x6 top rail and kerfed the bottom edges on both sides for drainage, using a table saw. We sanded any milled surfaces smooth prior to installation and fastened the pieces together with coated Bronze Star trim-head screws ([screw-products.com](http://screw-products.com)). Those jobs proved to be dusty, even with a vacuum hooked up to our tools; good dust collection is a must when working with Boral. Otherwise, it acts just like wood.

Boral is a lot denser than cedar, so we mounted the heavy gate on beefier hinges than were used originally. We repaired and re-used the original gateway's arched arbor, then primed and painted everything with an acrylic exterior finish. Finally, we fastened green vinyl-coated metal rabbit screening to the inside of the fence with stainless steel staples to keep small critters out of the herbs and vegetables planted in the center of the box-wood hedges that define the pathways inside the garden. ❖

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