

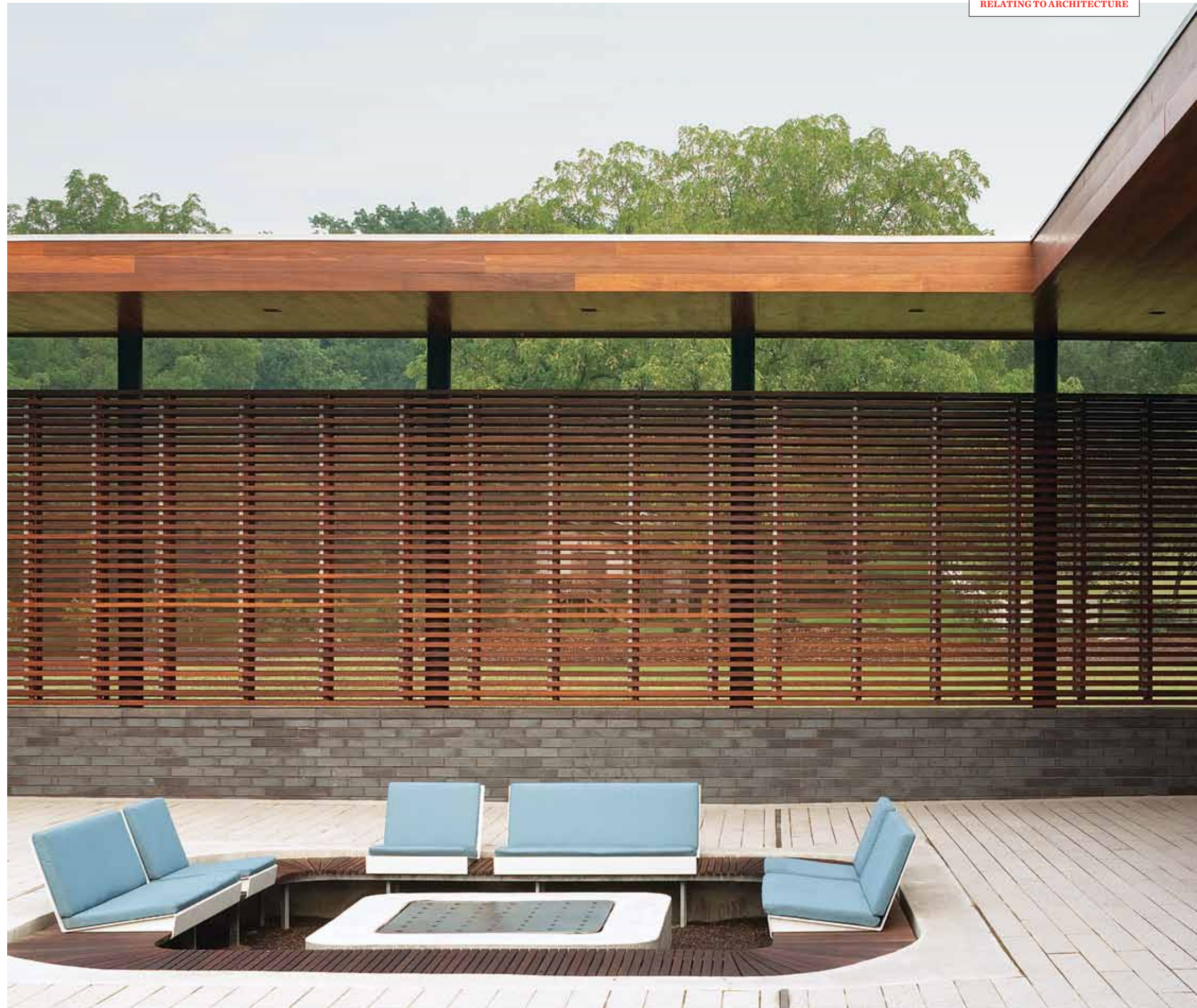
THE ART OF THE WOOD FENCE

The earliest known wood fences emerged as a byproduct of agricultural life, where their sole purpose was to prevent livestock from nibbling at villagers' valued crops. Over time, they've broadened in function and form. While we still use fences to keep things out (car noise, deer, unsightly views) or in (children, pets, privacy), we also look to them as a way to extend architecture into the garden, to create dramatic backdrops for plantings, to stand alone as sculptural focal points, and to carve out intimate spaces within larger swaths of property. Wood remains popular because it is such a malleable material. It adapts to any style, from traditional to whimsical and minimalist to midcentury. It fits all budgets: Mahogany, ipe, and cedar are higher-end options; spruce and pine are more affordable and suited to lengthy runs. And it can be protected with a stain or (as often happens with rot-resistant cedar) allowed to age with the weather. What wood always offers, though, is a bridge between our natural and constructed lives.

by
LISE FUNDERBURG

The Big Connector
Underneath a covered walkway that links this Springfield, Missouri, residence to its pool cabana, Hufft Projects created a slat fence of ipe mounted on steel. The structure screens the pool from passers-by while allowing light and air to pass through, and it complements the brick, ipe, and glass palette of the ranch home, extending its horizontal lines.

MIKE SINCLAIR



BACKDROPS AND COUNTERPOINTS



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❶ In the Swim

At his seaside home in West Sussex, England, garden designer Mark Laurence couldn't resist echoing the waveforms of the nearby ocean; he uses Western cedar treated with a seagrass tint stain. Laurence filled his beds with plants that respond to wind movement, such as phormium, *Stipa arundinacea*, and *Teucrium fruticans*. His fence runs east-west and creates a south-facing microclimate, which allowed the *Lavandula dentata*, considered tender, to flower all winter.

❷ Inherit the Wind

On a Manhattan rooftop, Workshop/apd created bamboo-filled planters to match the fence made of ipe. The rich-tone horizontal slats of wood contrast the wispy verticals of the grass stalks without feeling fussy, which suits the modern lines of the adjacent loft. While fence boards are set close together to ensure privacy and cut down on wind, they still allow for good air flow.

❸ A Meadow Lark

At his 12-acre topiary and large tree nursery in Buggenhout, Belgium, Guido Spruyt built this enclosure, inspired by Scottish sheep fences, out of fir poles treated with creosote oil. Each pole is individually set into the ground, spaced close enough that his flock of sheep can't pass through. Spruyt likes the way the fence provides a base-board contrast to all of the surrounding greenery and says he actually chose his breed of sheep to match the brownish-gray fence.

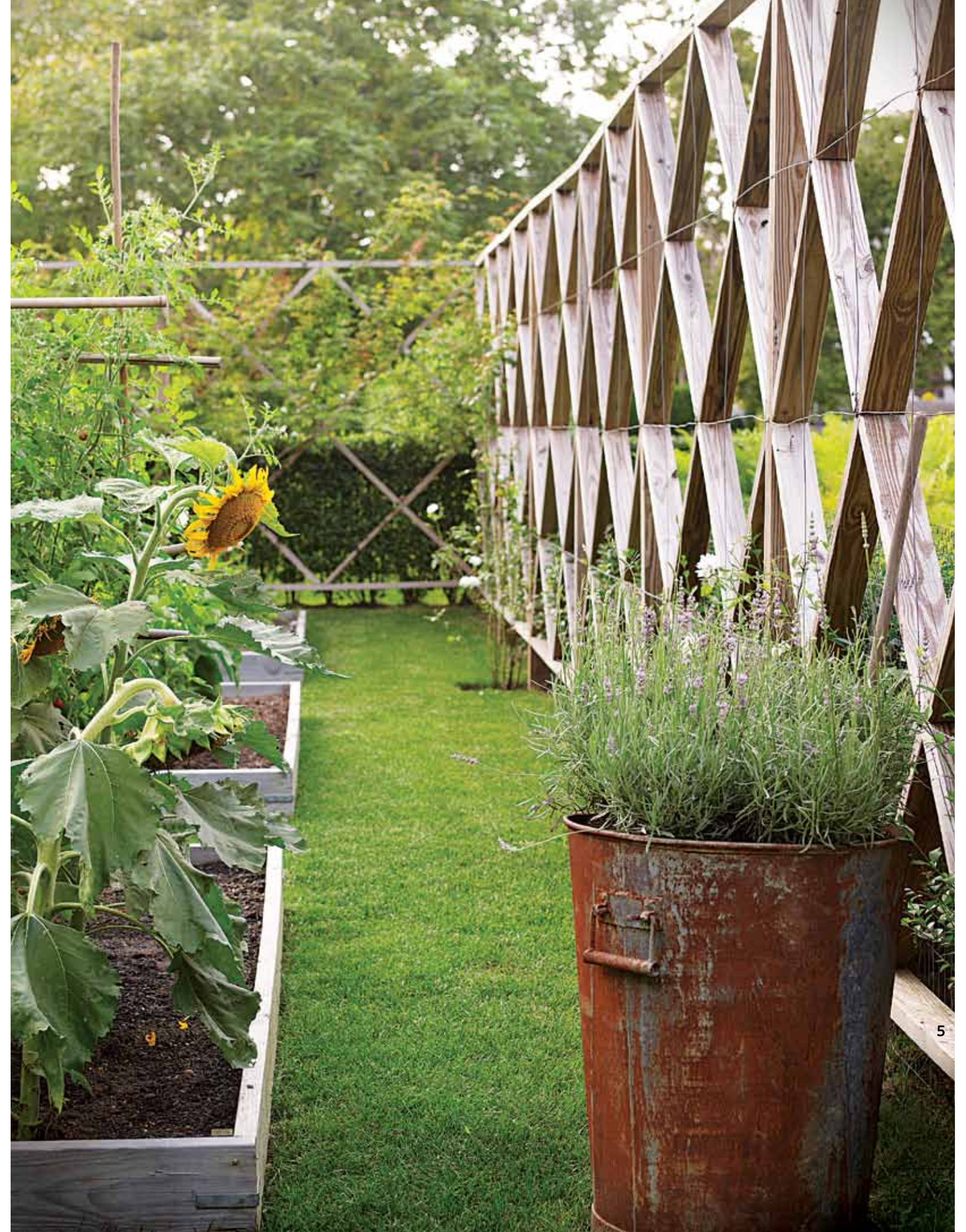
❹ The Great Imposter

While bamboo is actually a grass, it brings the same organic warmth to bear as wood when used in fences. For the 2011 RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show, Kevin Young backed his Asian-theme garden with a fence made of thick canes. Young screwed the canes onto a support, then covered the hardware with crisscrosses of black string — a subtle but strong statement behind the clipped *Ilex crenata*.

❺ Open-Air Courtyard

Almost hidden from the house by a five-minute walk through terraces and fern gardens, landscape designer Lisa Bynon's vegetable and cutting garden cum outdoor dining room in Southampton, New York, comes as a surprise encounter. A tall deer fence made of cedar (and reinforced with nearly invisible wire) protects her raised beds without cutting off the surrounding garden. The fence's bold graphic lines are an exploded version of the low fences Bynon saw at Hatfield House in Hertfordshire, England.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CLIVE NICHOLS; TOM OLCOTT; MARIANNE MAJERUS; PHILIPPE PERDREAU; FACING PAGE: NGOC MINH NGO



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❶ Sleight of Land

At Veddw House in Wales, garden writer Anne Wareham covered an ugly chain-link fence with black-stained roofing lathes. To address the uneven terrain, she and her husband, Charles Hawes, left the tops of the boards uneven, which some say will deter deer.

❷ Lattice 2.0

In the backyard of a San Francisco home, Feldman Architecture and landscape designer Loretta Gargan built a fence that takes a fresh look at the conventional lattice-topped shadowbox combination. A base of wide and closely placed ipe slats offers privacy while the thinner slats at the top invite more air and light to pass through.

❸ (Almost) Ready-Made

In Granada Hills, California, Dante Pascual and Bill Huntley enclosed their Joseph Eichler-built house with off-the-shelf wood siding. To reduce the number of cuts, they used 4-foot by 8-foot panels, cutting some in half to make the horizontal inset panels.



WOOD ADAPTS TO ANY STYLE,
FROM TRADITIONAL TO WHIMSICAL AND
MINIMALIST TO MIDCENTURY.

DAVID LAUER, FACING PAGE.
FROM TOP: CLIVE NICHOLS, PAUL DYER

COMBINING MATERIALS



1

WE USE FENCES TO CREATE DRAMATIC BACKDROPS
AND TO CARVE OUT INTIMATE
SPACES WITHIN LARGER SWATHS OF PROPERTY.



2

❶ Mixed Media

At a Los Altos Hills, California, residence, ipe boards top a stucco wall to help anchor a cantilevered bench. Arterra Landscape Architects packed the fence with purpose: It serves as a retaining wall, screens an unwanted view, and uses elongated horizontal lines to make the garden seem larger. Its highly sculptural design also makes it a focal point, enlivened by such plantings as *Phormium tenax* 'Jack Spratt' along its base, *Phormium* 'Dazzler' in the bowl, and *Miscanthus sinensis* in the background.

❷ Follow the Lines

For a Portland, Oregon, home, WA Design created a pool enclosure by fixing Western red cedar planks and stainless-steel cables to wide-flange Corten steel posts. The intention was to meet stringent safety standards without sacrificing transparency or naturalism. So while the fence's horizontal lines follow a consistently organized rhythm, everything else varies, including the angles of the posts.

Read All About It

Somehow, in between building his beautiful fences, decks, and arbors (by hand and one at a time), Southern California master craftsman Peter Kirsch-Korff found the time to construct one of the most informative wood fence websites around: kirsch-korff.com. On it, he offers practical, specific advice about how to pick wood, compare estimates, and think through such basic considerations as use, neighbors, wind, and water. Kirsch-Korff wins collegiality points for recommending quality builders in other parts of the country and for offering up a reading list, which includes:

1. **Wooden Fences** by George Nash (Taunton Press)
2. **Fences, Walls & Gates** by Scott Atkinson (Oxmoor House)
3. **Walls: Elements of Garden and Landscape Architecture** by Günter Mader and Elke Zimmerman (W. W. Norton & Co.)
4. **Fences, Gates & Trellises** by James Barrett (Creative Homeowner Press)
5. **The Fence Bible** by Jeff Beneke (Storey Publishing)
6. **How to Build Wooden Gates and Picket Fences: 100 Classic Designs** by Kevin Geist (Stackpole Books)

STAIN GANG

When finishing a wood fence, says Russ Neale of the venerable Cabot line of stain products, first consider the look you want. Choosing opacity (from transparent to solid) and tint will depend on how much you want to reveal the substrate's natural grain and color or hide uneven tones. Although wood tones and transparents continue to be the most popular among stain finishes, more homeowners are turning their fences into focal points through two-tone combinations and colors. Test out your stain, Neale suggests, in light of all the factors involved, "It's more art than science because the color you will see is a combination of the wood underneath and the color and opacity of the stain itself." ¶ Proper fence prep is critical, says Jeff Wilson, an HGTV host and Thompson's WaterSeal spokesman. "You want it to be spotless, clean, and dry," he says. Cleaning products and moisture monitors can help and are widely available, says Lara Toomin of Benjamin Moore's Arborcoat line. ¶ The next step is to pick the right product. Stains are generally best because they penetrate the wood, whereas paints and boat varnishes sit on its surface as a film that can crack, peel, or allow moisture and microbes to set up shop underneath. Any high-quality stain will also protect against rot and UV-ray damage (the more opaque, the more sun-fighting pigment), and it will flex with wood fibers as they contract and expand with the weather. But the product must be properly applied. A one-coat stain, for example, might be so hydrophobic that it will repel itself if given a second coat. The takeaway? "Always read the directions," says Wilson. "Always." — *L.F.*

1. Natural Redwood A semi-transparent finish that evokes Western ranches and the great outdoors. Thompson's WaterSeal Deck & House Waterproofing Latex Stain (thompsonswaterseal.com).
2. Rocky Tundra A solid opacity that sets off all types of plantings beautifully. Cabot Acrylic Siding Stain (cabotstain.com).
3. Rustic Red To protect damp wood (such as freshly pressure-treated lumber), use this tinted waterproofer in lieu of a stain. Thompson's WaterSeal

Advanced Tinted Wood Protector (thompsonswaterseal.com).
4. Juniper A semitransparent finish. Thompson's WaterSeal Deck & House Waterproofing Latex Stain (thompsonswaterseal.com).
5. Black A classic and stately solid, especially suited for modern fence styles or as a dramatic backdrop to a perennial bed. Cabot Acrylic Siding Stain (cabotstain.com).
6. White A solid that's perfect for pickets. Cabot Acrylic Siding Stain (cabotstain.com).
7. Olivewood An understated gray-green in a solid opacity. Thompson's WaterSeal Deck & House Waterproofing Latex Stain (thompsonswaterseal.com).
8. Natural Cedar Another tint that can be used on damp wood. Thompson's WaterSeal

Advanced Tinted Wood Protector (thompsonswaterseal.com).
9. Amherst Gray A semitransparent that recalls New England cottages. Benjamin Moore Arborcoat Waterborne Exterior Stain (benjaminmoore.com).
10. Spruce Mist In its semitransparent formulation, a subtle shading allows the wood to shine through. Thompson's WaterSeal Deck & House Waterproofing Latex Stain (thompsonswaterseal.com).
11. Spruce Mist What a difference opacity makes! In

solid, the color is front and center. Thompson's WaterSeal Deck & House Waterproofing Latex Stain (thompsonswaterseal.com).
12. Barn Red A solid that's bright, friendly, and farmy. Benjamin Moore Arborcoat Waterborne Exterior Stain (benjaminmoore.com).
13. Amherst Gray While sharing the same tonal characteristics as its semitransparent formulation, this solid version might be suited to cover the imperfections of an older or weathered fence. Benjamin Moore Arborcoat Waterborne Exterior Stain (benjaminmoore.com).
14. Mahogany For the best of both worlds, a translucent tint. Benjamin Moore Arborcoat Waterborne Exterior Stain (benjaminmoore.com).



ZACH STOVALL