

Ask the DESIGNER

Each month we help sort out a reader's problem garden with clever advice from the best experts in the garden design world



OUR OLD FENCE NEEDS REPLACING. We want to create a statement but also need a boundary that adds some much-needed privacy. What can we do?
Ruth Young, Berkshire



"LOOK AT ALL THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE AS FENCE DESIGN

is so much more interesting now than the standard overlap fencing of the past," says Sara Jane Rothwell from londongardendesigner.com. "The owners of this beautiful garden, pictured right, had a similar problem. The boundary fence offered little privacy and parts had rotted after decades of neglect! My advice was to install a new wooden boundary and then add individual metal panels for a modern look."

* Plan it

Work out how many metres of fencing you will need by measuring the existing boundary fence. The most affordable option will be all horizontal or all vertical fencing. Expect to pay from £21.50 upwards for a 6 x 6ft panel, wikes.co.uk. If you're doing it yourself, get a rough idea of the cost of materials including fence posts and supports from sites such as travisperkins.co.uk, and for more fencing styles, try forestgarden.co.uk. Or get a rough estimate for materials and labour from a local builder or garden landscaper.

* Work the fence line

If you don't go above 2m, planning permission is not usually required for putting up a fence, which will save time and money. The boundary

fence is a must but adding a designer walled area within it will help to create a real statement and give the effect of a separate room outdoors. Add an awning or cover in the space and it'll create a private area and block out the neighbours. The metal panels used here are made from Corten steel. Sara Jane chose this metal due to the natural way it fades to a burgundy-red and because it's so hard-wearing and requires no painting or maintenance costs. As a price guide, a Corten steel Blank Decorative Balustrade Panel is £213.99/3ft 2in at primrose.co.uk. Save money by finding a local metal fabricator who can cut pieces to the size you want. To install, the supporting posts are simply concreted in and the steel panels welded to them.

* Use screening trees

Pleached hornbeam trees reach 1.5m above the fence line. They are deciduous, which means they shed their leaves in winter. Sara Jane says: "Hornbeams give good coverage in summer. Although deciduous, they tend to keep their brown leaves in winter. As this garden was severely overlooked, anything that helped create privacy was welcomed." Eight fully



The garden had no shelter and was overlooked, with an old fence past its prime!

grown trees were planted 1.6m apart and eight across, creating instant impact.

* Create shelter

A roof-type feature over the area alongside the metal panels will give the feeling of an outdoor room or inner sanctuary and block prying eyes. A sail shade awning will work, or if the budget allows, go for a cantilever parasol with the main support cemented in the ground. This stylish and sophisticated system means with just one handle you can take it up or down easily depending on the weather. Prices start from around £200 plus ground socket. Try hayesgardenworld.co.uk and wayfair.co.uk.



SARA JANE ROTHWELL, DESIGNER

"Corten panels fade to an organic rust-red to naturally offset neutral greys from furniture and paving and lush, green planting."



* Add the finishing details

Sawn Yorkshire pavers and a strip of gravel trim were set alongside the metal screens. 'Sawn' simply means each paver is diamond sawn on all sides and then honed to a beautiful smooth finish. The same look can be had for a third of the price with porcelain or ceramic tiles at around £17-£50 per m². The gravel edge was used as Corten steel can create a run-off of rust-coloured water that may stain the paving.

* Keep it looking good

The main fencing should be given a lick of oil, stain or paint each year. The Corten panels are maintenance-free as they naturally fade to rust-red, and the gravel surround will just need to be swept.

Easy ways to get the look

- 1 FENCING** Forest Garden Featheredge Fence Panel, 6 x 5ft Multi Packs, H1520 x W1830 x D47mm, from **£138** wickes.co.uk
- 2 TREES** Hornbeam Fresh Pleached Tree 180cm Clear Stem, W180 x H120cm, **£349.99/45L pot** hedgesdirect.co.uk
- 3 STEEL PANELS** Corten steel sheet H2 x W1 x D3mm, **£225** buymetalonline.co.uk
- 4 FIREPIT** 80cm Corten Steel Fire Pit and

Water Bowl, **£119.99** primrose.co.uk

- 5 FLOOR TILES** Pennine Flax Inside-Outside, 900 x 600 x 10mm in GRIP finish for external use, **£44/m²** alistairmackintosh.co.uk
- 6 GRAVEL** 20mm Gravel/Shingle, 850kg bulk bag, **£59.94** mainlandaggregates.co.uk
- 7 OUTDOOR SOFA** Dune Sofa with Sunbrella Cushions, W177 x H79 x D86cm, **£1,154.76** crateandbarrel.com

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Email us, including a picture of your garden, at moderngardens@bauermedia.co.uk