

Your Guide
to Fence
Maintenance





Introduction

Page 3

Cedar Fence Care

Page 4

Split Rail Fence Care

Page 6

Vinyl Fence Care

Page 7

Trex Fence Care

Page 9

Ornamental Iron Fence Care

Page 11

Chain Link Fence Care

Page 13

Masonry Fence Care

Page 14

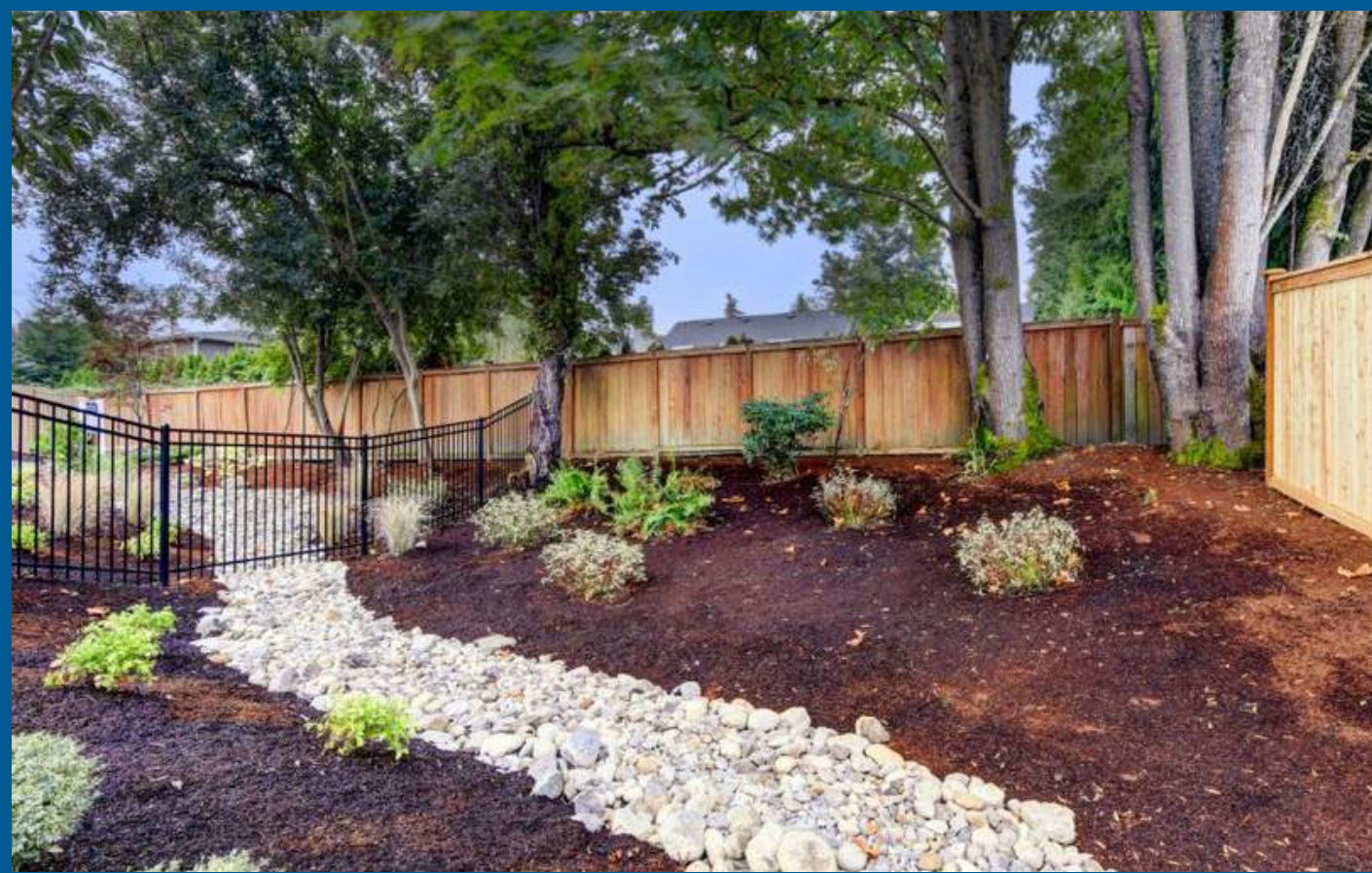
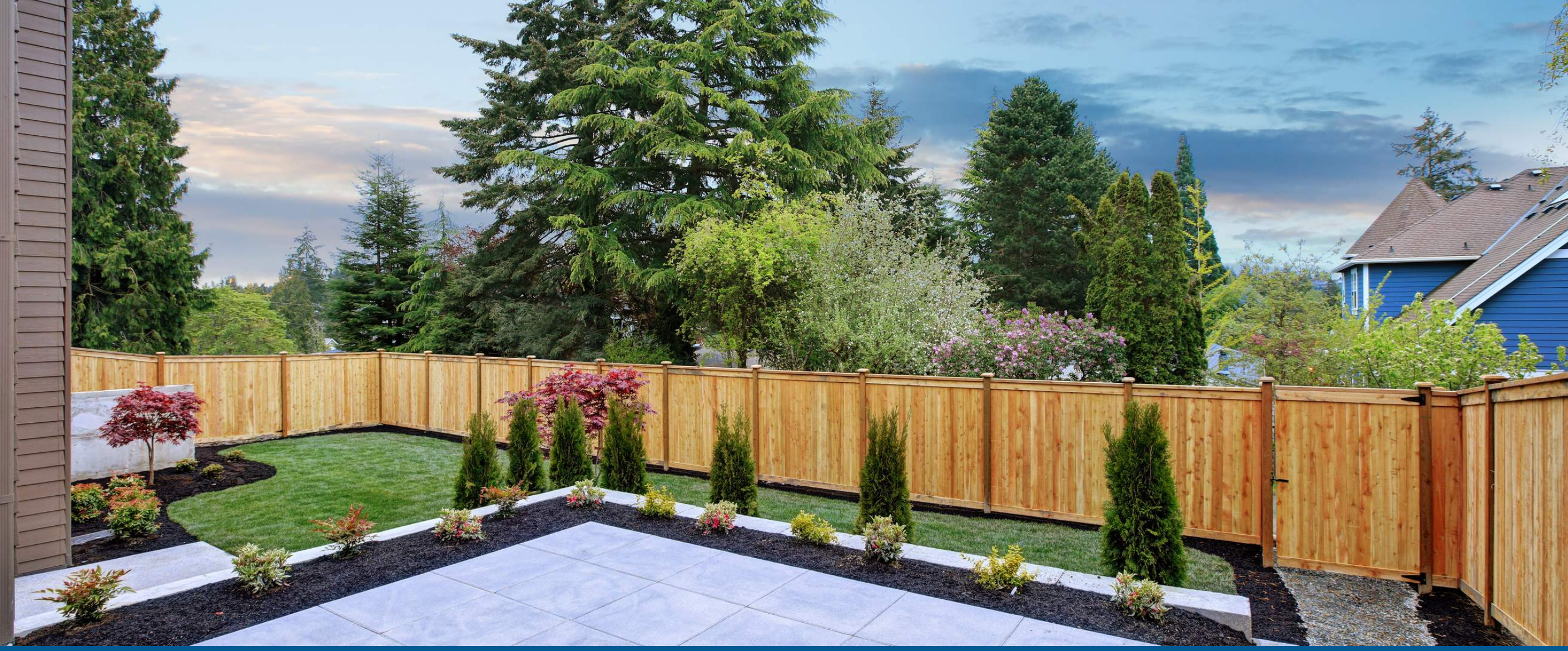
General Preventative Care

Page 16



Introduction

Whether you're hoping to prolong the lifespan of your current fence or you're researching which fence type is best for you, maintenance should be one of your primary considerations. At Split Rail Fence & Supply Company, we believe that the best way to ensure that our customers are satisfied with their fences for years to come is to educate them on the construction, materials, and care instructions for each fence type. This eBook provides helpful tips on how to maintain your cedar, split rail, vinyl, Trex, ornamental iron, chain link, or masonry fence. It also provides an instructive starting point for home owners determining which fence type best meets their needs.



Cedar Fence Care

In addition to their strikingly beautiful warm tones, cedar fences are popular because they are very durable. The natural oils in cedar deter insect attacks and curb warping, rotting, and shrinking. At Split Rail Fence & Supply Company, we add to this natural strength by constructing our fences with galvanized nails and PostMasters, which are invisible, protective sleeves that wrap around fence posts in the ground to further protect them from bacteria exposure and oxygenation.

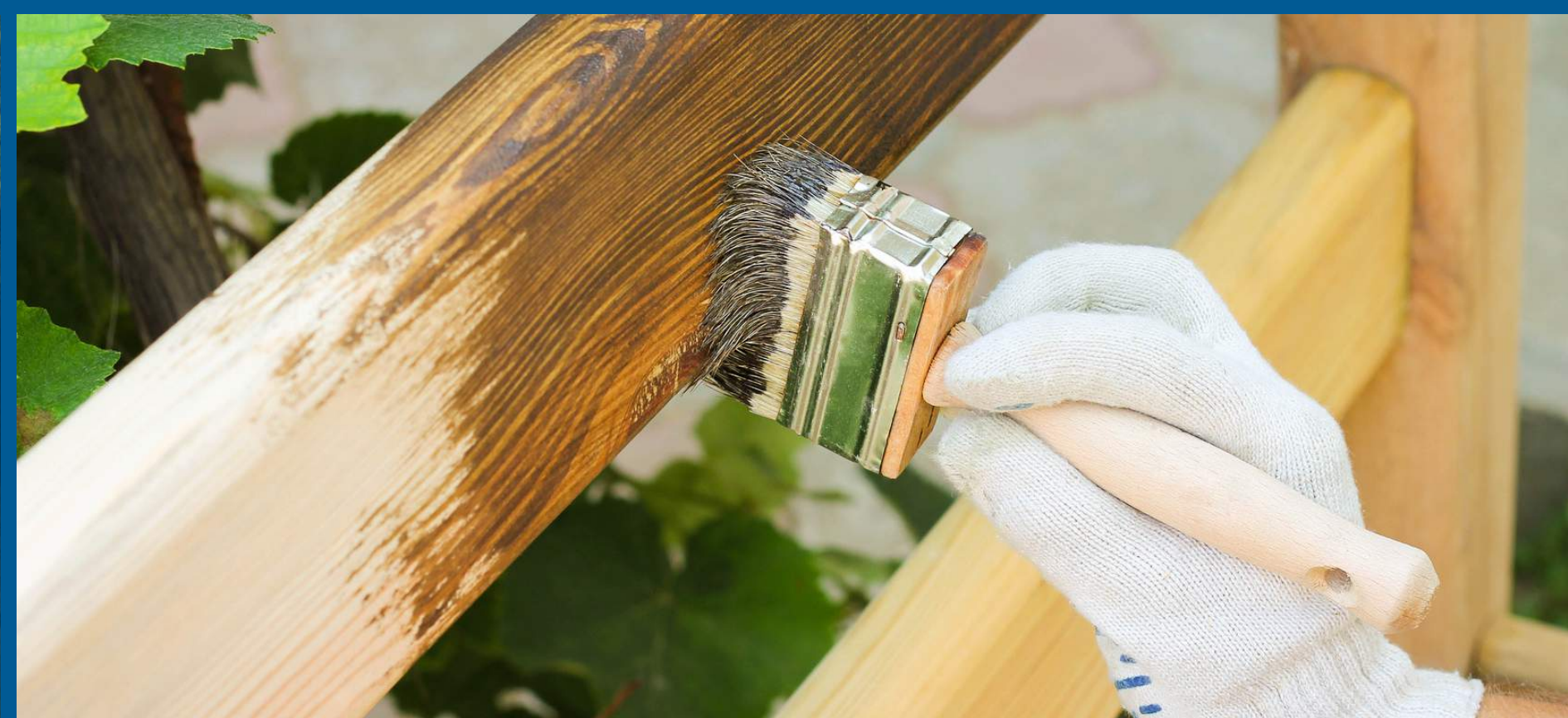
Because cedar is resilient to the elements, cedar fence owners do not need to sand and reseal their fences. In fact, though cedar will, over time, lose its red luster and turn to a vintage-looking grey, the transformed color doesn't reflect a structural decay.



Some homeowners with cedar fences, however, will prefer to seal their fences to maintain a polished aesthetic. In this instance, we recommend linseed oil. When first applied, this oil will appear quite dark, but once it dries, it will return to its natural look but appear more lustrous.

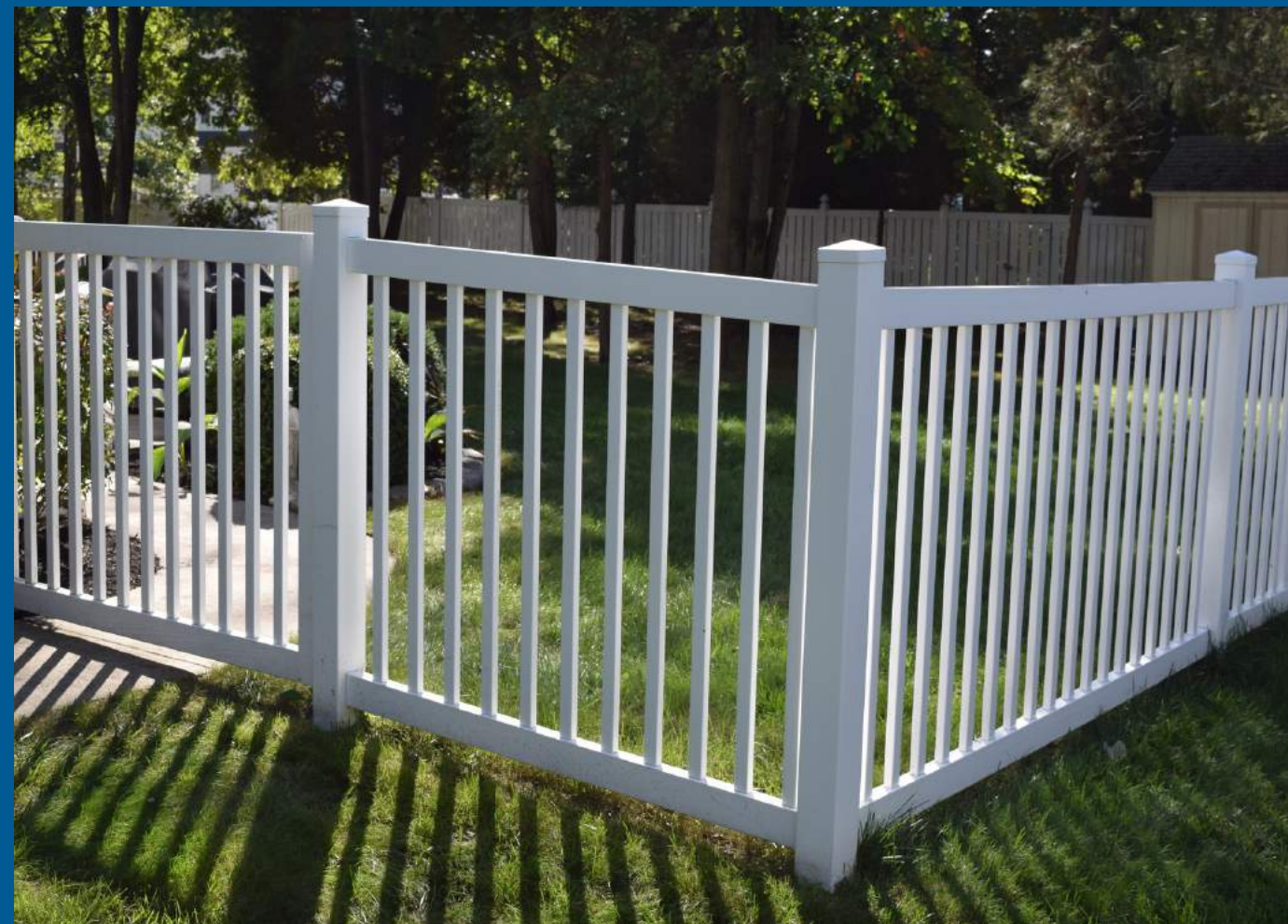
If you want to reproduce the original red appearance of cedar, we recommend a semi-transparent stain. A semi-transparent stain will allow the original grain of the wood to remain visible while also restoring its original color. We recommend applying the stain manually with a paint brush rather than by spraying. (If you want your cedar to take on a different characteristic entirely, you may apply a solid color stain or a primer and paint.)

To clean your cedar fence, apply warm water and some mild soap with a low-grain sponge. We do not recommend pressure washing your wooden fence, as doing so may compromise its naturally protective oils. If cared for properly, cedar fences have a lifespan of about 15-30 years.



Split Rail Fence Care

Split rail fences may be constructed with any type of wood, but we've chosen to use cedar for its natural durability. Therefore, care instructions for your split rail fence parallel those for your cedar fence. The only difference is that, if you construct your split rail fence with mesh between rails and posts, you'll need to check it regularly and replace torn and worn wire sections. Also, to clean your split rail fence, use warm water and a gentle scrub brush instead of soap and a sponge, then rinse.



Vinyl Fence Care

Although slightly more expensive than cedar up front, vinyl fences last a lifetime and are extremely easy to maintain. They are made from recyclable PVC, are extremely durable and flexible, and resist rotting and warping; they also, of course, don't chip, crack, peel, splinter, or decay. You may not know that vinyl fences even self-extinguish when exposed to flames.

Because color permeates all the way through our vinyl fence pickets, you'll never have to sand or repaint. Actually, vinyl is paint-resistant, which means that it's easy to wipe off graffiti. We use Bufftech as our vinyl fence supplier, and their partnership with CertainTeed gives customers a lifetime limited warranty, a lifetime color fade warranty, a transferrable warranty, and a labor warranty.

For cleaning vinyl of dirt and minor stains, apply warm water and mild soap with a soft cloth, and then rinse with water. For tougher stains or mold/mildew, add a small amount of bleach to warm water and wipe your fence with a non-abrasive cloth, rinsing it thoroughly with water after applying the bleach water. To remove grease or tar, gently apply mineral spirits with a soft cloth and wash immediately with water. (Be sure to test bleach and mineral spirit cleaning methods on a small, hidden area before cleaning your entire fence, especially if your vinyl fence isn't white.)





Trex Fence Care

Trex fences are backed by a 25-year limited warranty. They are composed of 96% reclaimed materials, are incredibly durable, resist insect damage, do not warp or splinter, and never need to be painted or stained. Never sand or power wash your Trex fence, as doing so will diminish both its aesthetic appearance and its protective coatings.

To clean Trex fences, apply a composite deck cleaner or hot water and soap with a soft bristle brush, and then wash clean. This should remove all surface dirt and debris. Scuffs and abrasions naturally diminish after 12-16 weeks, though if you'd rather not wait, you may gently apply WD-40 with a rag to the affected area.



Rinse grease stains immediately with hot water, and use Pour-N-Restore for any remaining stains. In the spring and fall, use cleaners that contain detergent and bleach to prevent mold and mildew growth, as described in this guide.

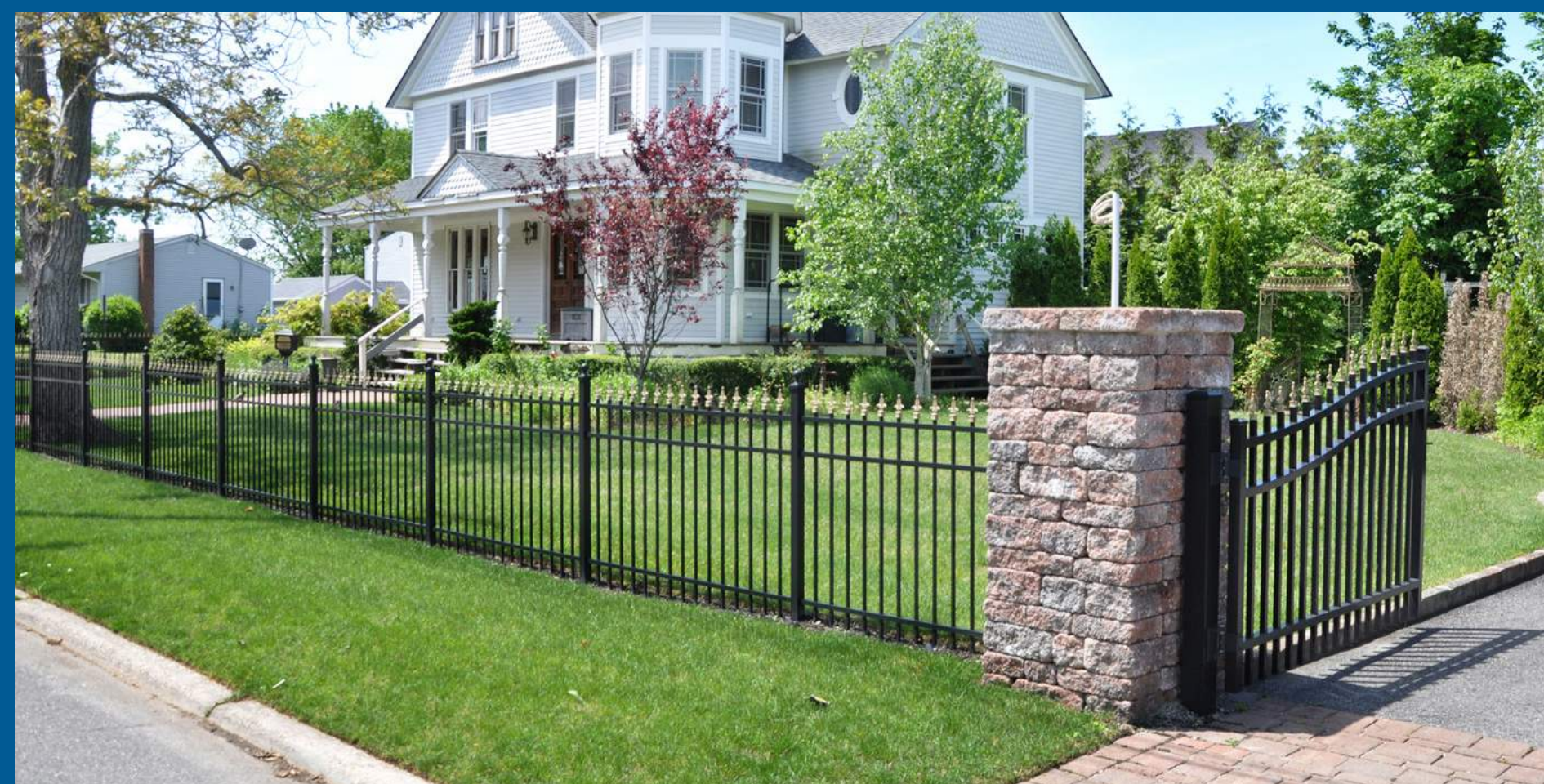
For rust stains, grime, and pigment stains, apply a cleaner containing oxalic or phosphoric acid; these cleaners may need to rest on your fence for 10-15 minutes before you wash them clean, but be sure to read your cleaning product instructions for specific application guidelines. Avoid exposing your fence to chalk, as most chalk stains permanently.



Ornamental Iron Fence Care

If properly maintained, wrought iron fences can last about 60 years. While iron fences are extremely strong, they are susceptible to rust. Because of this, we recommend performing routine maintenance once or twice a year, depending on your fence's exposure to moisture.

Begin your maintenance routine by removing surface dirt with warm water, soap, and a washcloth, using a toothbrush for small crevices. Next, inspect your fence for any signs of rust. Scrape rust with a fine wire brush. (N.B. Heavy corded wire brushes will ruin your iron fence's integrity.) Rinse these spots with water and nonionic detergent. For areas with heavy or obvious rust, apply a rust tannic-acid or phosphoric-acid-based rust converter according to product instructions.



Finish your fence maintenance by gently sanding any areas where the paint has chipped off the metal. Then, use a spray-on, oil-based primer made to adhere to metal. Once the primer is completely dry, apply a spray-on, oil-based paint. If necessary, apply multiple coats, letting each dry completely.

Although you'll likely only need to repaint your ornamental iron fence once every couple years, you'll want to keep coats of paint fresh by cleaning surfaces with soap and water and then applying a metal-grade wax about twice a year.



Chain Link Fence Care

Chain link fences last about 15-30 years, or longer with minimal repairs. They have a galvanized (a protective layer of zinc) finish that prevents them from rusting, and they're of course also resistant to warping, rotting, and insect damage. While chain link fences require very little maintenance, it is advisable to limit their exposure to moisture.

Aside from this, the most likely type of damage to occur to your chain link fence is that posts not secured in concrete may tilt or shift, so be sure to keep posts grounded firmly. To remove surface dirt and debris, apply hot water and soap or borax mixed with water to soiled sections. To remove any mold, apply bleach water or white spirit vinegar to affected areas.



Masonry Fence Care

Masonry fences are likely the longest-lasting fence option. Although their structural durability is unrivaled, they still require routine maintenance to prolong their lifespan. Because most damage to your masonry fence occurs due to excess water exposure, you may need to renew its water-repellent coating every 5-10 years or when you notice that water clings to it instead of dripping off.



One of the most common problems with masonry fences is efflorescence, a crystalline salt deposit caused by excess moisture that can discolor stone surfaces. In most cases, this may be removed by scrubbing the area with water and a brush. Be aware that, if you use any stronger cleaning solutions, such as a weak muriatic acid solution, you must rinse extremely thoroughly and be careful not to add too much acid. If mortar becomes soft, deteriorates, or cracks, your fence may require tuck-pointing (sanding down old mortar and adding new mortar to the joints).



General Preventative Care

For all of the fence types listed above—cedar, split rail, vinyl, Trex, ornamental iron, chain link, and masonry—general preventative maintenance is always the best way to prolong fence lifespan. For example, clear away any potentially hazardous tree limbs that might crush your fence and vines that might creep into its crevasses and weaken its structure. Always guard against too much moisture exposure by limiting contact with sprinklers and sprinkler systems.

Of course, the best maintenance routines only work as well as the original quality of the fence, so be sure to choose a fence contractor whose installation and material integrity you trust.