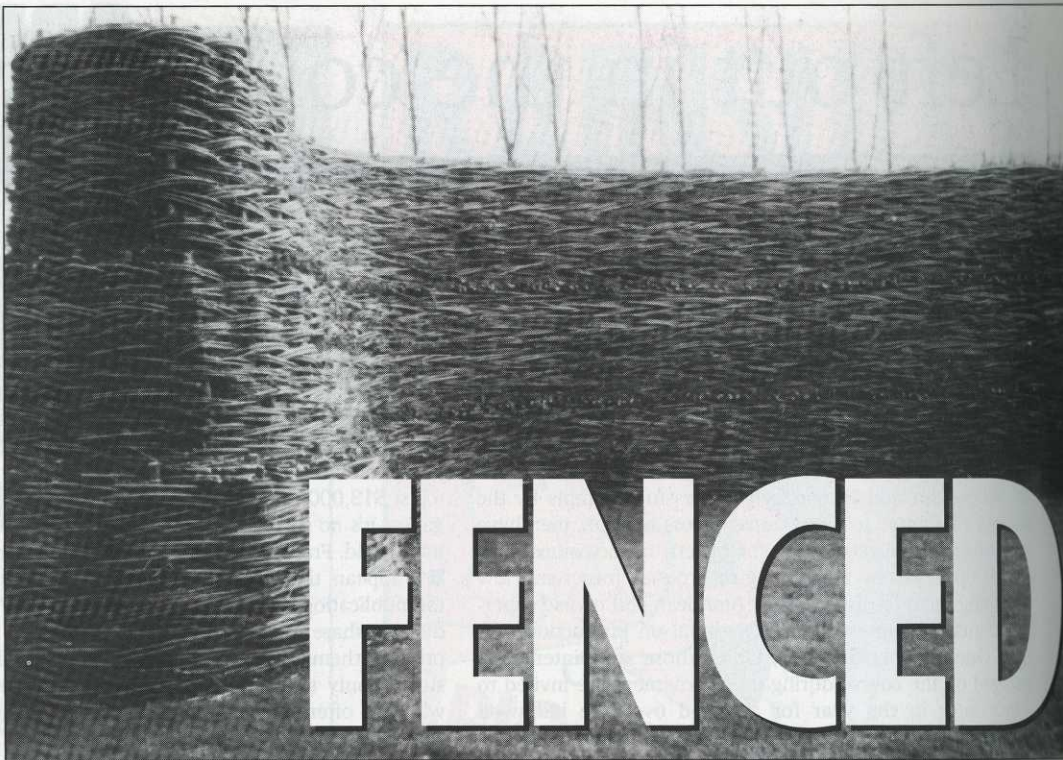


Anyone considering installing a new fence for the first time in a decade could be forgiven for being overwhelmed by the virtually endless permutation of designs, materials and specifications now on offer.

Gone are the days when one might have to choose between wooden post and rail, continuous steel bar or chain link, depending on the site, the security requirements and the appearance of the final job. Not only are there fence types and materials available to suit one's every need, but the quality and specification of the structure will, in most cases, be covered by a British standard.

Glancing at the BSI list for fencing, one will find that the majority of popular fencing systems in use are subject to one or more of the 16 parts contained in BS 1722 with regard to their design and quality of manufacture. This safeguard, recognised nationally, must be the starting point for anyone considering a new fence, says Mr Ray Smith, chairman of the European Fencing Industry Association (EFIA). "Irrespective of the size of contract, quality has to be the principal criteria for all specifications," he stresses. To ensure quality of materials, Smith advises buyers to insist that the selected product conforms to all requirements of BS1722.

Even when the fencing is purely



What to buy and what's available, by MICHAEL BIRD

of a decorative nature or manufactured to a patented design, he recommends that the fence and gate structures and the quality of the materials used comply with any applicable Clauses contained

within BS 1722. "Similarly, it is advisable also to ensure that the manufacturer and the installing contractor have been awarded or have applied for BS 5750, the quality assurance accreditation," com-

ments Smith. "I would also like to ascertain that they are a member of an approved trade association."

The only professional bodies currently found within the UK are the EFIA and the Fencing Contractors

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IN



Two pictures; same fence: a woven willow wall forms an excellent screen against noise and entry, bursting into leaf in spring.

Photographs courtesy of CD Brown Landscaping

Association. Both are represented on British Standards committees and subscribe to government training schemes to help improve the quality of workmanship in manufacture and on site.

Fencing systems can be categorised into four basic types according to their function. These are security, protection, decoration and direction. Most fences found on golf courses are likely to have to perform at least two of the above roles, and sometimes three or all four. The requirements for the fence's design and structure will vary but should normally include four factors: Low maintenance, aesthetically and environmentally acceptable, cost-effective to buy and erect, and fit for the purpose for which it is intended.

Of course, in the case of security fencing intended to keep intruders out, the appearance of the fence will often take second place to the need to provide appropriate protection to property, people and equipment. There are three basic types of security fence, all able to prevent entry to an increasing degree. The simplest is chain link, available in rolls up to 3.6m wide. Usually galvanised and plastic coated, this material is certainly one of the least costly to buy and erect per metre and has the advantage of being able to follow ground contours closely. It can also be buried to deter burrowing by foxes and rabbits. Aesthetically pleasing, especially when selected in dark green, chain link can be combined with other materials such as knitted or knotted nylon netting to form an excellent ball stop on driving

ranges and alongside fairways close to roads and houses. Chain link can be installed up to 6m high or greater, but it is most important to have adequate supports at such heights. It also becomes costly here (around £100 metre), due to the increased difficulty of erection.

Another fencing system able to combine security, protection and decoration is weld mesh. The wider advantages of this material came to be recognised little more than 10 years ago, when it was being used principally as a reinforcing medium in concrete. Stood vertically, weld mesh can form an excellent barrier against entry and prevent golf balls straying from the course or range. A major benefit of the material is the welded joint at each metal rod intersection which makes it far more difficult and time consuming to cut through than chain link. Galvanised only or with a plastic coating, weld mesh is available in heights up to 5.5m and is suitable for installation onto most types of metal post. It can be combined with other materials, such as chain link, nylon net or barbed wire, to form a suitable barrier against unwanted entry or exit. Interesting variations providing improved strength, appearance and security include a 'V' or 'W' shape pressed horizontally into the panels, folded tops and bases and special posts with anti-vandal fixings. Weld mesh also makes an excellent ball stop.

If security is the principal requirement, there are few more formidable barriers than corrugated or 'W' section steel palisade or pale fencing. Comprising a series

of closely-spaced vertical bars with horizontal rails 300mm from the top and bottom for added strength, palisade is manufactured in heights up to 3.6m with a variety of head 'points' depending on the required level of security. Features include anti-tamper rivet heads, cup square bolts for fence to post fixing and a choice of finishes to suit the surroundings. Palisade fences are suitable for vulnerable course perimeters and to protect buildings and compounds where machinery, materials and fuels are stored.

Security, and the appearance of fencing, can be enhanced significantly by planting trees and shrubs adjacent to the fence. It is important, however, to leave sufficient space for maintenance and to prevent vegetation growing through and over the barrier which could assist an intruder. A useful tip is to take a close look at your fencing system from the other side. All too often, a well-planned fence from the inside can look dreadful to the passer-by or neighbour and create antagonism and ill-feeling.

One fence designed to be secure, environmentally friendly and minimise noise levels by up to 30 decibels comprises living willow planted and woven to form two closely-spaced walls with soil in between. In autumn and winter the structure resembles a wicker basket. In spring and summer, leaf growth greens up the wall, encouraging birds and other wild life. A non-greening alternative to willow is reed thatch.

Apart from discouraging human entry, fencing is often needed to protect turf and new plantings

against vermin, livestock and, sometimes, golfers. For newly-planted areas, galvanised wire mesh netting, buried to 150mm and lapped outwards horizontally a further 150mm at full depth, will prevent access by most small animals. Inexpensive, it can be readily installed by staff using pressure-treated timber posts 10m apart.

Rabbit netting is best erected just before the main growing season so that vegetation grows through the lower part of the mesh quickly to prevent rabbits from finding a way underneath. In exposed areas, a windbreak made of open weave polyester will provide protection for young trees and prevent soil erosion, by reducing the speed and chilling effect of the wind.

If sheep, cattle or deer are a problem, then wire stock fence topped, if necessary, with high visibility tape or barbed wire is an excellent solution. On courses adjacent to farm or parkland, the landowner will normally pay close attention to his or her fencing. Those neighbouring common or moor land and other wide, open spaces will have to establish the optimum solution for their individual situation.

If vandalism is not a problem, then simple continuous steel bar, spike or bow top mild steel or wooden post and rail fencing are likely to be the most economical and simple to erect, combined with an attractive screening hedge or row of trees. Alternative fencing materials are concrete and plastic, with the advantage of minimal maintenance, long life and the ability to specify a colour to match the surroundings. These benefits mean that such materials are being used increasingly for decorative fences on entrance drives and other areas close to the club house.

Portable temporary fencing to protect course works and ground under repair or direct cars, players and spectators along specified roadways can range from the simple rope or plastic chain suspended on pigtail steel pins to brightly coloured polyethylene mesh to crush-type barriers manufactured of galvanised tubular steel. The latter may be free-standing on splayed legs or, for added security, slot into concrete blocks.

There are, literally, hundreds of fencing systems to choose from and this article has concentrated on just the main types on the market without making any specific recommendations regarding product name or manufacturer. Anyone wishing further information on the two fencing trade associations mentioned or advice on particular designs or products and the British Standards covering their manufacture or installation is invited to contact Mr Ray Smith, chairman of the European Fencing Industries Association, on 0386 792033.