

Replacing Your Fence – Metal Poles vs Wood Post **by Ann Cain**

Privacy fences dominate most neighborhoods and allow us to enjoy our yards more. It also helps to keep our pets in, and other peoples' pets out, and adds a measure of security.

I didn't take my privacy fence for granted, even before the tornado in May 2016. I really like my backyard and I spend a lot of time in it. I would not enjoy it so much if I did not have a privacy fence. When the tornado came through my subdivision, thankfully, the only damage my property sustained was that my fences were blown down. During the weeks that followed, I had to keep my dog on a leash and walk her around in the back yard several times a day. A lesson in patience for both of us! I also could not enjoy my backyard- I was so...EXPOSED!! I was able to see 3 or 4 yards over from me in each direction and they could see me!! In the first few days following the storm, though, I was glad to see the BTU men traipsing through my yard to get power restored for me and my neighbors.

So, the first order of business was to get my privacy fence replaced. The fence contractor gave me several estimates, using different types of pickets (which I expected) but he also gave me a choice of using metal poles or wood posts. I had not even considered metal posts. Here's what I learned about building materials for privacy fences:

There are 3 basic types of pickets: 1. Treated pine (treated to be used outdoors) cheapest of the 3 and warps easily 2. Stained pine (treated a little heavier) will last longer than treated pine 3. Cedar – best of the 3 pickets- not treated, just cedar; lasts longest of the 3.

Listed below are some comparisons using the 3 types of pickets and either metal poles or 4x4 wood posts. All costs are approximate and depend on availability of materials in B/CS. The comparison pricing is for a 3-rail, 6 foot privacy picket fence.

Pickett	Apprx. Cost w/Metal Pole	Apprx. Cost w/Wood Post
Treated pine	\$19.00 per foot	\$17.50 per foot
Stained pine	\$20.00 per foot	\$18.50 per foot
Cedar	\$23.00 per foot	\$21.00 per foot

Metal poles will not warp or rot, as long as a cap is placed on the pole and kept on. The cap keeps rain from getting inside the pole. Using the metal pole at the gate will keep it from sagging. Metal poles can be painted, but use a primer first.

If using 4x4 wood posts, make sure that the concrete or dirt is up around the base of the post to keep water from standing. To keep water from sitting on top of the 4x4 post, cut the top at an angle. If water is allowed to sit on the post, a low spot will be created and the post will eventually rot from the inside.

If there are drainage issues around either a wood post or a metal pole, the 4x4 wood post will have less life than the metal pole.

According to USAA using metal posts will not make any difference in the cost of their customers' homeowners insurance. You will have to ask your own insurance carrier.

Life in my neighborhood has been quiet these days. Gone are the days of chainsaws running and the incessant hammering of the roofers. Fences have been replaced or repaired. Mostly, folks are back to routines, including me and my dog; we are thoroughly enjoying all the privacy that our new fencing offers!