Key Points to Plan Before Installing New Garden Fencing

Getting the groundwork right for a new garden boundary

Planning a new garden fence involves more than choosing a style you like. The decisions you make before any posts go into the ground affect how long the fence lasts, how much maintenance it needs, and whether it stays straight through wet winters and windy spells. A methodical approach helps you avoid common mistakes that lead to leaning posts, rotting panels, or disputes with neighbours. Below are the main points to check as you plan.

Check your boundary line

The first practical step is to confirm exactly where your boundary runs. Title deeds and land registry plans show the legal line, but they can be hard to read. Look for physical markers such as old posts, concrete stumps, or changes in the hedge line. If you share the boundary with a neighbour, it is sensible to discuss your plans before you start. Agreeing the line early prevents misunderstandings and saves time later. Even if you are replacing an existing fence, the original posts may not sit exactly on the boundary, so check rather than assume.

Understand permitted development rules

Most garden fences fall under permitted development, but there are limits. In many areas, a fence beside a highway can be no higher than one metre, and a fence elsewhere on the property no higher than two metres. Conservation areas, listed buildings, or properties with specific planning conditions may have stricter rules. A quick check with your local planning authority confirms whether you need permission. It is easier to adjust your design before you buy materials than to take down a fence that does not comply.

Decide on materials and durability

Timber panels are a common choice for garden fencing because they are affordable and straightforward to install. But not all timber is the same. Pressure-treated softwood lasts longer than untreated wood, and some species such as western red cedar or oak offer greater resistance to rot without chemical treatment. Concrete posts add strength and stability, especially in soft ground or exposed sites. Gravel boards, fitted between the bottom of the panels and the ground, reduce soil contact and help prevent the base of the fence from rotting. The combination of materials you choose affects both the upfront cost and the lifespan of the boundary.



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Measure accurately and plan post spacing

Accurate site measurement is essential. Measure the total length of the boundary, and then work out how many posts and panels you need. Standard panel widths are usually 1.8 metres or 1.2 metres, but check the actual size before you calculate spacing. Posts should sit at consistent centres, and the gap between each post must match the panel width minus a small allowance for fitting. If your boundary length does not divide evenly, you may need a cut panel at one end or adjustable post spacing. Getting this right avoids a gap or an oversized panel that looks out of place.

Prepare the ground properly

Ground preparation affects how well the fence stands up over time. Remove any old fence, vegetation, and debris along the line. If the ground is uneven, you may need to level the posts or step the panels to follow the slope. For panels that sit level, the post heights change as the ground drops. For a fence that follows the ground, the panels tilt. Each approach works, but the choice affects the look and the difficulty of installation. Digging post holes to the right depth is critical. In most soils, a hole one-third of the post length is sufficient, but in clay or loose ground, deeper holes and concrete help stop the posts from moving.

Consider drainage and airflow

A fence that sits directly on damp ground rots faster. Gravel boards or a gap at the bottom of the panels allow air to circulate and rainwater to drain away. If you are using timber posts, setting them in concrete can trap moisture against the wood. One solution is to coat the buried section of the post with a bituminous paint or to use a post base that keeps the wood above ground level. For concrete posts, drainage is less of a concern, but the panels themselves still benefit from airflow underneath. Planning for drainage from the start adds very little time to the job but extends the life of the fence considerably.

Think about access and logistics

Before you order materials, check how they will reach the site. Long panels and posts do not fit easily through narrow side gates or around tight corners. If access is limited, you may need to carry materials through the house or arrange delivery to a front garden. Concrete posts and gravel boards are heavy, so having a helper or a wheelbarrow ready saves strain. Also consider where you will store materials once they arrive. Stacking panels flat on a dry surface keeps them from warping before installation. Good logistics make the job smoother and reduce the risk of damaged materials.



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Decide who installs the fence

Some homeowners enjoy the work of installing their own fence, while others prefer to leave it to professionals. A DIY approach can save money, but it requires the right tools, some experience, and time. Mixing concrete, digging holes, and setting posts plumb takes physical effort and attention to detail. For longer runs or tricky ground, professionally installed garden boundaries often give a straighter, more durable result. The peace of mind that comes from knowing the posts are set correctly and the panels are aligned is worth factoring into your decision. Getting an installation quote early in the planning stage helps you compare options and budget accordingly.

Factor in ongoing maintenance

No fence is completely maintenance-free, but some choices reduce the work. Timber panels need treating with preservative every few years to keep them looking good and to prevent rot. Concrete posts and gravel boards require very little upkeep beyond an occasional clean. If you want a low-maintenance option, consider composite panels or metal posts, though these come with a higher initial cost. The location of the fence also matters. A boundary that is shaded and damp will need more frequent treatment than one in full sun. Planning for maintenance from the start means you choose a fence that fits your lifestyle, not just your budget.

Check for underground services

Before you dig any post holes, find out where underground pipes and cables run. Water pipes, gas lines, electrical cables, and telecom ducts can sit surprisingly close to the surface. Hitting a service not only damages the utility but can be dangerous and expensive to repair. Many utility companies offer a free mapping service, or you can hire a private locator. Marking the route of any buried services on the ground helps you avoid them when you dig. This step is often overlooked in the rush to start work, but it is one of the most important checks you can make.

Plan the timing of the work

Weather affects both the installation and the curing of concrete. Digging in wet clay is messy and hard work, and concrete takes longer to set in cold or damp conditions. Summer and early autumn usually offer drier ground and longer daylight hours. However, these seasons are also the busiest for fencing contractors, so if you want a professional installation, book early. If you are doing the work yourself, give yourself enough time to complete each stage without rushing. A fence that is rushed is rarely a fence that lasts.



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Working through these points before you buy materials or break ground saves time, money, and frustration. A well-planned boundary adds privacy, security, and value to your property, and it stands up to the weather year after year. Whether you choose timber panels and concrete posts or a different combination, the preparation you do now determines how well the fence performs over its lifetime. For homeowners who want a trouble-free result, professionally installed garden boundaries provide a reliable solution that takes the guesswork out of the process. Taking a methodical approach to planning means you end up with a fence that meets your needs and lasts for years to come.