

9.6 Landscape Features

9.6.1 Heritage Landscape Treatment

The landscape treatment on private property visible from the street can do a great deal to help express the character of a heritage area. For example, large expanses of neatly mowed lawns are more expressive of a modern subdivision than an older village area. The landscape of the property should be in harmony with the historical period of the building. A historical landscape treatment can also be used in conjunction with newer buildings to complement the heritage environment.

Typical Landscape Treatment for Pre-Confederation Homes (pre 1860s)

General Form

- Generally in rural areas, highly stylized gardening efforts were not widespread. Most planting was very utilitarian with little effort towards elaborate gardens or displays.
- Hedgerows often lined the carriage lane and often a grove of deciduous or coniferous trees would be planted around the homestead as a windbreak.
- Large expanses of open grass were not common during this period. There were no lawnmowers and small lawns in front of the home were cut with scythes.
- Design focus of the front yard was on simple geometrical placement of trees and shrubs.
- Alignment of fencing and walkways was laid out in a straight rectilinear manner.
- Plantings were typically arranged in straight lines. There was little bedding out or ornamental display.
- Before the 1850s, there was an absence of any foundation planting, but after the 1850s, owners began to cover their foundations, usually with shrubs.

- Andrew Jackson Downing's theoretical approach to rural landscape during this period influenced homeowners in both Canada and the U.S. Downing was a proponent of the picturesque in both building form and the associated landscaping. He advocated a "house with feeling" through the incorporation of trellis, climbing plants, and small floral bedding out.

Fences

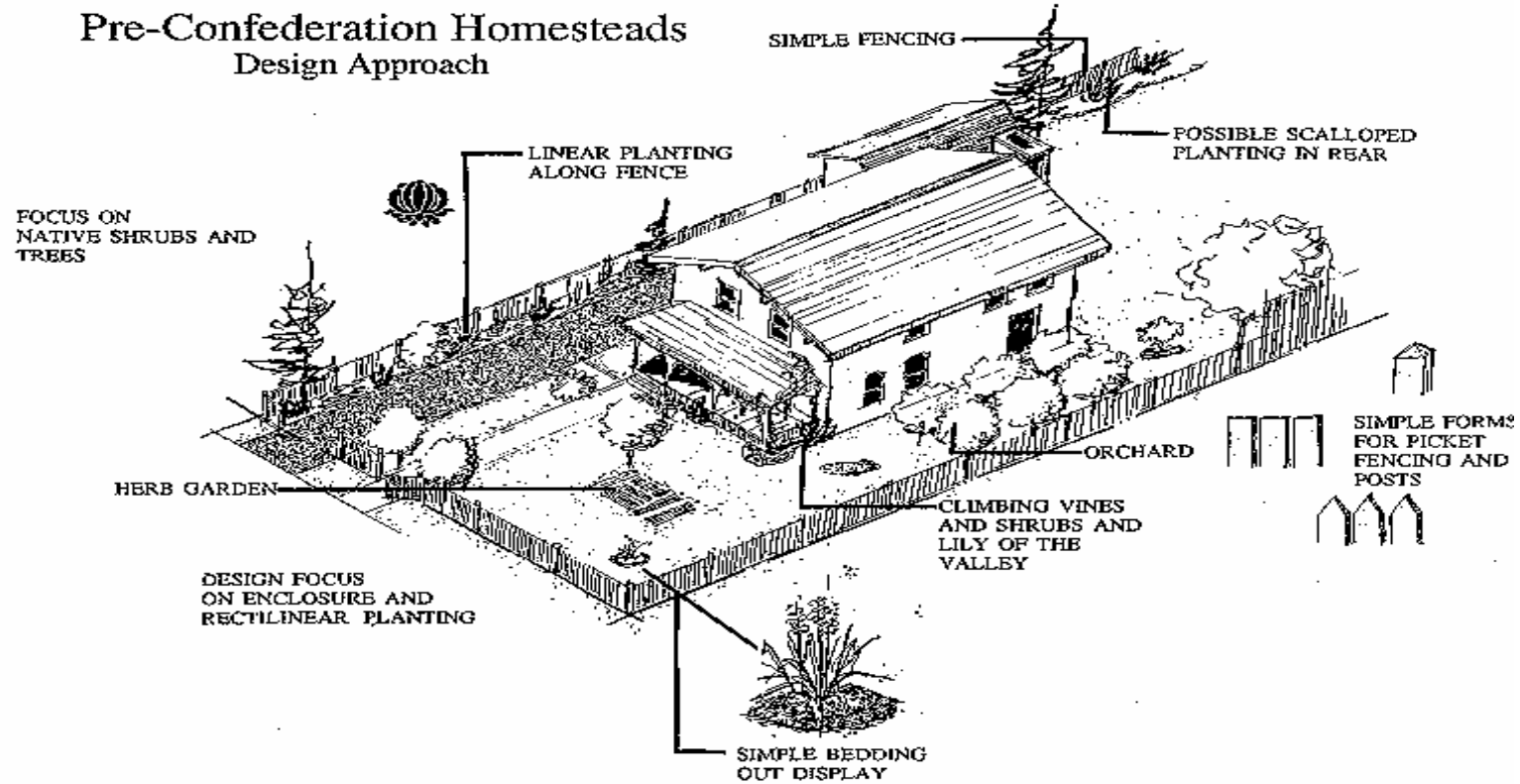
- Fencing was largely used for utilitarian and not aesthetic purposes.
- Often front yards or frontage would be enclosed.
- Wooden picket fencing was common in Markham.

Ground Plantings

- Plants commonly used in gardens were rhubarb, asparagus, strawberries, and most common vegetables.
- Ground covers included ferns, lily of the valley, daylilies.
- Flower bed would have contained hollyhocks, peonies, Sweet William, and irises.
- Climbing shrubs and vines included clematis, roses, and wisteria.

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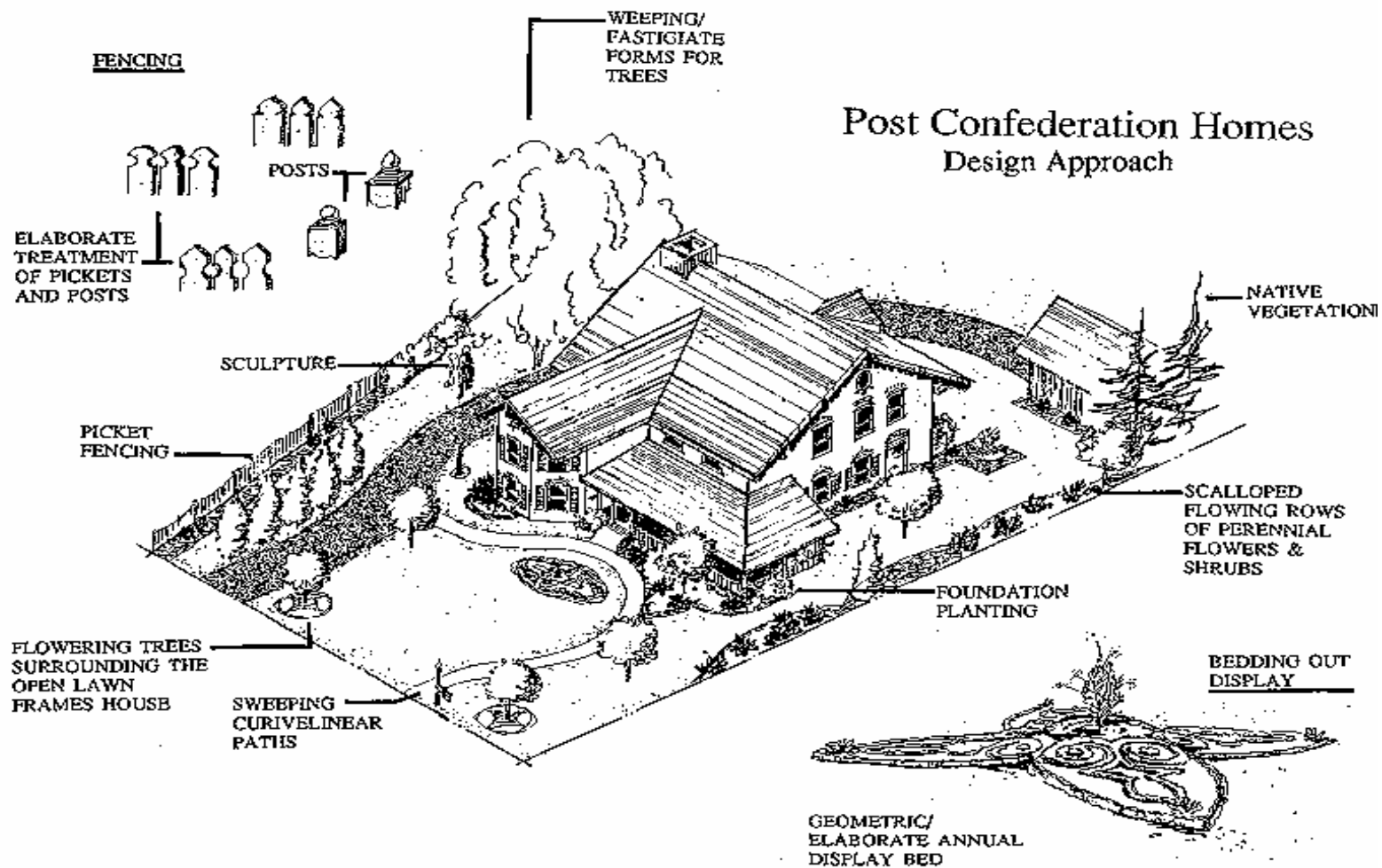
9.6.1 Heritage Landscape Treatment cont'd



Pre-Confederation Design Approach to Landscaping

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9.6.1 Heritage Landscape Treatment cont'd



Post-Confederation Design Approach to Landscaping

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9.6.1 Heritage Landscape Treatment cont'd

Trees and Shrubs

- Native trees were common as they were readily available to transplant.
- Conifers would typically include spruce, cedar, and pine, but one single species would be used and not a mixture. (The same holds true for deciduous trees.)
- Deciduous trees included native maples, basswoods, oak, elm, beech, ash, and cherry.
- Fruit trees and small orchards were common and included individual or small groves of apple, pear, or cherry.
- Shrubs such as raspberries, currants, and quinces were common as they could be used for jam-making. Other popular shrubs were roses and lilacs.

Typical Landscape Treatment for Post-Confederation Houses (1860–1900)

General Form

- Landscape treatment in this period was concerned with the creation of open space lawn areas with broad sweeping vistas, flowing naturalistic curves, and planting in drifts of colours versus straight lines.
- Larger lawns also become fashionable with the invention of the lawnmower.
- The North American leading theorist with respect to landscaping the Victorian and "suburban" home was Frank J. Scott. In his book *The Art of Beautifying the Home Grounds*, he suggests that plants, walls, or hills should not obscure the view of the house. Rather, decorative planting was the art of picture-making and picture-framing. Therefore, landscaping became part of the visual composition associated with the house.



Georgian house with landscape. 25 Colborne Street, Weaver #109



Arts and Crafts house with landscape, 86 John Street, Weaver #32

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9.6.1 Heritage Landscape Treatment cont'd

- Utility gardens and orchards moved to the rear yards.
- Expanded trade from places like China introduced many oriental plants, trees, and shrubs.
- Weeping plants, plants with large, coarse leaves, and plants with exaggerated forms were also popular. These plants were often located along the edge of the fenced lot with some feature planting on the front lawn or the approach road.
- Foundation planting of flowering shrubs helped to hide higher foundations made necessary by the introduction of central heating and basement furnaces.
- Gardens of individuals of lesser means did not feature fountains or ornate carpet bedding, but would have had simple round beds on either side of the front walk or in the centre of a side lawn.

Fences

- If a fence was used, it was usually more elaborate in design.
- Wood picket fencing was still common in Markham.

Ground Plantings

- Showy plants with bold leaves were popular such as cannas, castor beans, phlox, hens and chicken plants, and zinnias.
- Vines and climbing shrubs at the front and sides of houses were common, often utilizing a trellis.



Fencing at the Edey House, 7690 Yonge Street (since moved to 44 Leahill Drive) Weaver # 399.



Fencing at 10 Colborne Street, Weaver #84.

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9.6.1 Heritage Landscape Treatment cont'd

Trees/Shrubs

- Trees with new and interesting leaf patterns were popular, including weeping forms such as Lombardy poplars, weeping beech, mulberry, willow, and birch.
- Other trees included horse chestnut, Japanese angelica, hornbeam.
- Shrubs included Japanese maples, barberries, smoke tree, and Russian olive (now considered an invasive plant species).

Walkways

- Traditionally, walkways were not usually of a hard surface, but as technology has evolved and walkways need to be functional, alternative materials can be considered such as flagstone and random tumbled unit pavers in earth tone colours.

Guidelines

1. All property owners are encouraged to introduce a heritage landscape treatment to further enhance the character of the District.
2. Owners of heritage buildings should also review section 9.2.4.10.



Traditional picket fencing reintroduced, 14 Colborne Street, Weaver #88.



New house, new picket fence, 65 John Street.

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9.6.2 Appropriate Plantings

No heritage permits are required for planting activities, but voluntary compliance with the guidelines in this Section can help maintain and enhance the natural heritage of the Thornhill and its valley.

Suitable new planting and management of existing flora are a primary means of ensuring the health of the entire ecosystem: plants contribute to storm water and groundwater management, erosion control, and provide habitat and nutrition for wild fauna.

Guidelines

1. Maintain health of mature indigenous tree by pruning and fertilizing.
2. Over time, remove unhealthy, invasive and non-indigenous species.
3. Site buildings and additions to preserve suitable mature trees.

Suitable indigenous species include:

- Sugar Maple, Red Oak, Basswood, Silver Maple, Bitternut, Butternut, White Pine, Hemlock, American Elm, Red Maple, Bur Oak, White Spruce, Beech, Black Walnut, Norway Spruce, White Oak, Ash, Catalpa.

Suitable salt-tolerant indigenous species (for roadside planting) include:

- Ash, Little Leaf Linden, Serviceberry.

Unsuitable species include:

- Manitoba Maple, Hawthorn, Black Locust, and Buckthorn tend to be invasive.
- Ornamental species, particularly Norway Maple cultivars, are extremely invasive.

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9.6.3 Invasive Plant Species

Of the roughly 2600 identified vascular plant species that grow wild in Ontario, more than 25% are aliens or exotics not native to the province. These importations have been going on since Europeans first arrived, either as deliberate introductions or as stowaways in cargoes, ballasts, and debris. However and whenever they arrived, these species have found hospitable ecological niches. Once established they make use of the plant world's full array of propagation strategies. Without the pests and competitors of their native environments, many are able to out-compete native species, and may seriously threaten entire native ecosystems, replacing a host of native plants that together provided food and habitat for native wildlife. The Federation of Ontario Naturalists has more detailed information on invasive species and their control on their website.

Guidelines

1. Avoid these invasive plant species:

- Purple Loosestrife
- Norway Maple
- European Birch
- Highbush Cranberry
- European Mountain Ash
- Privet
- White Mulberry
- Horse Chestnut
- Scots Pine
- Crown Vetch
- Periwinkle
- Dame's Rocket
- Winter Cress
- Silver Poplar
- Siberian Elm
- Himalayan Balsam
- Russian Olive
- Sweet Woodruff



Two prime invaders are Purple Loosestrife, above, and Norway Maple, below. Both have been popular for garden and street planting, and both have proven to be highly invasive. Images from Audubon Society Field Guides.

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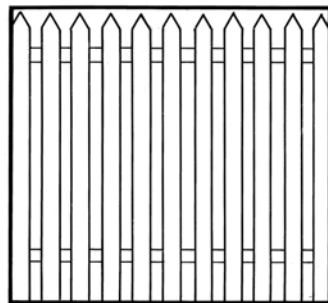
9.6.4 Front Yard Fencing

Front yard fences are traditional landscape features found in the District. Picket fences were used and while there are different varieties, only a few are common to the area.

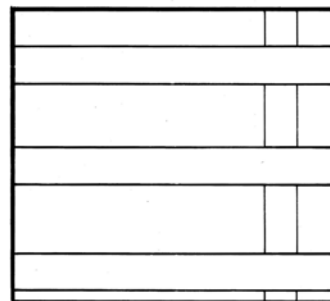
In all cases, it is encouraged that fencing be sensitive to the heritage character of the District.

Guidelines

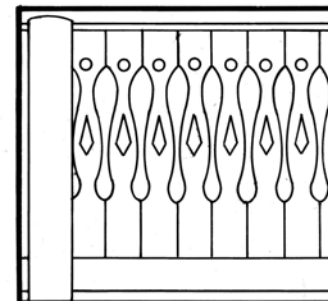
1. Traditional wood picket fences (3 feet high) are encouraged as a front yard landscaping treatment in the District.
2. Metal fencing in simple patterns may also be used.
3. Where historic fences or hedges exist, they should be retained.



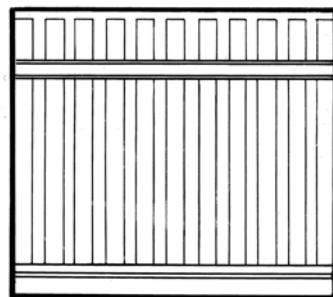
Appropriate: pointed picket



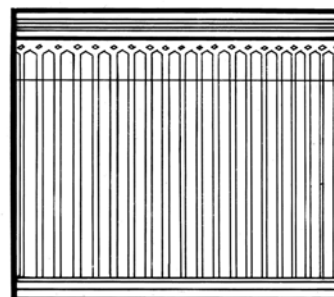
Appropriate: open horizontal board fence



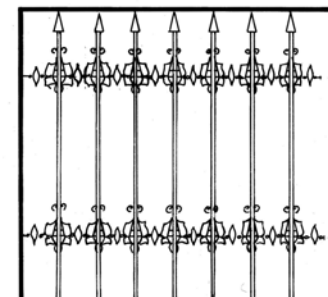
Appropriate: decorative picket—turn of the 20th century



Appropriate: plain picket



Appropriate: sturdy decorative

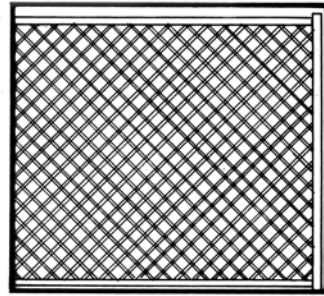


Appropriate: low, cast iron

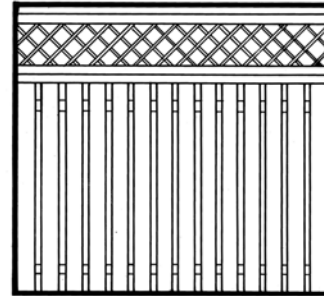
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9.6.4 Front Yard Fencing cont'd

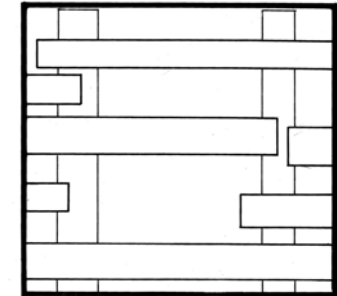
While traditional wood picket fencing is encouraged in the District, the examples of modern fencing at right are not compatible with the Heritage District context and should be avoided.



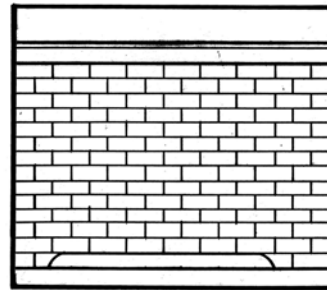
Inappropriate: chain link



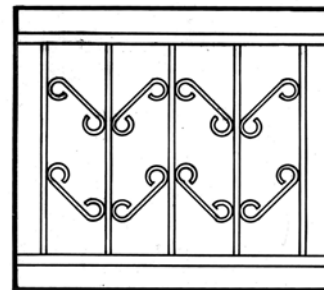
Inappropriate: pressure-treated wood, stock trellis



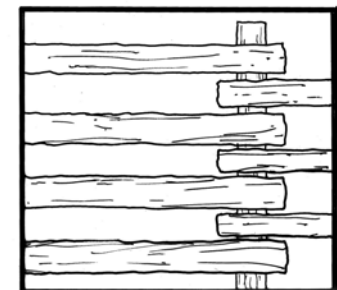
Inappropriate: abstract fence



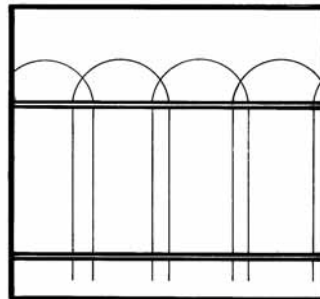
Inappropriate: brick or stone walls



Inappropriate: decorative wrought iron



Inappropriate: cedar rail



Inappropriate: wire

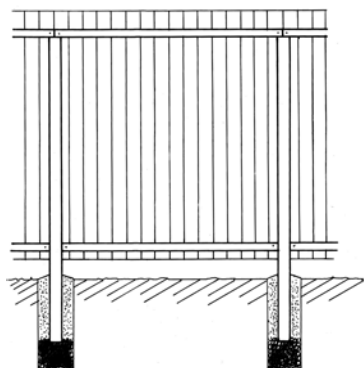
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9.6.5 Backyard Fences

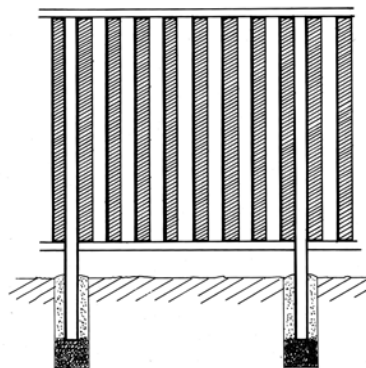
As a result of the historic lot plan of Thornhill, occasionally rear yard fencing runs along the street and is visible. In these cases in particular, special attention should be paid to ensuring that the fencing treatment is compatible with the Heritage District context. The general rule is that simplicity is preferred should apply with regard to rear yard fencing in the District.

Guidelines

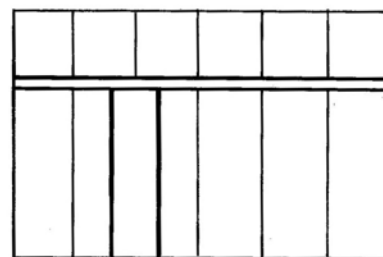
1. Wooden fences are preferred in the District. A straight board fence or a board-on-board fence are appropriate styles.
2. Where historic fences or hedges exist, they should be retained.
3. If a chain link fence is used, it should be black or dark green in colour.
4. All backyard fence heights will conform to the Town Fence By-law.



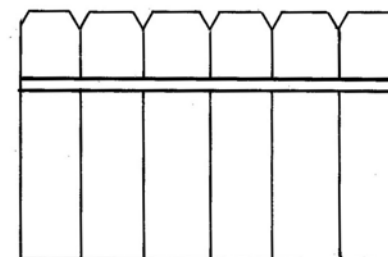
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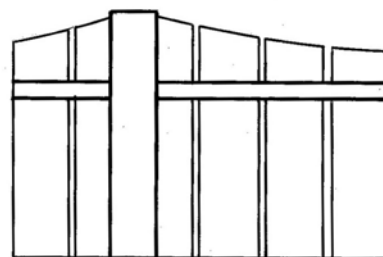
2.



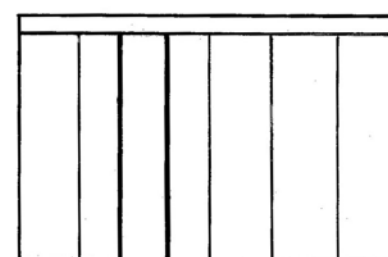
Clean straight fence top



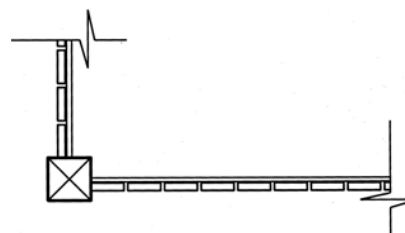
Dog-eared fence top



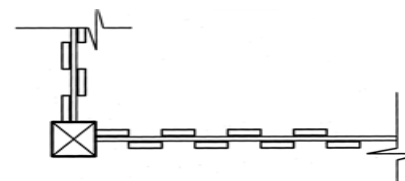
Bevelled fence top (shallow curve only)



Fence top flush with stringer



3.



4.

Key to illustrations to the left:

1. Straight board fence with flat placement of boards, showing ground connection.

2. Board-on-board fence, with alternating placement of boards, showing ground connection.

3. Plan drawing of straight board fence shown in figure 1.

4. Plan drawing of board-on-board fence shown in figure 2.

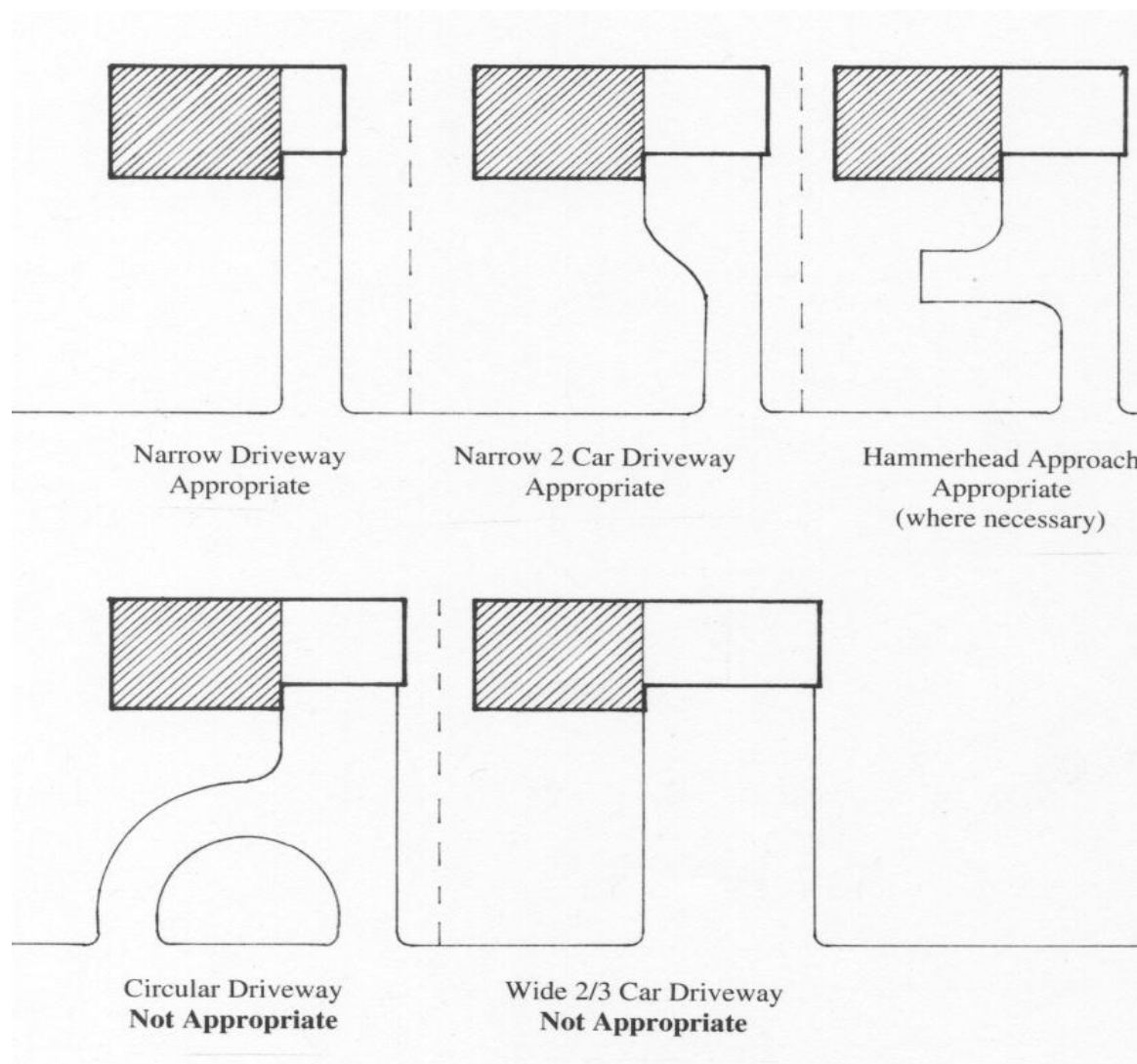
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9.6.6 Driveways

Driveways should provide a service function on residential properties and assume a secondary role to that of the front yard landscaping.

Guidelines

1. Driveways are to be kept narrow on residential properties (i.e., 3.0m in width) in order to preserve the expanse of the front yard.
2. Circular driveways and the paving of the front yard is not supported.
3. The introduction of a hammerhead to allow cars that are backing out to turn around and exit the property facing forward is supported where necessary (i.e., John Street).
4. Appropriate driveway materials include asphalt, pea gravel, coloured asphalt in natural tones, and concrete pavers in natural tones.
5. Driveway entrances are not to be gated.



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