

VANCOUVER FENCE BUILDERS

Cedar Fencing

Western Red Cedar fence options including privacy, picket, board-on-board, and horizontal styles — the premium locally sourced choice for BC's wet climate

12 Expert Answers from Fence IQ

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How do I prevent green algae and moss from growing on my cedar fence in North Vancouver?

Green algae and moss growth on cedar fences is extremely common in North Vancouver due to the area's high humidity, frequent rainfall, and shaded conditions — but regular cleaning and preventive treatments can keep your fence looking great.

North Vancouver's marine climate creates perfect conditions for algae and moss growth, especially on north-facing fences and those under tree canopy. The combination of moisture from rain, morning fog, and limited sun exposure means your cedar fence is constantly damp during the October-March wet season. Even naturally rot-resistant Western Red Cedar will develop that telltale green coating without proper maintenance.

Cleaning Your Fence

Start with a thorough cleaning using a pressure washer on a low setting (1,500-2,000 PSI maximum) to avoid damaging the cedar surface. Work from top to bottom, keeping the nozzle 12-18 inches from the fence and using a fan spray pattern rather than a concentrated stream. For stubborn growth, mix a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water and apply with a pump sprayer, letting it sit for 10-15 minutes before pressure washing. Always wet down surrounding plants first and rinse them thoroughly after cleaning to prevent bleach damage.

For a gentler approach, use a deck brush with a solution of oxygen bleach (sodium percarbonate) mixed according to package directions. This is safer for plants and won't lighten the cedar as much as chlorine bleach. Commercial deck and fence cleaners specifically designed for cedar are also effective and often contain mildewcides that provide longer-lasting protection.

Prevention Strategies

The key to preventing regrowth is reducing moisture retention and improving air circulation. Trim back any vegetation that's touching or hanging over your fence — branches, shrubs, and climbing plants create shade and trap moisture against the wood. Consider raising the bottom of fence panels 2-3 inches above grade to improve drainage and air flow, especially important in North Vancouver's wet conditions.

Apply a high-quality cedar stain or sealant every 2-3 years, choosing products that contain mildewcides and UV protection. Semi-transparent stains allow the cedar grain to show while providing better protection than clear sealers. Schedule this work for dry periods between May and September when you can get several consecutive dry days for proper curing.

North Vancouver Specific Considerations

Your location on the North Shore means dealing with additional challenges like outflow winds that can drive rain horizontally against fence surfaces, and the heavy tree cover in many neighborhoods that limits drying time. Properties near the water or in ravines stay damp longer and may need more frequent cleaning — every 6-12 months instead of annually.

Consider installing a French drain or improving yard drainage if water pools near your fence line. Standing water creates constant moisture that feeds algae growth and can lead to post rot over time. The rocky, clay-heavy soils common in North Vancouver don't drain well naturally, so addressing drainage issues benefits both your fence and your landscaping.

When to Call a Professional

While cleaning is definitely DIY-friendly, hire a professional if your fence shows signs of rot or structural damage beneath the algae growth, if you're uncomfortable using a pressure washer, or if the fence is very tall or in a difficult location. Professional fence cleaning services in North Vancouver typically charge \$2-4 per linear foot and often include treatment application.

For severe algae problems or fences that need frequent cleaning due to heavy shade, consider upgrading to vinyl fencing for sections that get the worst growth. Vinyl simply rinses clean with a garden hose and never develops the organic growth that plagues wood fences in Metro Vancouver's climate.

Need help finding a fence professional for cleaning, staining, or replacement? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with experienced local contractors through the Vancouver Construction Network.

Q2

We just bought a place in North Vancouver — is Western Red Cedar really worth the extra cost for fencing?

Yes, Western Red Cedar is absolutely worth the extra cost for fencing in North Vancouver — and arguably more so there than anywhere else in Metro Vancouver. The North Shore's heavier rainfall (some areas receive over 2,000mm annually, compared to roughly 1,200mm in central Vancouver), frequent mountain outflow winds, and heavily treed, shaded lots create conditions that are especially punishing for lesser fence materials. Cedar's natural rot resistance, dimensional stability, and performance in wet conditions make it the clear choice for North Van properties.

Western Red Cedar costs roughly 30 to 50 percent more than pressure-treated wood upfront. In concrete numbers, a 6-foot cedar privacy fence runs \$40 to \$80 per linear foot installed in Metro Vancouver, while pressure-treated

runs \$30 to \$65 per linear foot. For a typical 200 linear foot fence, that difference works out to roughly \$2,000 to \$6,000 more for cedar. However, when you factor in cedar's longer lifespan (20 to 25 years versus 15 to 20 for pressure-treated), lower maintenance burden, and better appearance over time, the cost per year of service often favours cedar.

Why Cedar Performs Better on the North Shore

Cedar contains natural oils called thujaplicins that actively resist fungal decay, rot, and insect damage from within the wood fibre. This is not a surface treatment that can wear off — it is built into the cellular structure of the wood. In North Vancouver's wet, shaded environment where fences may stay damp for weeks at a time during the October to March rainy season, this natural protection is invaluable. Pressure-treated wood relies on chemical infusion to resist rot, which works reasonably well, but the treatment does not prevent surface weathering, cracking, warping, or the unsightly greening and greying that happens rapidly in wet conditions.

Dimensional stability is another critical advantage on the North Shore. Cedar swells and shrinks less than other softwoods as it cycles between wet and dry. This means fewer gaps opening between fence boards during dry summer months and less warping or cupping during the long wet season. Pressure-treated wood, which is typically spruce-pine-fir (SPF) lumber treated with alkaline copper quaternary, is more prone to twisting, cupping, and splitting as it goes through wet-dry cycles — a particular problem on the North Shore where the moisture swings are dramatic.

Wind resistance matters in North Vancouver. The North Shore experiences strong outflow winds from the mountains during winter storms, sometimes reaching 80 to 100 km/h. Cedar's lighter weight compared to pressure-treated lumber might seem like a disadvantage, but cedar's natural flexibility and resistance to splitting actually make it perform well in wind. The key to wind performance on the North Shore is proper post installation — 6x6 posts rather than 4x4, set a minimum of 2.5 to 3 feet deep in concrete with drainage gravel below, and post spacing of 6 feet rather than the standard 8 feet. A board-on-board (shadowbox) cedar design allows wind to pass through while maintaining visual privacy, and is highly recommended for exposed North Van locations.

Cedar is also locally sourced in British Columbia, which keeps prices more reasonable than in other provinces and means consistent supply. Much of the Western Red Cedar used in Metro Vancouver fencing comes from BC forests, and local sawmills produce fence boards in standard dimensions that fence contractors are set up to work with efficiently.

Making Cedar Last on the North Shore

Even with its natural advantages, cedar fencing in North Vancouver needs some care to reach its full lifespan.

Apply a penetrating semi-transparent stain within the first year of installation — this adds UV protection and

water repellency on top of cedar's natural oils. Re-apply every two to three years, always during a dry stretch between May and September. Use a penetrating stain rather than a film-forming finish — film finishes will peel and blister in North Vancouver's moisture and require scraping before re-application.

Moss, algae, and mildew growth is common on North Shore fences, particularly north-facing sections and fences under tree canopy. An annual cleaning with a garden hose and diluted oxygen bleach solution (not chlorine bleach, which can damage cedar) keeps this in check. A gentle pressure wash on a low setting also works, but avoid high pressure that can damage the wood grain.

Make sure your installer uses galvanized or stainless steel fasteners throughout — standard steel screws and nails will rust, stain the cedar with dark streaks, and eventually fail in North Vancouver's moisture. Ring-shank nails or structural screws provide superior holding power compared to smooth-shank nails.

Before building, check with the District of North Vancouver or the City of North Vancouver (they have separate bylaws) about fence height limits and any requirements specific to your zone. Standard residential limits are 1.83 metres (6 feet) in rear and side yards and 1.22 metres (4 feet) in front yards. Call BC One Call (1-800-474-6886) before digging post holes.

Need help finding a cedar fence specialist on the North Shore? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you for free.

Q3

Is it cheaper to repair or replace an aging cedar fence in Metro Vancouver?

As a general rule, if more than 30 to 40% of your cedar fence boards are damaged, rotted, or warped, full replacement is usually more cost-effective than piecemeal repairs. Below that threshold, targeted repairs can extend your fence's life by 5 to 10 years at a fraction of the replacement cost — but only if the posts and rails are still structurally sound.

The critical assessment starts with the posts. **Posts are the structural foundation of any fence, and in Metro Vancouver's wet climate, post rot is the most common failure point.** Push firmly against each post — if it rocks, wobbles, or feels soft at the base, that post needs replacement regardless of whether you repair or replace the fence. Individual post replacement costs \$150 to \$400 per post including removing the old post and concrete, digging a new hole, setting the new post in concrete with a gravel drainage bed, and reattaching rails and boards. If you have 3 or fewer rotted posts on a 100-foot fence, repair makes sense. If 5 or more posts are compromised, the cost of individual replacements starts approaching a full rebuild.

Board and panel replacement costs \$8 to \$20 per board for materials plus labour, depending on whether you're matching existing board widths and profiles. Matching aged cedar is tricky — new cedar boards will be noticeably lighter in colour than weathered boards, even with staining. After a year of weathering, the colour difference fades, but it will be visible initially. If your fence has a consistent weathered grey patina that you like, replacing scattered boards creates a patchwork look.

The Break-Even Calculation

Here's a practical way to decide. **A full replacement of a 100-foot, 6-foot cedar privacy fence in Metro Vancouver runs \$4,000 to \$8,000 installed.** Compare that to your repair estimate: if you need 4 posts replaced (\$600 to \$1,600), 20 boards replaced (\$160 to \$400 in materials plus labour), and professional staining of the entire fence to blend old and new (\$200 to \$500), you're looking at \$1,000 to \$2,500 in repairs. That's clearly cheaper than replacement — and if the remaining structure is solid, you'll get another 5 to 10 years from the fence.

But if you need 8 posts, 40+ boards, new rails in several sections, and the fence is already 15 to 20 years old, repair costs can hit \$3,000 to \$5,000 — at which point a full replacement at \$4,000 to \$8,000 gives you a brand-new fence with a 15 to 25 year lifespan, fresh gravel drainage at every post base, and proper modern fasteners. **In Metro Vancouver's wet climate, a fence that's already showing widespread rot will continue to deteriorate even after repairs, so investing heavily in patching a fence that's past its prime is often throwing good money after bad.**

After any repair or replacement, invest in professional staining and sealing every 2 to 3 years to protect your cedar from Metro Vancouver's relentless moisture. This \$2 to \$5 per linear foot maintenance cost is the single best investment you can make to maximize your fence's lifespan in this climate.

Need a professional assessment? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with experienced local contractors who will give you an honest repair-vs-replace recommendation.

How much does a split-rail cedar fence cost for a rural property in Langley?

A split-rail cedar fence for a rural Langley property typically costs \$15 to \$35 per linear foot installed, making it one of the most affordable fencing options available. For a large rural lot with 500 to 1,000 linear feet of perimeter, that puts the total project cost between \$7,500 and \$35,000, with most properties landing in the \$12,000 to \$25,000 range depending on the number of rails, post spacing, and terrain.

Split-rail fencing is the traditional choice for rural and semi-rural properties across the Fraser Valley, and Langley is where you'll see it most in Metro Vancouver. **A standard 2-rail split-rail fence stands about 3 to 3.5 feet tall and costs \$15 to \$25 per linear foot installed.** A 3-rail version at 4 to 4.5 feet runs \$22 to \$35 per linear foot. Western Red Cedar is the preferred material because it's naturally rot-resistant, locally sourced in BC, and weathers beautifully to a silver-grey patina that complements rural landscapes. Pressure-treated split rail is available at the lower end of the price range but doesn't age as attractively.

Langley Rural Property Considerations

Langley has a significant amount of Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) property, and fencing requirements can differ from standard residential zones. ALR properties may have specific municipal guidelines about fence type, height, and placement — particularly if the fence borders agricultural operations, watercourses, or environmentally sensitive areas. Check with the Township of Langley's planning department before committing to a design.

Post spacing on split-rail fences is typically 8 to 10 feet, compared to 6 to 8 feet for solid privacy fences. This wider spacing means fewer posts, less concrete, and faster installation — which is why the per-foot cost is so much lower than privacy fencing. Posts are usually 5 to 6 inches in diameter (round or half-round cedar) set 2 to 2.5 feet deep in concrete or compacted gravel. For rural properties where aesthetics favour a natural look, gravel-set posts (no concrete) are common and appropriate — the fence isn't carrying wind load like a solid panel fence.

If you need to contain animals, a split-rail fence alone won't do the job. Adding welded wire mesh or field fencing to the inside of the split rails adds \$3 to \$8 per linear foot but creates an effective barrier for dogs, horses, or livestock while maintaining the open, rural aesthetic from the outside. This is extremely common on hobby farm properties in Langley, Maple Ridge, and Pitt Meadows.

For very long runs (500+ linear feet), many contractors offer volume pricing that can bring the per-foot cost down by 10 to 15%, since the setup cost is spread across more footage and their crews can work efficiently on long, straight runs. It's worth getting quotes for the entire perimeter at once even if you plan to install in phases — you may find the per-foot price is better for a single larger project.

Looking for a split-rail fence contractor in Langley? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with professionals experienced in rural and acreage fencing.

Q5

What grade of Western Red Cedar should I use for fencing in Vancouver?

For most residential fences in Metro Vancouver, #2 Common or STK (Select Tight Knot) grade Western Red Cedar offers the best balance of appearance, durability, and value. Higher grades like Clear or Select exist but cost significantly more and are typically reserved for premium custom builds or front-facing feature fences where a flawless appearance justifies the investment.

Understanding cedar grading helps you make a smart decision at the lumber yard. **Clear grade** is the top tier — no knots, consistent colour, straight grain, and the most visually appealing. It's also the most expensive, running \$4 to \$7 per linear foot for 1x6 boards at Metro Vancouver lumber suppliers. Clear cedar is ideal for horizontal modern fences where every board is visible and imperfections stand out, or for front yard fences on upscale homes in neighbourhoods like Shaughnessy, Kerrisdale, or West Vancouver. **Select grade** allows a few small, tight knots and minor character marks. It looks nearly as clean as Clear but costs 15 to 25% less, typically \$3.50 to \$5.50 per linear foot for 1x6 boards.

STK (Select Tight Knot) grade is the workhorse of cedar fencing in Metro Vancouver and what most experienced fence contractors recommend for standard privacy fences. STK allows tight knots (knots that are firmly embedded and won't fall out) throughout the board, giving the fence a natural, rustic character. The knots don't compromise structural integrity or rot resistance — they're part of the heartwood and carry the same natural oils that make cedar durable. STK 1x6 boards run \$2.50 to \$4 per linear foot at Lower Mainland suppliers, making it roughly half the cost of Clear grade for virtually the same performance and longevity.

#2 Common grade is a step below STK, allowing larger knots, some loose knots, and more variation in colour and grain. It's the most affordable cedar option at \$1.75 to \$3 per linear foot for 1x6 boards. For a rear yard privacy fence that will be stained a solid colour, #2 Common is a perfectly reasonable choice — the stain hides the cosmetic imperfections while the cedar's natural rot resistance still protects against Vancouver's moisture. However, sort through the pile carefully and reject boards with loose knots (they'll fall out over time, leaving holes), significant wane (bark edge), or heavy sapwood content (the lighter-coloured outer wood that lacks cedar's natural rot resistance).

The grade you choose matters less than ensuring you're getting heartwood, not sapwood. Cedar heartwood is the darker, reddish-brown inner wood that contains the natural thujaplicins — the oils and compounds that make

Western Red Cedar naturally resistant to rot, decay, and insects. Sapwood is the lighter, almost white outer wood that has virtually no rot resistance and will deteriorate quickly in Metro Vancouver's wet marine climate. Even in lower grades, look for boards that are predominantly heartwood. A #2 Common heartwood board will outlast a Clear sapwood board by years in Vancouver's rain.

For a typical 100-linear-foot cedar privacy fence at 6 feet tall, the grade choice affects your total material cost significantly. Using Clear grade, cedar boards alone cost approximately \$2,400 to \$4,200. Using STK grade, that drops to \$1,500 to \$2,400. Using #2 Common, you're looking at \$1,050 to \$1,800. When you add posts, rails, concrete, fasteners, and labour, the total installed cost ranges from about \$40 to \$80 per linear foot — and the grade of cedar is one of the biggest variables in that range.

My recommendation for most Metro Vancouver homeowners: **go with STK grade for side and rear fences, and consider upgrading to Select or Clear for front-facing sections or modern horizontal designs.** Apply a quality semi-transparent stain within 3 to 6 months of installation, and re-stain every 2 to 3 years — this maintenance schedule matters far more for longevity than the grade of cedar you choose. Need help finding a fence contractor who knows their cedar grades? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with experienced local professionals for free.

Q6

How long does an untreated cedar fence last in Metro Vancouver's climate?

An untreated Western Red Cedar fence in Metro Vancouver typically lasts 12 to 18 years before structural failure, though individual boards may start showing significant weathering and surface degradation within 5 to 8 years. By comparison, a properly maintained cedar fence — stained or sealed every 2 to 3 years — can last 20 to 30 years in the same climate. The difference is enormous, and understanding why helps you decide whether to invest in ongoing maintenance or accept the natural weathering process.

Metro Vancouver's marine climate is the defining factor. The region receives over 1,200mm of annual rainfall, with some North Shore areas exceeding 2,000mm. Roughly 70% of that rain falls between October and March, meaning your cedar fence spends nearly half the year in persistently wet conditions. Even Western Red Cedar — which is the most naturally rot-resistant softwood commercially available in BC — cannot withstand this level of moisture exposure indefinitely without surface protection.

Here's what happens to untreated cedar year by year in Vancouver's climate. During the first year, the fresh reddish-brown colour begins to fade as UV exposure breaks down surface lignin. By year 2 to 3, the fence has turned a uniform silver-grey — this is purely cosmetic, and many homeowners actually prefer this weathered patina

look. The grey colour is the result of UV degradation and does not indicate rot. However, by year 3 to 5, you'll start noticing green moss and algae growth, particularly on north-facing surfaces and sections under tree canopy. This biological growth traps moisture against the wood surface, creating the conditions for fungal decay to begin.

Years 5 to 8 is when untreated cedar starts showing real damage in Metro Vancouver. Surface checking (small cracks along the grain) develops as the wood goes through repeated wet-dry cycles. These checks allow water to penetrate deeper into the board, accelerating internal decay. Boards with significant sapwood content — the lighter-coloured outer wood that lacks cedar's natural protective oils — may already be soft and punky. Fence rails (the horizontal 2x4 members that boards attach to) are particularly vulnerable because they're horizontal surfaces that collect and hold water. Rail rot is often the first structural failure point on an untreated cedar fence.

Years 8 to 12 typically bring the first board replacements. Bottom boards closest to the ground absorb splash-back moisture and often rot from the bottom up. Boards in persistently shaded areas or near irrigation systems deteriorate faster. You'll notice boards becoming soft, spongy, or developing holes where knots have rotted through. Individual board replacement costs \$5 to \$15 per board depending on size and access.

Years 12 to 18 is when most untreated cedar fences in Metro Vancouver reach end of life. Posts are the critical structural element, and even cedar posts set in concrete (with proper gravel drainage) eventually rot at the ground line where moisture is constant. When posts fail, the fence leans or collapses. Post replacement runs \$150 to \$400 per post, and by this stage it's often more cost-effective to replace the entire fence rather than continue patching.

There are several factors that can extend or shorten these timelines. **Heartwood vs. sapwood** makes a dramatic difference — a fence built entirely from heartwood cedar can last 5 to 10 years longer than one with heavy sapwood content, even without treatment. **Air circulation** matters — fences in open, sunny locations dry faster after rain and last longer than fences in shaded, enclosed areas with poor airflow. **Ground contact** is the biggest enemy — raising the bottom of the fence 2 to 4 inches above grade, and ensuring gravel drainage around posts rather than direct soil contact, significantly extends lifespan. **Board-on-board (shadowbox) design** actually helps untreated fences because both sides of each board get air exposure, promoting faster drying.

The financial math is worth considering. A 100-linear-foot cedar fence costs roughly \$4,000 to \$8,000 installed. Professional staining every 2 to 3 years costs \$200 to \$500 per application. Over 25 years, that's roughly \$2,000 to \$5,000 in maintenance — but you get 25 to 30 years from the fence instead of 12 to 18 years. That's potentially an extra decade of service for a modest ongoing investment. If you prefer the natural grey look and want to skip maintenance, just budget for a full replacement around year 15.

Whether you choose to maintain your cedar fence or let it weather naturally, the quality of the initial installation — proper post depth, gravel drainage, heartwood lumber, stainless steel fasteners — determines the baseline lifespan. Find experienced fence contractors through Vancouver Fence Builders to ensure your fence is built right

from the start.

Should I stain my new cedar fence right away or let it weather first in Vancouver?

Let your new cedar fence weather for 3 to 6 months before applying stain, but ideally time it so the staining falls during Vancouver's dry season (May through September). Fresh-cut Western Red Cedar has a high moisture content and natural surface oils that prevent stain from penetrating and bonding properly. Giving the wood time to dry out and the surface to open up allows the stain to absorb deeply, resulting in better colour saturation, longer-lasting protection, and less peeling or flaking.

This timing advice comes with a critical Metro Vancouver caveat. **If your fence is installed in spring (March to May), you're in the ideal window** — the fence weathers through late spring, and you can stain it during the dry summer months of July or August when you'll get 3 to 5 consecutive dry days needed for proper stain application and curing. If your fence is installed in fall or early winter, you'll need to wait through the entire wet season (October through March) and stain the following summer. That means 6 to 9 months of unprotected exposure to Vancouver's heaviest rainfall period, which is not ideal but is manageable with quality heartwood cedar.

The "water bead test" tells you when your cedar is ready for stain. Sprinkle a few drops of water on the fence surface. If the water beads up and sits on the surface, the wood is still too fresh and oily — stain won't penetrate. If the water soaks into the wood within 30 to 60 seconds, the surface is ready to accept stain. This test is more reliable than counting calendar days because drying rates vary depending on sun exposure, air circulation, and whether the fence faces north (slower drying) or south (faster drying).

Before staining, prep work is essential. After the weathering period, your fence will likely have some grey oxidation on the surface, and in Metro Vancouver's climate, possibly some green algae or mildew starting to form. Use a fence cleaner or brightener product — available at any Lower Mainland hardware store — applied with a garden sprayer and scrubbed with a stiff brush, then rinsed with a garden hose or light pressure washer (no more than 1,500 PSI to avoid damaging the cedar grain). Let the fence dry for 2 to 3 sunny days after cleaning before applying stain. Skipping this prep step is a common mistake — staining over grey oxidation or mildew traps contaminants under the stain and leads to premature failure.

For Metro Vancouver's climate, semi-transparent oil-based stain is the best choice for cedar fences. Semi-transparent stains penetrate into the wood grain rather than forming a surface film, which means they wear gradually rather than peeling or flaking — a critical advantage in Vancouver's wet climate where surface-film products get undermined by moisture from behind the boards. Oil-based formulations penetrate deeper than water-based and provide superior moisture repellency. Look for products that contain UV inhibitors and mildewcide, both essential in Metro Vancouver. Quality semi-transparent cedar stains from reputable brands run \$50 to \$80 per

gallon and cover approximately 150 to 250 square feet per gallon on rough-sawn cedar (less coverage on rough textures because they absorb more product).

Solid-colour stains and paints are generally not recommended for cedar fences in Vancouver. They form a surface film that traps moisture behind it — and in a climate that delivers 1,200mm of annual rainfall, moisture will get behind any surface film. The result is bubbling, peeling, and flaking within 1 to 3 years, requiring extensive scraping and sanding before recoating. If you want a solid colour, use a solid-body stain rather than paint, and accept that maintenance intervals will be shorter.

Apply stain to both sides of the fence if possible. This is often overlooked, but boards that are sealed on one side and raw on the other absorb moisture unevenly, leading to cupping and warping. If your fence design allows access to both sides, staining both provides the most balanced protection. For privacy fences where the neighbour's side is inaccessible, at minimum apply a coat of clear wood preservative to the back side before installation if your contractor is willing — some Metro Vancouver fence builders offer this as an upgrade.

Plan on re-staining every 2 to 3 years in Metro Vancouver's climate. South and west-facing fence sections that get direct sun and rain will need re-staining more frequently than north-facing or sheltered sections. The maintenance cost runs \$2 to \$5 per linear foot for professional application, or you can DIY with a pump sprayer and back-brush technique for just the cost of materials.

Need a fence contractor who can advise on the right stain schedule for your specific property? Vancouver Fence Builders can match you with local professionals who understand Metro Vancouver's unique climate demands.

Q8

How much does a tongue-and-groove cedar fence cost in the Lower Mainland?

A tongue-and-groove (T&G) cedar fence in the Lower Mainland typically costs \$55 to \$100 per linear foot installed for a standard 6-foot privacy fence, making it one of the more premium wood fence options. The higher cost compared to standard board-on-board (\$40 to \$80 per linear foot) reflects the milled lumber, tighter joinery, and additional labour time required for a clean, gap-free installation.

Tongue-and-groove cedar fencing uses boards that have been milled with a protruding tongue on one edge and a matching groove on the opposite edge. When assembled, the tongue of each board slides into the groove of the adjacent board, creating a tight, interlocking joint with no visible gaps between boards. This gives the fence a seamless, solid appearance that is more refined than traditional butt-jointed board fences where small gaps appear between boards as the wood shrinks seasonally.

Material costs for T&G cedar boards run \$3.50 to \$7 per linear foot depending on grade and board width. The milling process that creates the tongue and groove profile adds approximately 20 to 30% to the board cost compared to plain flat boards of the same grade. STK (Select Tight Knot) grade T&G 1x6 Western Red Cedar is the most commonly used for fencing and runs \$3.50 to \$5 per linear foot at Lower Mainland lumber suppliers. Clear grade T&G cedar — preferred for front-facing or visible applications — runs \$5 to \$7 per linear foot. For a 6-foot-tall fence, each linear foot of fence requires approximately 7 boards (accounting for the tongue overlap that reduces effective board width), so material costs for boards alone run roughly \$25 to \$49 per linear foot of fence.

Add to that the **posts, rails, concrete, fasteners, and hardware**. Cedar or pressure-treated 4x4 posts (\$15 to \$25 each, spaced every 6 to 8 feet), 2x4 cedar rails (three per section for 6-foot height), concrete for post footings (\$8 to \$12 per hole), and stainless steel or hot-dipped galvanized screws (essential in Metro Vancouver's wet climate — standard screws will rust and stain the cedar). Total material cost per linear foot, including everything, runs approximately \$35 to \$60.

Labour for T&G cedar fencing runs higher than standard board fences because the interlocking joints require more precision. Each board must be carefully aligned and tapped into the groove of the previous board without cracking the tongue. On sloped terrain — common across Metro Vancouver in areas like the North Shore, Burnaby Mountain, and Coquitlam — T&G fences require either a stepped panel approach or careful racking (angling the boards to follow the slope), both of which add complexity. Labour costs for T&G installation in Metro Vancouver typically run \$20 to \$40 per linear foot, compared to \$15 to \$30 for standard board fences.

For a typical Lower Mainland project — 100 linear feet of 6-foot T&G cedar privacy fence with one pedestrian gate — budget \$5,500 to \$10,000 all-in. That includes removal of any existing fence (\$3 to \$8 per linear foot), new posts set in concrete with gravel drainage beds, three-rail construction, T&G STK cedar boards, one gate (\$200 to \$600), and cleanup. Premium builds using Clear grade cedar, steel posts, or custom details will push toward the higher end.

One important consideration for T&G fencing in Vancouver's climate is wood movement. The tight-fitting joints that make T&G fences look great when new can cause problems as cedar expands and contracts with Metro Vancouver's seasonal moisture changes. During the wet winter months, boards absorb moisture and swell — if the joints are too tight, boards can buckle or push apart at the tongue. During dry summer months, boards shrink and small gaps may open at the joints. Quality T&G cedar has enough tolerance in the joint profile to accommodate this seasonal movement, but cheaper or poorly milled boards may not. Ask your contractor about the specific T&G profile they use and confirm it's designed for exterior applications with moisture movement in mind.

T&G fencing also requires sealing on all surfaces, including inside the tongue-and-groove joints, to prevent moisture from wicking into the end grain through the joint. Applying a coat of end-cut preservative or wood sealer to the tongue and groove profiles before assembly is a best practice that many fence contractors in Metro Vancouver

skip to save time. If this matters to you, discuss it with your contractor upfront.

Get matched with fence contractors experienced in tongue-and-groove cedar installation through Vancouver Fence Builders — our matching service is free and we can connect you with professionals who will provide detailed quotes for your project.

Q9

How do I tell if cedar fence boards are heartwood or sapwood when buying in BC?

The simplest way to distinguish heartwood from sapwood on Western Red Cedar fence boards is colour: heartwood is the darker, reddish-brown to chocolate-brown inner wood, while sapwood is the noticeably lighter, almost creamy-white to pale yellow outer wood. This colour difference is usually obvious and visible at any Lower Mainland lumber yard, and it's one of the most important things to check when selecting cedar for fencing in Metro Vancouver's wet climate — because heartwood and sapwood perform dramatically differently when exposed to moisture.

Heartwood is what gives Western Red Cedar its legendary rot resistance. The heartwood contains thujaplicins — natural phenolic compounds and oils that are toxic to the fungi and bacteria that cause wood decay. These compounds also repel insects and give heartwood cedar its distinctive aromatic scent (that classic "cedar" smell comes from the heartwood oils). In Metro Vancouver's marine climate, where fences endure over 1,200mm of annual rainfall and months of persistent moisture, heartwood cedar can resist rot for 15 to 25 years even with minimal maintenance. It's the reason Western Red Cedar is the premier fencing wood in BC.

Sapwood, by contrast, has virtually no natural rot resistance. Sapwood is the outer growth layer of the tree that was actively transporting water and nutrients when the tree was alive. It contains very few of the protective extractives found in heartwood. In Metro Vancouver's wet conditions, sapwood cedar can begin showing soft spots and fungal decay within 3 to 5 years — roughly the same deterioration rate as untreated spruce or pine. Paying cedar prices for sapwood boards is essentially paying a premium for wood that won't outperform cheap alternatives.

Here's how to identify heartwood vs. sapwood at the lumber yard. **Look at the end grain of the board** — the cross-section visible at the cut end. On a board cut from near the outside of the log, you'll see a clear colour transition from darker heartwood in the centre to lighter sapwood toward the edge. Some boards are entirely heartwood (cut from the inner portion of the log), some are entirely sapwood (cut from the outer portion), and many have a mix of both. **For fencing, select boards that are at least 80% heartwood** — some sapwood on the edges is acceptable, but avoid boards that are predominantly or entirely sapwood.

The "sniff test" works surprisingly well. Pick up the board and smell the end grain or a freshly cut surface. Heartwood cedar has a strong, distinctive aromatic scent — warm, slightly spicy, and unmistakable. Sapwood has very little scent. If the board smells strongly of cedar, it's heartwood-dominant. If it smells like generic lumber with no particular aroma, it's likely heavy sapwood.

Weight can also help distinguish the two. Heartwood is slightly denser and heavier than sapwood in the same species. When comparing two boards of the same dimensions and grade, the heavier one typically has more heartwood content. This difference is subtle but noticeable when you're handling boards side by side.

At Lower Mainland lumber yards, grading terminology can guide you. Cedar marketed as "**heartwood**" or "**heart**" grade is specifically selected for minimal sapwood content — this is the best choice for fencing in Metro Vancouver, though it commands a premium. **STK (Select Tight Knot)** and lower grades do not guarantee heartwood content and can contain significant sapwood. When buying STK or #2 Common cedar for fencing, you need to physically sort through the pile and select heartwood-dominant boards yourself. Most lumber yard staff will let you pick through the bunk if you explain you're selecting for heartwood.

Some practical purchasing tips for Metro Vancouver. When buying from big-box stores (which source from multiple mills), heartwood content varies widely within the same pile — always sort and select. When buying from specialty cedar suppliers or direct from BC mills, ask specifically for heartwood grades and be prepared to pay 15 to 30% more. For a fence where you're investing thousands in materials and labour, the heartwood premium is a small price for dramatically better longevity.

If your budget requires mixing heartwood and sapwood boards, use a **strategic placement approach**: put heartwood boards in the most moisture-exposed locations (bottom boards near ground level, boards on the weather-exposed side, boards in shaded areas), and use sapwood boards in protected upper positions or on the sheltered side of the fence where they'll dry faster after rain.

A knowledgeable fence contractor will already know to select heartwood-dominant cedar for Metro Vancouver projects. If you want to ensure you're getting quality materials, Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with experienced professionals who source their cedar carefully.

What's the best fence stain brand available in Vancouver for cedar fences?

For cedar fences in Metro Vancouver's wet marine climate, semi-transparent oil-based stains from Sansin, TWP (Total Wood Preservative), and Ready Seal consistently outperform other brands in independent testing and contractor experience. These products share the key characteristics that matter most in a climate that delivers over 1,200mm of annual rainfall: deep penetration into the wood grain, no surface film to trap moisture and peel, UV protection to slow greying, and mildewcide to combat the algae and mould growth that plagues fences in Vancouver's humid conditions.

Sansin DEC (Decorating Exterior Colour) is a favourite among professional fence contractors in the Lower Mainland. It's a penetrating wood finish that uses a water-borne alkyd formula — meaning it penetrates like an oil but cleans up with water. Sansin DEC soaks into the cedar grain rather than forming a surface film, so it wears gradually by fading rather than peeling or flaking. It contains UV absorbers and fungicide, and it's available in dozens of semi-transparent colours that let the natural cedar grain show through. A gallon covers approximately 200 to 300 square feet on rough-sawn cedar and costs \$55 to \$75 at Lower Mainland suppliers. Sansin is a Canadian company (based in Ontario) and their products are formulated for Canadian climates, including the west coast marine environment.

TWP (Total Wood Preservative) in the 1500 series is an oil-based stain that has been a top performer in independent stain testing for years. TWP 1500 penetrates deeply into cedar, provides excellent UV protection, and contains zinc-based preservatives that combat mildew and fungal growth. It's one of the few stains that can be applied to new cedar after just 2 to 4 weeks of weathering (most brands recommend 3 to 6 months). TWP runs \$50 to \$70 per gallon and covers 150 to 250 square feet on rough-sawn cedar. It's available at specialty paint and stain retailers in Metro Vancouver — not always stocked at big-box stores, so you may need to order it or visit a dedicated paint supplier.

Ready Seal is a wipe-on, no-back-brushing stain that has gained a strong following among both DIY homeowners and contractors. Its unique selling point is that it requires no wet-line maintenance during application — you can spray it, brush it, or roll it without worrying about lap marks or uneven colour. Ready Seal is oil-based, penetrating, and self-priming. It contains UV inhibitors and is naturally resistant to mildew. At \$40 to \$55 per gallon with coverage of 150 to 200 square feet on rough-sawn cedar, it's the most affordable of the three premium options. The ease of application makes it especially appealing for homeowners who plan to maintain their own fence rather than hiring a professional stainer.

What to avoid in Metro Vancouver's climate. Solid-colour stains and exterior latex paints form a surface film over the wood. In Vancouver's wet climate, moisture inevitably gets behind that film — through the back of the boards,

through end grain, through fastener holes — and pushes the film off from behind. The result is peeling, bubbling, and flaking within 1 to 3 years, followed by extensive scraping and sanding before you can recoat. Once you've applied a film-forming product to cedar, you're committed to a high-maintenance cycle that's difficult and expensive to escape. Stick with penetrating semi-transparent formulas for cedar fences in Metro Vancouver.

Water-based stains have improved significantly and some premium water-based products (like Sansin DEC mentioned above) now rival traditional oil-based formulas. However, many budget water-based stains still don't penetrate rough-sawn cedar as deeply as oil-based options, and their moisture repellency in heavy rain environments like Vancouver can be inferior. If you go water-based, invest in a premium brand formulated for exterior wood in wet climates — don't grab the cheapest option off the shelf.

Application timing and technique matter as much as brand selection. Even the best stain will fail if applied to wet wood, applied too thickly, or applied without proper surface preparation. In Metro Vancouver, plan staining for the dry season — July and August typically offer the best window with 3 to 5 consecutive dry days needed for proper absorption and curing. Clean the fence surface first to remove any grey oxidation, mildew, or dirt. Apply with a pump sprayer and immediately back-brush (work the stain into the grain with a brush) for maximum penetration. One coat is sufficient for most penetrating stains on rough-sawn cedar; two coats can darken the colour but won't necessarily double the protection.

Budget approximately \$200 to \$400 in materials to stain a 100-linear-foot, 6-foot-tall cedar fence (both sides if accessible, roughly 1,200 square feet of surface area). Professional staining runs \$2 to \$5 per linear foot. Plan on re-staining every 2 to 3 years in Metro Vancouver's climate — this maintenance schedule is the single biggest factor in maximizing your cedar fence's lifespan, regardless of which brand you choose.

Q11

Does cedar fencing need to be sealed on both sides to prevent warping in Vancouver?

Yes, sealing both sides of cedar fence boards is the single most effective step you can take to prevent warping, cupping, and twisting in Metro Vancouver's wet climate. When only one side is sealed, the exposed back absorbs moisture from rain and humidity while the sealed front repels it — this uneven moisture content across the board's thickness creates internal stress that causes the wood to cup (curl across its width) toward the wetter side. In a climate that delivers over 1,200mm of annual rainfall, this differential moisture absorption is aggressive and relentless.

The physics behind warping are straightforward. **Wood cells expand when they absorb water and shrink when they dry.** If both sides of a board absorb and release moisture at roughly the same rate, the board stays flat — it swells and shrinks uniformly. But when one side is sealed and the other is raw, the raw side absorbs moisture faster during Vancouver's 6-month wet season (October through March) and swells while the sealed side stays relatively stable. The board cups toward the raw side. During the drier summer months, the process partially reverses, but the repeated flexing fatigues the wood fibres and the board progressively develops a permanent curve. After just 2 to 3 wet-dry cycles, the warping can become severe enough to pull the board away from the rails and pop fasteners.

The practical challenge is that sealing both sides of a fence is difficult after the fence is built. On a standard privacy fence, the "back" side (typically the neighbour's side, showing the posts and rails) is often inaccessible or at best awkward to reach. This is why the best time to seal both sides is **before installation** — laying the boards flat on sawhorses and applying sealer or stain to the back side, then flipping and doing the front, and letting both sides dry before fastening the boards to the rails. Some Metro Vancouver fence contractors offer this as a pre-finishing service for an additional \$1 to \$2 per linear foot, and it's one of the most worthwhile upgrades you can request.

If pre-finishing isn't feasible, there are workarounds. **Board-on-board (shadowbox) fences** naturally expose both sides of every board to air and can be stained on both sides after installation because there's access from either direction. This is one of several reasons board-on-board is an excellent fence design for Metro Vancouver — the open airflow also helps both sides dry faster after rain. **Fences with accessible neighbour sides** — where you have an agreement with your neighbour or the back faces your own yard — can be stained on both sides after installation with a brush or sprayer.

At minimum, seal the end grain even if you can't seal the full back surface. The cut ends of cedar boards are like straws — they absorb moisture at 10 to 15 times the rate of the flat grain surface. Every cut end on your fence is a moisture entry point. Applying end-cut preservative (available at any Lower Mainland hardware store for \$10 to \$20 per quart) to all cut ends before installation dramatically reduces moisture infiltration through the board ends, which is a major contributor to warping, splitting, and rot at the tops and bottoms of fence boards.

For the sealed side, semi-transparent penetrating stain is your best option in Metro Vancouver — it soaks into the wood grain and provides moisture repellency without forming a surface film. For the back side, a clear wood preservative or water repellent is sufficient if you don't care about colour — the goal is moisture management, not appearance. Products with a wax or paraffin base provide good water repellency and are easy to apply quickly with a garden sprayer. A gallon of clear wood preservative costs \$25 to \$40 and covers 200 to 400 square feet — enough for the back side of a 100-linear-foot fence.

Other strategies to minimize warping in Metro Vancouver's climate include using rough-cut cedar (the textured surface absorbs and releases moisture more evenly than smooth-planed boards), selecting boards that are

predominantly heartwood (heartwood is more dimensionally stable than sapwood), using ring-shank nails or structural screws that hold boards flat against the rails even under warping stress, and spacing fasteners properly — two fasteners per board at each rail, placed 3/4 inch from each edge, to resist cupping force.

Thicker boards also warp less. Upgrading from standard 3/4-inch (nominal 1-inch) boards to 1-inch (nominal 5/4-inch) boards provides 33% more material thickness, which resists the bending force of uneven moisture stress. The upgrade adds roughly \$1 to \$1.50 per linear foot to your material cost but meaningfully reduces warping, especially on wider boards (1x6 and 1x8).

A quality fence contractor in Metro Vancouver will understand the importance of moisture management on both sides of the boards and can advise on the best approach for your specific project. Vancouver Fence Builders can connect you with experienced professionals who build fences designed to last in our demanding climate — our matching service is free.

Q12

How much does a cedar lattice-top fence cost per linear foot in Metro Vancouver?

A cedar lattice-top fence in Metro Vancouver typically costs \$50 to \$90 per linear foot installed for a 6-foot total height, with the solid cedar panel occupying the lower 4 to 5 feet and a lattice section adding 1 to 2 feet on top. This hybrid design is one of the most popular fence styles in Metro Vancouver because it delivers privacy where you need it while allowing light and airflow through the lattice — a practical advantage in a region where shading from solid fences can make already-dim winter yards feel even darker.

The cost breakdown for a typical 6-foot cedar lattice-top fence includes several components. The **solid cedar section** (lower 4 to 5 feet) accounts for the majority of the material cost and is essentially the same as a standard privacy fence — boards attached to horizontal rails between posts. The **lattice section** (upper 1 to 2 feet) adds \$8 to \$20 per linear foot depending on the lattice style. **Pre-made lattice panels** (the most economical option) cost \$3 to \$8 per linear foot for the material, with diagonal lattice being the most common and affordable, and square lattice costing slightly more. **Custom-built lattice** with thicker slats, tighter spacing, or specific patterns costs \$10 to \$20 per linear foot but provides a more substantial, premium appearance.

For a **100-linear-foot cedar lattice-top fence at 6 feet total height**, expect to pay \$5,000 to \$9,000 installed in Metro Vancouver. This includes 4x4 or 6x6 cedar posts set in concrete with gravel drainage (spaced 8 feet apart), three horizontal rails per section, tongue-and-groove or flat cedar boards for the solid portion, a lattice cap frame

that holds the lattice panel, the lattice panels themselves, post caps, and all stainless steel or galvanized fasteners. Labour for a lattice-top fence runs slightly higher than a standard privacy fence because the lattice frame requires additional carpentry — each panel section needs a top rail, a lattice frame with trim, and precise fitting to ensure the lattice sits level and square.

The lattice-top design offers several practical advantages in Metro Vancouver's climate. First, the open lattice section allows wind to pass through the upper portion of the fence, reducing wind load compared to a fully solid 6-foot fence. This is particularly valuable in exposed locations on the North Shore, West Vancouver hillsides, and waterfront properties in White Rock and Richmond. Second, the lattice allows dappled sunlight into the yard — important in Metro Vancouver's overcast climate, where a fully solid 6-foot fence on the south or west side of a yard can create deep, persistent shade. Third, lattice provides a ready-made trellis for climbing plants like clematis, jasmine, honeysuckle, and climbing hydrangea — all of which thrive in Metro Vancouver's mild, wet climate and add beauty to the fence year-round.

Lattice quality varies significantly, and this is one area where cheaper is not better in Metro Vancouver's wet marine climate. Budget lattice panels made from thin stapled strips are the most common option at \$15 to \$30 per 4x8 sheet, but they're fragile, sag over time, and deteriorate quickly when exposed to constant moisture. Heavy-duty cedar lattice with thicker strips (3/4 inch rather than 1/4 inch) and screwed rather than stapled joints costs \$40 to \$70 per 4x8 sheet but lasts significantly longer. For the best longevity, choose lattice made from **Western Red Cedar** rather than pressure-treated spruce — cedar's natural rot resistance is especially important in the lattice section, which is fully exposed to rain from above and doesn't benefit from the partial shelter that the solid fence section below provides.

The lattice frame is an often-overlooked detail that affects both appearance and durability. A properly built lattice-top fence has the lattice panel recessed into a cedar frame — essentially a picture frame of 2x2 or 2x4 cedar trim that holds the lattice securely on all four edges. This frame prevents the lattice from warping, sagging, or popping out during wind, and it creates a clean visual transition between the solid fence and the lattice section. Some budget installations simply staple lattice directly to the top of the fence posts without a frame, which looks crude and fails quickly. Insist on framed lattice panels for a result that lasts.

Maintenance for a cedar lattice-top fence follows the same schedule as any cedar fence in Metro Vancouver — stain or seal every 2 to 3 years. The lattice section requires extra attention because its many surfaces and crevices trap moisture and promote moss and mildew growth. A pressure washer on a low setting (or a garden hose with a scrub brush) cleans the lattice effectively before re-staining. Find experienced fence contractors who build quality lattice-top fences through Vancouver Fence Builders — our free matching service covers all of Metro Vancouver.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Vancouver Fence Builders. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any fencing project. Information is current as of March 15, 2026 and may change. Visit vancouverfencebuilders.com for the latest answers.