



Finish It Old-Style

A rustic gate made with materials harvested from your woodlot is a perfect finishing touch to your heritage fence. For instructions on making this gate, and for an illustration labeling different types of posts, visit go.myFarmLife.com/heritagefence.

- **REMEMBER, BEFORE YOU DIG**—whether that’s for post holes, a new pond or just about anything—call 811 to learn if there are underground utility lines that could get damaged or, worse, harm the person doing the digging.

Select strong, rot-resistant wood with relatively straight trunks like Osage orange, black locust, Eastern red cedar, bald cypress or white oak. With deciduous trees, look for groups of 4- to 8-inch-diameter sucker trunks sprouted from a large stump; harvest them all unless it will make a hole in your windbreak. Or, look along fencerows for groups of trees that are crowded and can stand a good thinning out.

Cut line posts from 3- to 4-inch-diameter stock at least 2 feet longer than the desired height of your fence. Corner/end and brace posts should be in the 5- to 8-inch-diameter range; cut them at least 3 feet longer than the desired height of the fence. Cut horizontal brace rails about 8 feet long from 4-inch stock.

Use your tractor’s loader, or the drawbar and a chain, to move the posts from the woodlot to the fence site. When working with very large trunks, it’s often safer to skid the timbers using a log arch attachment on the tractor.

Build Braces

Begin by building braces, which is the combination of a corner/end post tied together with a brace post with a horizontal (brace) rail. Take care to mark the exact locations of the fence’s corners and gates.

Using a post-hole auger mounted to your tractor’s 3-point hitch, carefully bore holes at least 3 feet deep and hoist the corner/end posts into position using the tractor’s loader bucket and a chain. With the posts braced plumb or with a slight outward lean, backfill the hole about 2 inches at a time; take care to completely pack each 2-inch layer with a metal rod or stick to exclude any air pockets or areas of loose soil.

Bore another 3-foot-deep hole at a distance from the corner post that’s approximately 3 inches shorter than the length of your horizontal brace rail. Backfill partially; trim, fit and pin the horizontal rail in place and then finish backfilling the brace post. Next, install the line posts evenly spaced between the braces, digging holes 2 feet deep.

Stretch Wire

Depending on the animals you wish to contain, choose from among woven, smooth or barbed wire. Barbed wire works well with cattle; woven wire is a good fit for goats, sheep and horses; and electrified, smooth wire works well for most species. If installing barbed or smooth, determine how many strands ahead of time.

First, attach the wire to a corner/end post. To hold it in place, use a combination of fencing staples and the wire wrapped around the post and twisted onto itself.

Pay out sufficient wire to extend at least 2 feet past the opposite corner/end post and attach it to one end of a wire stretcher. Chain the other end of the wire stretcher to your loader bucket and gently take up the slack.

Ratchet the stretcher until the wire is tight and staple securely to the corner post. Staple wire to line posts, but leave staples slightly proud so that the wire can float; this ensures that if an animal collides with the wire, it will be less likely to break.

The end result is a rustic yet practical fence made primarily with the sustainable resources from your land, one you can truly claim as your own creation. **FL**