

Still on the Fence about Composite Fencing?

While composite fencing is still in its relative infancy, wood-filled thermoplastic composites have been around since the early 1990's. Since then, great strides have been made in improving the performance, appearance and environmental impact of this material and the result has been a steady influx of composite building products from general lumber, decking, railings, siding, and windows. Over the last 10 years these building products have enjoyed their share of success, with composite decking capturing approximately 10% of the market share by 2005. The good news for composite fencing is that it now seems to be making strides of its own, with the latest industry reports forecasting above average gains through 2013.

During its first few years of production, there were those who were "on the fence" about composite fencing. Initial questions about weight and sagging caused some concern. Issues with mold, evident in composite decking products, were also keeping buyers at bay; as well as the cost of composite lumber products versus wood. But composite fencing manufacturers have pressed forward to overcome these issues and are ready to claim their share of the composite pie.

One such manufacturer is Fibertech Polymers, Inc. After six years of developing its technology, Fibertech introduced a low-density line of polypropylene edging and in 2004, launched its line of Timberwolf® composite fencing. This fencing has a "Threecycling" proprietary process whereby all of the rosin, tannins and lignins are removed from the 100% recycled cellulose fiber and then blended with 100% recycled plastics. These post-consumer materials, otherwise destined for a landfill, as well as the Threecycling process, are what give Timberwolf fencing its strength, durability and flexibility. Most importantly, it makes the product resistant to insect, fungal and moisture damage. (AWPA E1 / E10).

Timberwolf also scores great marks on performance tests. It can withstand winds upwards of 110 mph and temperature tolerances of -55°to+55°C. Additionally, this fencing tested at 0% for thermal expansion/contraction, compared to standard wood (oak) at -64% or wood-flour composite products at 111% (ASTM D 1037). You also won't get the water absorption problems during the freeze/thaw cycle that are evident in some foamed wood-plastic composites.

Aesthetically, Timberwolf looks like rough cut lumber, with the texture and feel of real wood. It is currently available in five colors (Coastal Cedar, Driftwood Gray, Sequoia Red, Dark Walnut and White) and comes in a flat cut or dog ear plank that can be configured into five attractive styles. From a cost perspective, Timberwolf is in the middle of the pack. Compared to traditional wood fencing, it is still approximately 2-1/2 times more costly, but after doing the math, composite fencing turns out to be the better value long-term; especially for those of us who would rather be BBQ'ing on our weekends instead of sanding and staining.

What might be most impressive about Timberwolf fencing, however, is it has a LIFETIME Transferable Limited Warranty. No other manufacturer offers more than a 25 year warranty and many are "scalable" in terms of how much product will be replaced as years pass. The confidence Fibertech shows in their product speaks volumes and it seems the industry is listening. In 2007, Principia Partners named Fibertech's Timberwolf industry leader and in 2008, it was recognized as one of LBM's 50 Hot Products and Professional Builder's 100 Best New Exterior Products; not to mention receiving a couple "Green" awards along the way.

If Timberwolf is an example of what we can expect in composite fencing, *it's definitely time to get off the fence!*