

De Best Line of Defense is De Fence!



**Neo-Terra's Fence
Installed in 2007**

www.neo-terra.org

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De Fence Theory



We use 5' wide welded wire fencing with 1"x 2" rectangular grid bent at the 18" mark so that 18" of fencing lies flat along the ground OUTSIDE of the garden. Grass grows up through this fencing on the ground and helps to secure it and render it invisible. Most animals figure they can dig at the base of the fence to enter the garden and are deterred quickly because the fencing continues, even if they back up a little.

We string (14 gauge) wire tautly all the way around the garden from the top hook of the stakes and attach to this wire 4' long yellow ribbons every four feet or so. We fold the ribbons in half and clip these to the wire using spring-loaded wooden clothespins. The Inuits keep reindeer in their corrals at night with yellow ribbon. The fluttering of the ghostly ribbons at night spooks the reindeer. We use it to keep our white-tailed deer OUT.

How we learned: We started mini-farming in 1997.

Here is the fencing we used prior to 2007.

We used a mix of so-called “small animal fencing” and some 3’ welded wire fencing with 2”x4” rectangular mesh. In short: **don’t use fencing like this if you’re serious about food-growing.** We also used the wire strand with cheap plastic yellow ribbons.

The plastic yellow ribbons degraded quickly and shredded in the wind into little pieces that still show up in our soil and compost to this day! It’s much better to use cloth ribbons purchased from a fabric store (polyester ribbon – contact us for bulk source).

The ribbons worked to deter the deer most of the time. We saw deer tracks in the snow in winter a few times inside the fenced garden area, so we knew they could get in if they wanted to. Rabbits and groundhogs were much more problematic: the groundhogs could tunnel under the fence; the rabbits could hop the fence and, as bunnies, could easily fit through the fencing holes. Once a bunny got in, it could live on our seedlings and hide in the vegetation successfully until it grew large enough that it could NOT fit back through the fence holes and became a permanent garden resident. Evicting bunnies was more amusing for the neighbors to watch than for us to do!

Raccoons and opossums were an annual threat to our corn crop. We had to do better...

De best line of defense is de fence!!




Here we have rolled out our welded wire mesh fencing which is 5 feet wide with 1" x 2" rectangular mesh – seems to keep the bunnies out pretty well though chipmunks get through. The tape measure runs along the 18-inch mark where we intend to bend the fencing. Date of this project was April 2007.



We use long 2x4's as a surface against which to bend the fence. You want 15" to 18" to run flat along the ground as a 1st level deterrent from burrowing critters. Don't bend to 90 degree angle. Keep it more shallow as shown so that weight of the fence will push it down to the ground once it is vertical.

We drag the fence upward into place. We secure it to 7' tall metal garden posts, leaving some top slack so the fence bends back from the weight of animals that try to climb it.






We also place
fencing *on the
ground* below
and outside the
gate as well.



We've cut yellow cloth ribbon in 4' lengths in preparation for hanging it from the wire above the fence.



We use spring-operated wooden clothespins to secure yellow ribbons from the taut wire.



**Completed east fence with
wire and ribbons**



Finished installing west side fence. Wire and ribbons are next.



We pin down the fencing along the ground where necessary, using heavy (9 gauge) U-shaped wire. Note also appropriate bracing of fence posts on corners and at gates – plan braces to address stresses.



We secured the fence gates with small bungee cords – one end fastened to the post, the other free to loop around the gate frame and back to the post.



May 2nd

May 2nd :
Grass is growing
in; perennial
flowers are
growing up
through the rest
of the fencing
along the ground.



May 10th:
Grass has grown
in; lilies are
filling in the rest
more gradually.



The previous fence served us well until the summer of 2012 when a junior deer braved the daunting yellow ribbons and jumped between the top of the fence and the wire from which the ribbons hang. By running a thread around the garden perimeter between the wire and the top of the fence, we were able to confirm the location of this intrusion since the deer broke the thread the next time he jumped through. Consequently, we added another 2-3 feet of fencing all around the garden perimeter and raised the wire and ribbons. Below is the east fence with a new course of chicken wire installed.





We used 3 feet of deer netting on the remaining fence sides – hard to see but more attractive than chicken wire.



Here you can see more clearly the original welded wire fence with the taut black plastic deer netting spanning an additional three feet upward. The netting is secured with 20 gauge wire to a taut 14 gauge wire along the top edge and to the fence posts. It is also secured in spots to the fencing below it.

We had to increase the height of the fence posts to accommodate this additional fencing height and the upward shifted wire with ribbons. We were able to bolt thinner gauge 4' long metal fence posts to the thicker gauge base fence posts to achieve this. The metal fence posts have holes that made it fairly straightforward, but we did have to saw off the bottoms of the 4' extenders to remove the soil fins.

So far: no new deer intrusions!

Defense Summary

- Our fence keeps out
 - Deer
 - Groundhogs
 - Rabbits and bunnies
 - Skunks
 - Dogs
 - Bears (so far)
 - Chickens
- Our fence deters
 - Opossums
 - Raccoons
 - Cats

- What is NOT kept out
 - Chipmunks
 - Squirrels
 - Mice
 - Voles
 - Very determined coyotes chasing prey
 - Birds

*See our “Animal Defenses”
presentation for further info on how
we handle what de fence fails to
keep out!*

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