

EYE FOR DESIGN

Approaches to creating great-looking decks

Blocking Pattern

by Shane Chapman

“No lattice,” my clients told me when discussing their proposed backyard project. Otherwise, they said they trusted me to come up with something creative for the design of a pair of privacy walls for the new cedar deck my company was building for them.

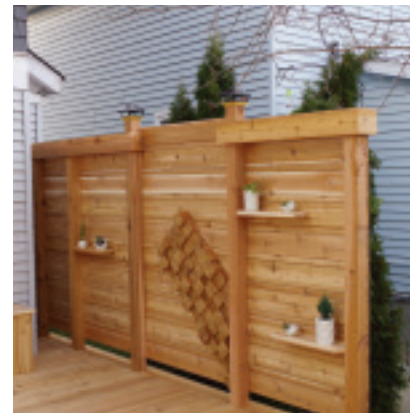
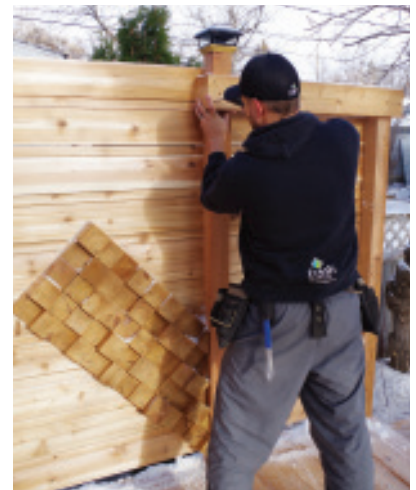
On the south side of the deck, the cedar privacy wall had to be only long enough to block an unsightly view of their power meter. On the opposite side of the deck, the privacy wall is longer, so I created a focal point and broke up the wall’s symmetry with a geometric design made with

blocks of cedar of various thicknesses.

The end-grain pixel pattern that shoots up and out from the side of one of the posts is based on an idea that had popped into my head about six months earlier, when I had been playing around with designs for my own backyard. Thinking that stacking cedar blocks with exposed end grain would create a feature wall with interesting shapes and patterns, I went ahead and designed my idea in SketchUp to see what it would look like. I liked the design so much, I decided to poach my own idea and put it to use on this project.

I cut the blocks in 1½-inch, 2-inch, 2½-inch, 3-inch, and 3½-inch lengths from a western red cedar 4x4 post, taking a palm sander to the face and corners to remove any splinters and smooth out the roughness from the cut. The blocks are fastened to the cedar fence slats with Titebond III waterproof glue and screws driven through the slats into the backs of the blocks. To prevent potential splitting, we predrilled for the screws and used a single screw per block.

To create the random pattern, I marked out the baseline at a 45-degree angle, and



PHOTOS: FRESH DECKS



then did a dry-fit with each row. Once the bottom row was installed, it was fairly simple to dry-fit the next row. With five block sizes to choose from, I never had to place two blocks of the same size next to each other.

I briefly considered trimming the top of the wall with a traditional Roman ogee-type trellis rafter. But this detail would have been a little out of character with the straight lines and boxiness of the other aspects of the wall, so I decided instead to just box the top of the wall with a cedar band, which keeps the modern vibe of the whole project intact.

I capped the tops of the posts on either side of the design with light fixtures to gently light that portion of the wall at night. To stage the project for my clients, I placed a few succulents on the floating cedar shelves (see photo on page 24, bottom right). Adding greenery always makes projects look cleaner and complete, and in this case, the geometrical lines of the planters were a perfect match for the straight lines and modern look of the privacy wall. I had borrowed the plants from a local business, but my clients liked the look of the planters so much that they ended up buying them. ❖

Shane Chapman owns Fresh Decks, located in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.