



VINYL- THE (NOT SO) NEW ALTERNATIVE

by Richard Stull August
President/CEO
Vinyl Concepts, Inc.

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www.vinyl-concepts.com

If there is one thing most of us can agree upon, it is our disdain for the tedious and repetitive maintenance tasks like scraping, prepping and repainting a wooden patio cover or fence – or the expense of having to pay someone to do it again... and again... and again! Sure, when it is done, it looks great – for a while. Unfortunately, even this regular maintenance does not cover the bill when it has to be replaced because the termite gets involved. These are voracious little critters. They can destroy the structural integrity of a wooden fence or patio (not to mention a house) in very little time. When the exterminators set up their big tents to fumigate the little beasts, the fences are rarely tented. This means that twice a year, every year, these dry-wood termites will sprout wings and search for a new home nearby. Hopefully the home they find is not the same residence that was just tented and is being protected by the security of that same wooden fence or the shade of the wooden patio cover.



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Wouldn't you rather be sitting in a lounge chair sipping a tall, cool drink while the fence and patio covers just sit there with you, looking good all the time?

Enter the alternative: Vinyl fences, gates, and patio covers. Now I know some of you are thinking these are cheap looking, will fade out, chalk and stain, just like the resin patio chairs you can buy at Pic-n-Save for \$3 (I may have dated myself there...). Well, there are lower quality vinyl products that may tread in that arena, but for high quality professionals that do this for a living, nothing could be further from the truth. The fact of the matter is that high quality vinyl building materials have as much in common with these chairs as a Mercedes has in common with a Yugo.



With lots of conflicting information available to consumers, there is a very legitimate concern in the Homeowners Association segment of the market regarding the longevity and usefulness of some of these products, especially considering the fiduciary duty that comes with serving on a Board of Directors.



Vinyl building materials have been successfully used outdoors for over 50 years, and were first used as fencing in the late 1970's. The success of the outdoor vinyl building products is reflected in its acceptance and use by many cities and municipalities, commercial customers and military bases, not only for fencing and patio covers, but as decking and

railing, street signs and other building materials. It is also approved and used as safety barriers (guard rails) for upper level, multi-story buildings. There are many well established test criteria on these products including ASTM and ICC, and these should be consulted when choosing a product.

The long life span of these products, eliminating the need for chemically impregnated wood, and not having to use VOC laden paints and stains every few years makes this product a very green alternative. Because it is made without 'plasticizers', it is inert and safe and it does not sustain a flame.

As these products are relatively new in the field (50+ years vs. centuries using steel and wood) it is important to choose a high quality product and have it installed by people who really know and understand the proper design, application, fabrication, and installation. Experience counts. This can be the difference between a happy one time project, and a disastrous project that never quite seems to be completed.

While vinyl fencing has a higher initial installation cost, because it lasts approximately twice as long as wood fencing and requires no paint cycles, it is significantly less expensive. Replacing your wood fence with a high-quality vinyl fencing (with color, grain, and steel structural members) is like getting your second wood fence at half price, while totally eliminating all the repainting costs. This brings the effective cost down to about the same price as a wood fence. The bottom line is that community associations with vinyl fencing enjoy lower Reserve contributions. Install it, and you won't have to think about it for 30 yrs or more. No warping, no cracking, and no termites!



Richard Stull has been in the fencing and outdoor building products business for 27 years. He is the President / CEO of [Vinyl Concepts, Inc.](http://www.vinylconcepts.com) headquartered in Thousand Oaks, CA, with a division located in Torrance, CA. Vinyl Concepts manufactures, fabricates, sells, and installs ultra-low maintenance outdoor building products solutions including patio covers, fencing and gates, and decking and railing. Vinyl Concepts recycles and reuses all scrap and waste materials including vinyl.