

Hardscaping

Your Way to *Beauty*

Story by Mark Carter

This gardener opted for flag-stone pavers interplanted with the dwarf zoysia for their walk.



Backyard living is growing in popularity. More and more we are staying at home and enjoying our leisure time with family and friends. This trend is literally paving the way for more interest in hardscape design.

Now don't get confused by the term *hardscape*: it is simply the term for non-vegetative elements in the garden – those decks, patios, retaining walls, walkways and driveways within your landscape. These are the spaces that permit you to sit down, relax and fire up the grill. They provide places where you congregate when family or friends come over to visit or where you go just to get away for a little while.

Aesthetic and Functional

With this growing trend to entertaining and enjoying family meals outdoors, the need for attractive and functional outdoor spaces is at an all-time high. This growing consumer demand has also opened up many more choices and technologies than once were readily available. Now, instead of the standard wooden deck or concrete patio, a whole world of choices are out there. Here are a few.

Synthetic Decking

Made to look like wood, this new material will not rot or shrink and comes in several different colors and textures. It costs more, but it will last much longer than a traditional wooden deck.

Washed/Exposed Aggregate Concrete

Many different colors and textures to choose from. Easy, low maintenance and one of the most inexpensive choices.

Stamped, Textured and/or Colored Concrete

This is poured concrete that is stamped or imprinted to look like a world of different choices, from old brick, flag stone, cut stone, cobblestone and much more. It's a little more expensive than regular finished concrete, but it's less expensive than real stone or brick and looks very good.



Tumbled driveway pavers and accent stone make a beautiful entrance to this custom home.



Talk about beautiful Hardscapes, this sunken bar/kitchen area is awesome! The retaining walls are brick, and the stamped concrete patio/pool deck comes right up to the edge. It's a swim-up bar! Bar stools are actually inside the pool so you can swim up, sit down and have a drink.



This is a beautiful mix of hardscape materials! The pool coping is natural stone. The deck is a combination of stamped concrete and washed/exposed aggregate concrete. The retaining/seating walls in the background are old brick. A gorgeous combination!



The addition of paver retaining walls and steps made an otherwise dangerous slope an attractive and passable area.

Photos on this page courtesy of Mark Carter. Others courtesy of Gerald Klingaman.



Photo courtesy of Gerald Klingman.

This attractive firepit patio was a do-it-yourself project using materials purchased from a local home store.

Synthetic Overlays

This can transform an existing concrete patio or pool deck without a complete tear out and can be stamped and/or textured to match many different looks. It's great for rehabs on a budget.

Stone

My personal favorite! Stone comes in a variety of colors and textures and

the look and feel of stone is hard to beat. I really like native stone whenever possible, so living in Tennessee, with our plethora of native stones, is a great fit for me.

Brick

Brick is another classic choice that has been a favorite for years. Many people are again using old or antique brick for their patios and retaining walls. The

look you get from brick will never go out of style.

Pavers and Wall Systems

Synthetic pavers are very popular. They come in a wide variety of sizes, colors and applications. Pavers can be used to build a patio, walkway, retaining wall, fire pit, driveway and more. Many do-it-yourselfers find them easier to install than masonry, stone or even poured concrete.

“Having a plan you love is the most important thing. If, like many, you must implement your plan in stages, your plan will be your road map and the end result will be the destination you desired.”

Think Outside the Box

Creating a hardscape design that fits your life pattern is not that hard. It starts with a good design.

First, sit down and make out a wish list of hardscape features you want in your landscape – perhaps a patio with a table big enough for the whole family, a seating wall around a fire pit, a retaining wall to hold back that slope and create more level/usable space for the kids to play, a gravel path through the landscape or woods, a multi-level deck, a stone bridge across the Koi pond.

Next, gather some idea pictures from books, the internet or interesting landscapes you may have seen. A picture is definitely worth a thousand words to a designer!

Then get out the pen and paper and draw out a basic sketch. Try to include as many of your needs and wishes as possible. After your first draft, edit as needed. You might want to consult a professional designer to help you with your final plan. A professional designer can also help you figure out costs and budgets.

Having a plan you love is the most important thing. If, like many, you must implement your plan in stages, your plan will be your road map and the end result will be the destination you desired. Remember: keep it simple and do it right the first time!

A well-designed and -constructed hardscape can have a positive impact on your life. It will also improve the beauty and value of your home. It will get you out of the house and into nature, where simpler pleasures hold sway.

See you on the patio! 🌿

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Though the engineered concrete block retaining wall systems will last indefinitely, they are not the most attractive solution to controlling a slope.



Photo courtesy of Gerald Klingman.

This 2-foot dry-stack retaining wall was planted with heucheras, ferns and other shade-loving plants as the wall went up.



Photo courtesy of Gerald Klingman.