



# Designing Hardscapes

What exactly is the hardscape? Hardscape is any non-living element in the landscape yards such as patios, fences and sidewalks.

While plants are the major emphasis in our landscapes, hardscapes also have a considerable impact.

They enhance our outdoor spaces by offering entertainment and recreation. They also provide a focal point in the landscape and solve privacy and security issues.

Good hardscapes make our landscapes more livable and easier to maintain. Well-selected and installed hardscapes help increase property values.

The average homeowner can tackle countless projects with planning and imagination. Utilize hardscapes to construct an area for dining furniture, a bench or a glider.

Think about the ways in which you presently use your front, back, and side yards. Are there ways to better separate the public, private, and utilitarian areas of your property? Could you make better use of the space you have?

Make hardscapes functional and attractive, and make walkways adequate and inviting. Study the traffic patterns throughout your yard.

Consider an attractive winding path to encourage visitors to explore your garden. Is the passageway to your front door welcoming?

Creating a new walkway or making an existing one more appealing can be done in numerous ways. Pavers, bricks, flagstone, or tile can be set in a mortar base and arranged in a variety of striking patterns.

Laying some materials in a base of sand makes

the job easier. An exposed aggregate concrete sidewalk is a more interesting option than plain concrete. Even a simple gravel pathway can be attractive.

Fences or walls provide privacy and security. There are times when we need to establish boundaries and protect our privacy.

If young children have access to your yard and pool, a fence in conjunction with a locked gate can prevent a tragic drowning. Intruders can be discouraged in the same way.

Concrete block by itself or coated with stucco will withstand the test of time in our dry, desert climate.

A low wall of brick, glass block, or interlocking masonry blocks, (no mortar required!), is an option if you wish to separate one area of your garden from another.

Features such as patios, built-in barbeques and fireplaces make entertaining easier. Covered patios attached to a home are an excellent hardscape option. Cooking outdoors keeps the heat out of the house during our hot summers

A pool is not your only option if you want to include a water feature in your landscape. Having a pool offers relief from summer heat, but you must consider the installation and maintenance expense.

There are many alternatives for the sound and cooling effects of water in your landscape.

Consider a fountain, waterfall, or a pond in your design. Do-it-yourself kits make these projects affordable.

Arbors, ramadas, gazebos, and trellises offer

shade and opportunities for enthusiastic gardeners to add more plants to the landscape.

Shade is at a premium in the desert. It makes outdoor living during the summer bearable.

These structures help to cool areas of our landscape and provide protection from the sun. They are practical as well as attractive. Train vining plants up these structures

Raised beds and containers work well if your space is limited, or if you need easy access to your plantings.

Many gardeners find growing vegetables, herbs, and annuals irresistible, but finding room in a small yard can be a problem.

Maintaining these garden areas can also be

demanding. Raised beds constructed from wood, concrete, or interlocking blocks can solve these problems. These help avoid back and other troubles from bending and stooping.

A group of pots arranged in the landscape or on the patio is another interesting idea. There are endless sizes and styles of containers that will satisfy anyone's taste.

These projects are just a few of the countless ways to integrate hardscape into your landscape.

Hopefully, these will start your creative juices flowing. Browse through home and garden magazines, or check out your local library for more ideas.