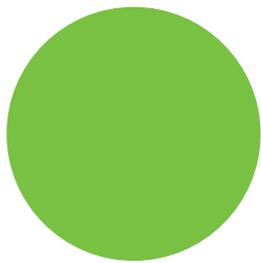
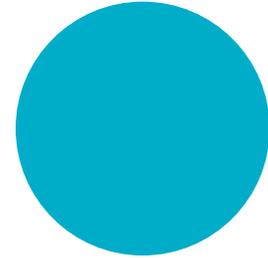
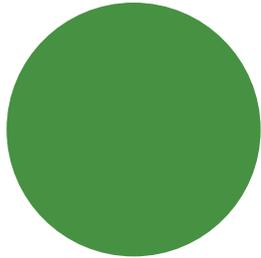


IMPROVEMENT CENTER



Guide to Hardscape Materials

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Hardscape materials are used for driveways, building retaining walls, paths, patios, steps, and boundaries. Which hardscape you select depends on your home's architectural style, the type of project you're working on, and your budget. This guide describes hardscape materials commonly used in landscaping along with suggestions for how and where to use them.

- **Pavers:** Concrete pavers can be laid flat for creating driveways and paths, or they can be stacked to serve as retaining walls, planters, and steps. Pavers are constructed of pressurized concrete and are available in many colors and a choice of textures. Traditional flat pavers are suitable for contemporary or simple architecture and landscaping, but tumbled or cobblestone pavers can be used for more rustic or natural settings. Choose pavers to compliment the color of your home; blending similar colors of pavers provides a softer effect. If you're using pavers for your driveway and walkways, using the same pavers for other hardscape projects can provide continuity throughout your landscape. Pavers are typically dry laid; they are less expensive to install and repair than comparable hardscape materials installed using mortar.
- **Bluestone:** This is a natural material that is primarily slate blue in color, but can range from tan to purplish hues. A mixture of these colors adds interest to your project and provides a natural effect. Bluestone can be laid in squares and rectangles (rectilinear), or in natural rounded and irregular shapes. Large bluestone boulders laid horizontally can be used for creating steps in your landscape. Bluestone can be dry-laid using a base of stone covered in sand. Install your bluestone flush or with spaces of about a quarter inch between stones. Sweep sand or gravel over the laid bluestone for filling spaces between stones. When deciding whether to lay rectilinear or naturally shaped bluestone, keep in mind that rectilinear layouts can easily be ruined by stones laid irregularly.
- **Natural stone:** This is a catch-all term for natural stones and boulders used in landscaping and for building retaining walls and boundary walls. Consider the scope of your





project, the color of your house, and other hardscape materials used in your landscape, stairs, paths, or patio areas. Too many conflicting colors, shapes, and types of hardscape can confuse the eye and create a haphazard appearance. Stone walls can be dry-laid or built using mortar. Narrow stones are good for constructing garden barriers or stair risers, but are not the best choice for taller walls. A few large boulders in your landscape can create focal points and anchor smaller stones used in walls, waterfalls, and garden areas. When visiting stone suppliers, take samples home to see how colors and textures work within your landscape and existing hardscape materials.

- **Decomposed granite (DG):** This material is composed of small particles of granite ranging from about 1/4 inch to a sandy consistency. Colors include a range of grays, tans and beige tones. DG is used for driveways, walkways, and

can also be used for specialized purposes such as play areas and dog runs. DG is less expensive than many hardscape materials and provides a natural and casual appearance. DG can be applied loose over a base of road gravel and then compressed; this is the least expensive method of installing DG. You can also install DG mixed with stabilizers or resin. While these choices are more costly, the DG may last longer.

Climate may factor into your hardscape decision. If snow will need to be cleared, a path with a smooth surface may be more desirable than a loose gravel walkway. In rainy climates, irregular shapes and textures may make hardscape less slippery when wet. Consult with a hardscape contractor about seasonal considerations in your area.