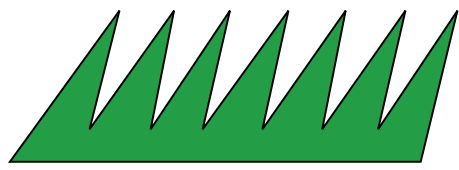


BO YARD SMART



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Hardscapes for a Sustainable Landscape

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Most residential landscapes include a combination of hardscapes (patios, decks, walkways and driveways) and ornamental plants. As you think about the design, construction and maintenance of your overall landscape, consider how you could make each component more sustainable.

The principles of sustainability: reduce, reuse and recycle, apply to the hardscapes used in landscaping. Reduce the amount of virgin materials used in the landscape.

Reuse existing materials when possible or select recycled products. A number of new recycled landscape products are available. Many of them are made from recycled plastics combined with wood by-products. These materials require virtually no maintenance and have a longer life span than wood, can be used for decks, fences, benches and planters and come in a variety of textures and colors.

It is often easier to evaluate the initial cost of construction materials than it is their long-term maintenance costs. However, the long-term maintenance costs of some building materials can be significant. Before you choose a product, research the initial and long-term costs as well as its recommended uses.

The hardscape options listed below vary in their sustainability and short and long-term costs. For specific information on these materials, consult a landscape construction reference or a landscape contractor.



Porous (permeable) pavement allows rain to permeate the soil and gravel layers below.

Porous Paving: This material can be used for driveways, walks or patios. It allows for water infiltration while providing a solid surface that can handle human and vehicular traffic.

Concrete Pavers: These pavers are durable, easy to install and allow for water infiltration. They come in a wide range of colors and shapes and can be used for drives, walks, patios and even sunroom or porch floors. Because they come in uniform sizes and shapes, they are relatively easy for a homeowner to install.

Concrete Slabs: The set up for pouring a concrete slab can

be labor intensive but the actual cost of the concrete is relatively inexpensive. However, the slabs are susceptible to cracking and are expensive to repair. For most homeowners, concrete pavers are a viable alternative to a concrete slab.

Wood: Decay-resistant species such as Redwood are in short supply, generally harvested from ecologically-sensitive forests and often expensive. Using redwood salvaged from other structures is a sustainable choice. Treated landscape lumber is readily available, and if maintained properly, can last 15–20 years. The safety of wood preservatives has been a subject of much controversy, particularly as it relates to disposal, accidental burning of the wood and leaching of the products into the soil. The methods and chemicals used to treat landscape lumber vary and you should consider



Concrete pavers come in uniform sizes and shapes are relatively easy for a homeowner to install and can replacement for concrete in your landscape.

these before you purchase a product.

Composite Wood: These products are relatively new for homeowners, but have been available commercially for

more than 15 years. A number of manufacturers make these products, which results in variability in their composition. In general, they all resist rot and insects and can substitute for preservative treated wood. They can be used for decks, fences and even some outdoor structures such as a gazebo. If using this product for a structure, be sure to check that it is rated for such a use.

Thoughtful consideration of hardscapes can significantly increase the sustainability of your landscape. Remember, a landscape is a long-term investment and you must consider up-front and long-term costs, both financially and to the environment, when you design and construct your landscape.



The methods and chemicals used to treat landscape lumber vary.

Good Lawn Care Practices Reduce Need for Chemicals

A healthy, dense stand of turf reduces weeds and recovers quickly from insect or disease injury. Cultural practices play a big role in the health of the lawn and need for pesticides.

Lawns requiring frequent pesticide use — in particular herbicides — may have an underlying problem causing the repeated invasions of pests, such as weeds. Correcting the problem leads to a healthier lawn that can resist weed invasions and reduce the need for chemical use.

Good lawn care practices can also save water and prepare turf for dry summer months. Taller mowing and proper fertilization result in a deep and efficient root system which reduces the need for additional water.

SOIL CONDITION

— Many lawns are growing on soils high in clay, compacted

and poorly drained. Aerating and topdressing with organic matter or screened compost may improve these conditions. Another option is starting over and amending clay soils with compost. Thoroughly preparing soils before seeding or sodding is critical.

GRASS SELECTION

— Make sure the proper grass species is used on the site. Full sun and sun/shade environments call for different grasses. Kentucky bluegrass is the primary species for lawns in full sun; in some cases mixed with perennial ryegrass and/or fine fescues. For shade areas, shade-tolerant Kentucky bluegrass cultivars are commonly mixed with fine fescues.

WATERING — Proper watering includes irrigating as lawns need it and getting moisture down into the root zone.

FERTILIZING — Proper fertilizing includes supplying adequate nutrients and proper soil pH. In particular, avoid excess or lack of nitrogen, fertilize during cooler weather (especially early and late fall) and use controlled-release nitrogen fertilizers. Don't apply high rates of nitrogen in spring.

MOWING — Proper mowing has a major impact on lawn health. Many lawns are mowed too short, allowing weeds to invade and other problems to appear. Mow between 2- and 3-inches and mow often enough so no more than one-third of the leaf blade is removed in any one cutting.

CORE AERATING — Manage lawn stress factors such as thatch, shade and soil compaction. Core aerating on a regular basis is an excellent practice to consider, in particular for sod-



Core aerators can be rented at some garden centers and rental agencies.

ded lawns over clay soils. Spring and fall are good times to aerate. Topdressing the turf with screened compost after aerating will further help relieve these stress factors.

Occasionally, problems will

still come up requiring special management. Start by identifying the problem, then look at control options — both cultural and chemical. When using pesticides read, understand and follow all label directions.