

# HARDSCAPE & GROUND COVER EXHIBIT



A garden isn't necessarily all plants. In fact, to really enjoy it, you may add a pathway to stroll on, surfaces to sit on, shade to rest in, or a design feature to accentuate and compliment the beauty of the plants in your yard. There are so many choices available, we can't begin to display them all in The Garden, or on these pages. But this exhibit does have several examples of hardscape and a few landscapes, to see and touch so you know what best fits your garden needs. To clarify, hardscape, refers to hard/solid elements of a landscape design such as stone, brick, tile, concrete and metal. Examples include paths, walls, decks, and gazebos (surfaces / structures). By comparison, landscape, sometimes called "softscape", refers to living elements of landscape design, like trees and shrubs, plants and flowers, and, grasses and soils. Hardscape can be used to separate areas of a garden, add custom borders, provide walkable access, contain raised garden beds, and the list goes on and on. In this exhibit, we focus on surfaces rather than structures and demonstrate a range of options. It may seem simple to fill a yard with turf, but just consider hardscape options for reducing the amount of water and work required to maintain a turf lawn. Simply put, hardscape and ground cover reduce the amount of maintenance and water your landscape needs.

## Less Water and Work—More Wow!



Landscapes can be attractive *and* low-water and low-maintenance. One outcome of using living things, is that it helps keep the soil healthy and adds interest to your yard. A simple solution is any low growing, low water use plant, like Dymondia "Silver Carpet", found in the "front yard" of our Education Center. It requires little water or attention, but is a landscape design feature. Another option is covering areas of open ground with mulch, rocks (many options of size and color), or bark. This dresses up any yard with a finished look and helps retain soil moisture. It also requires little work, and absolutely no water.

## HARDSCAPE & GROUND COVER EXHIBIT (continued) Stone & Decomposed Granite



FLAGSTONE WITH SOFT FILL

Flagstone: Available in many colors, flagstone comes in broken pieces with a natural organic look, or in specific shapes with smooth edges and consistent dimensions. They also come in several thicknesses, so chat with an expert at The Garden to determine the best choice for your needs. There are basically two options for fill material between stones. Soft fill (top left), includes materials like sand, gravel, or ground cover between the stones. The path shown is located in the Education Center's front yard.



FLAGSTONE WITH HARD FILL

Hard fill (left) includes grout, or polymeric stone dust, both of which can be color calibrated to match the stones. Soft fill allows more rain to sink in, but may require occasional weeding, refilling, or replanting up. Hard fill requires little upkeep, but allows runoff, so plan ahead for the water flow direction from runoff.



Manufactured (Stone) Pavers: Concrete can do a lot more than make a slab. With the right mixture and the addition of a coloring agent, concrete is poured into molds to produce natural looking pavers for less cost. Clay is also a common type of manufactured paver. Both are installed just like natural stone pavers.



Cut Stone: Cut stone is more consistent and easier to layout than broken flagstone. Instead of fitting a puzzle together, cut stone lines up nicely like bricks or tile. Most pieces are almost exactly the same shape and size. Using a guideline makes the process even more predictable. Actual install is the same as any other stone.



Decomposed Granite (DG): DG has become the gardener's friend more recently. Because it can take on any shape and comes in nearly any color, DG can take on unique, and intriguing patterns and designs, as shown here. Be prepared, for DG to stay looking good, use a stabilizer. Heavy use DG requires more depth and stabilizer.

## HARDSCAPE & GROUND COVER EXHIBIT (continued) Brick



Standard Red Brick: Even with the most common brick, you can create an interesting surface area. By changing the pattern of the layout, the look becomes completely different and can be quite unique. The best filler for this layout is a soft fill of sand.



Red Brick (Plus): Add one additional type of brick into the layout, and the pattern looks remarkably different. You may need to play with the layout a few times to get them to fit together in the space you have, but it's worth the effort if you want a more interesting look. Sand is also the best for filler for this layout.



Colored Bricks: You can get many different colors of bricks and arrange them in different patterns as mentioned before. But what if you get a few different colors and mix them? Now you have a completely different look from a single-color surface. Change the pattern, or place tightly together (without filler), for even more options.



Interlocking Brick: One of the best products for laying bricks without filler is the interlocking type. These are specifically designed to fit snugly together and lock in place. When cut in half they allow for a clean edge which can be the ultimate end of the surface or you can use an accent brick as a border. A border will reinforce the edge.



Varied Size: For a surface with a random look to it, use a set of bricks that comes in several sizes. These sets are made in sizes that "add up" to the right final measurement when put together. Lay them out first to make sure they are arranged to fit. Small space between bricks allows for minor adjustments, and a soft fill will finish it off nicely.

## HARDSCAPE & GROUND COVER EXHIBIT (continued) Tile



Materials: Tile can be made of concrete, ceramic, composites, or stone, to name a few. Not all tile is meant for outdoor use. Outdoor tiles are very durable, non-porous, fade-resistant, and won't crack during weather extremes. Even so, outdoor tiles come in many patterns, colors and textures to choose from.



Mosaic Designs: Some sets of tiles allow for a mosaic-look to your hardscape. As shown here, the overall pattern looks intricate, providing a unique look to the surface. In reality, the finished design looks much more complicated than it is to install since each tile is one of a set of designs that fit together to form the bigger picture.



Terracotta Tile: It's common across Southern California and not surprisingly, given our history of influence from Mexico. But this is one tough tile! They're very sturdy and provide a clean, simple look. Terracotta ranges in color tones from light to dark reddish-brown. Hardscape can look like a solid color, or multi-colored.



Slate Tile: Slate is stain-resistant and hard to damage, yet can have the texture and look of high-quality flooring. In fact, when using a slate that compliments the indoor flooring, it brings indoor and outdoor living together. A bonus for patios is that slate is naturally non-slip, so it's safe for guests, even when it gets wet.



Final Thoughts: For permeable hardscapes, brick is typically least expensive. Stone is durable and has many choices of shapes, sizes and colors. Tile is most expensive, but has the widest range of design options. So, there is a perfect fit for your project. Make sure it's outdoor-durable and you can enjoy your outdoors for years to come!