

WAY TO GROW

**Way to Grow in Orinda**  
**Hardscape - What's Underfoot in Your Garden?**



Steve & Cathy Lambert

At first glance, “hardscape” might sound like trying to landscape during hard economic times – but really this article is about the “hard” surface areas of a well-designed garden. Hardscape is a term coined to represent anything in the garden that is hard: concrete, rock, stone, brick, pavers, or anything that is not part of the softscape, such as plant materials, dirt and mulch.

This article will focus on the underfoot elements of hardscape design, meaning materials used primarily for walkways, patios and driveways – particularly paving materials. Like plants, the right paving materials can add interest to your garden through your choice of color, texture, and

pattern.

Widely available paving materials fall into two very broad categories: quarried stone and composite materials. Quarried stone, such as slate and flagstone, is dug or excavated then shaped by splitting, cutting, or crushing. Composite materials such as brick, pavers and concrete are mixed materials that are poured, shaped, worked and then fired or allowed to dry. In our area, there are hundreds of materials and processes to choose from. We hope the following information will help make your hardscape choices a little less hard.

Concrete has long been the most common paving material and is often the right choice, especially if your budget is tight.



STEVE LAMBERT

Stamped textures and color additives make this concrete outdoor kitchen area a work of art.

Although concrete is often very utilitarian, and styles and finishes come in and out of fashion, with today's options of stamp textures and color additives, properly installed concrete can be a visual marvel.

There's a huge range of textured mats available to create distinctive looks – from forest floors (complete with fossil impressions) to flagstone patterns. Some of the newest mats we've used include a windswept beach with the occasional shells scattered about, as well as a Mexican tile texture.

Another popular hardscape element for clients with young children has been a circular concrete tricycle path that runs around a lawn or play area, creating a safe raceway space. For our own backyard trike path, we used concrete colored to resemble hardened earth and then we pressed in real leaves and grasses to add texture. Then, just for a fun kid factor, we pressed in dinosaur bone fossils using wooded 3-D puzzle pieces and dino footprints running across the path using a hand made clay three-toed dinosaur foot mold.

For really distinctive designs using concrete, there are now several companies (the Concrete Colorist) that specialize in unique faux finishes, mosaic tile patterns and more.

The cost of poured concrete is inconsistent when compared to other paving materials because so much of the ultimate expense varies with the labor and materials required to build forms and install the reinforcement necessary to make the concrete sound. Some good comparative questions to ask include how thick will the concrete be when poured, how much base rock and steel will be used, what size steel will be used and how far apart will it be placed?

Another question: What type of expansion joints will be used and how far apart will they be placed?

Concrete Pavers were once frowned upon by designers for their inept attempts at simulating brick or stone. But modern pavers have shapes and textures that give a paving project a rugged, old-world look. However, pavers have the added advantage of being more forgiving than concrete.

When comparing bids for paver installation, it is important to ask the following: How much and what type of base will you use? Four to eight inches of base gravel is what we recommend, depending on soil type. What type of edge restraint will you use? Some contractors install rebar and concrete along the edge, (this is the best restraint method) while others mix cement into the base (the second best method), and some use plastic edging (not recommended).

Stone, historically the longest used paving material, has proven itself to be enduring and elegant. It offers an enormous range of colors, shapes and sizes. From irregularly shaped Arizona flagstone for an informal look to precision-cut geometric patterns for a formal patio, there is a stone for every garden. All this comes with a price. Stone can be expensive to purchase and install. Even the most common of stone options installed on top of concrete usually runs around twice the cost of concrete or pavers. The most expensive stone we've installed is an Antiqued Jerusalem Limestone which cost more than \$65 a foot for the material alone. Cost aside, for a truly lavish look, stone is our preferred paving material.

While comparing masonry bids for stone [SEE GROW page 18]

**Integrity Expertise**



**35 year Orinda Resident**  
**(925) 253-4611**

**Laura Abrams, M.B.A.**  
**Residential Sales Associate**

Orinda Office, Coldwell Banker Real Estate  
 www.lauraabrams.com laura@lauraabrams.com



**Kristin Walker M.D., Inc.**  
**General & Cosmetic Dermatologist**  
 89 Davis Road, Suite #180  
 Orinda  
 (925) 254-1080

Dr. Walker, board certified dermatologist, offers care in general adult and pediatric dermatology, laser surgery, skin cancer surgery, and cosmetic dermatology. Her friendly and supportive staff can assist you with diminishing the effects of nature to reveal the real you underneath. Dr. Walker and her caring staff can help return the glow to your skin with the most advanced skin care lasers and technologies. Dr. Walker is proud to announce the addition of a Nutritionist and Aesthetician to her practice.

**NEW ADDITIONS TO THE OFFICE:**  
 IPL-Photo Genesis Rejuvenation Treatment for Rosacea, Sun Damage, Fine Lines  
 Laser Hair Removal  
 Microdermabrasion  
 Waxing

**COSMETIC PROCEDURES AVAILABLE:**  
 Botox Cosmetic Restylane Sclerotherapy  
 Collagen Peels

**AVAILABLE SKIN RESTORATION SYSTEMS:**  
 Procyte Jan Marini  
 MD Forte Glyquin

**Garden Lights** Award winning landscape & pool development inc.

*Garden Lights is an Award Winning Landscape Design-Build Firm Offering Services in . . .*

- Landscape Design & Installation  
 Planting - Masonry - Concrete - Carpentry
- Low-voltage Landscape Lighting
- Pool / Spa Design & Installation
- Water Gardens, Ponds & Waterfalls




We design & install with just one call.  
 925-254-4797  
 Free Consultations



Serving the Lamorinda Area for 17 years. Bonded - Licensed & Insured

