

## Way to Grow

*Paving Your Way to a Better Hardscape*

by Steve & Cathy Lambert



Since the times of ancient Romans, Incans and Mongols, man has looked for ways to make roads and outdoor spaces last for centuries. The oldest paved road was discovered in 1994 in Giza, Egypt. Experts agree that this road is at least 4,600 years old. It was built with thousands of slabs of sandstone and limestone. The road was used to carry massive stones on sleds from a quarry in Lake Moeris to the temples in Giza.

Over 1900 years ago, the Roman Republic began using segmental pavers in their massive road systems of over 51,000 miles. Paved roads alleviated many of the past problems they faced such as mud, uneven terrain, and even dust, which made it difficult to navigate through heavily traveled areas. To solve these problems, the Roman built roads using deep gravel beds topped with six sided capping stones. Many miles of these roads still exist today proving their reliability and durability.

Over time, many other cultures copied the Roman's road design using gravel topped with stone. Cobble stones were very popular in most of Europe, while the British Isle preferred fired clay bricks. In Holland, which is below sea level, the ground constantly shifts, moves and sinks. Poured concrete and asphalt didn't hold up to all this movement so the Dutch turned to the use of individual stones placed in sand and gravel which provided a flexible, yet durable road.

After World War II, most of Europe was in need of reconstruction. Natural stone had become expensive and less available. Europeans weren't willing to give up on the charm and elegance that stone paving provided so they invented a new type of paving stone in an attempted to duplicate the beauty and strength of natural stone at a fraction of the cost. Interlocking pavers were born. They became available in the United States in the late 70's and early 80's. Since then, concrete pavers have become increasingly popular as the hardscape material of

choice for driveways, pool decks, walkways and patios.

Although it's best to examine all paving options when designing your landscape, pavers are an excellent choice for their affordability, durability and diversity of color, texture and pattern. In the long-term, pavers are more cost effective because of their durability. When properly installed, paver projects won't crack, settle, shift or creep like concrete and asphalt can. If pavers ever become stained, chipped, scratched or marred, they can be easily and seamlessly replaced. This is very difficult with most other types of pavement including stamped, stained or plain concrete. Paving stones are also very earthquake resistant.

Today's interlocking pavers come in a huge range of shapes, colors and finishes. Our favorite brand for just about any look is Belgard pavers.

If you're leaning toward a modern, streamline look, un-tumbled pavers with simple shapes laid in geometric patterns work nicely. Most styles of tumbled pavers will help achieve an "old-world" look. There are even several pavers that are manufactured to resemble cobblestones.

For homes with lots of brick work, choose pavers larger than the bricks to avoid an overly busy appearance. One of our favorite new pavers mimics an Ashler

pattern (random rectangle) with very large stones creating a nice streamline yet classic look.

If you love the look of flagstone, but not the cost, there are now less expensive flagstone styled pavers available in a random stone option.

Choosing the right color combinations for your pavers need not be a daunting task. The best advice when choosing paver colors is to select tones that work in harmony with your home's paint and trim colors. Pavers a few shades lighter or darker than the body of your house won't compete for attention. Gray and tan blend pavers work best in combination with brick on your house or in existing landscape. You can avoid monotony by combining two different colors or using pavers with blended colors. Color blends can consist of up to four colors that harmonize well together and give the surface an interesting and dynamic appearance. Avoid blends with drastic color contrasts as they tend to look busy and distracting. Choosing a subtle blend of colors also allows you (or a future owner) the flexibility to change house colors without being pigeon holed into a narrow color range.

The final decision is texture. Modern pavers vary from richly dimpled to smoother surfaces with edges that are gently distressed to rough hewn natural stone cuts. Using multiple textures can add even more interest and help to visually separate hard surface areas such as a patio from a walkway. Textures are also important for practical reasons. Rough textured surfaces are perfect for more relaxed areas like patios and porches. Smoother, more rounded pavers are ideal in high traffic areas and for bare feet on swimming pool decks.



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Pavers make an attractive hardscape around this backyard pool.

One space we do not recommend using smooth pavers for is on a steep driveway. We've seen this error made before, and it can be a very costly mistake. It's extremely important to use rough pavers with the right lay out to achieve proper traction on sloped driveways.

Another reason to choose pavers over concrete is their permeability. Pavers are a much more permeable hard surface allowing water to drain through therefore requiring fewer unsightly drains to be installed.

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