



## Patios, Pathways, Walls & More

Hardscaping is a term landscape contractor's use referring to the part of a home or building's grounds consisting of structures, such as patios, retaining walls, and walkways made with hard materials. Anything made of hard material that's not living is hardscaping.

Whether attempting a hardscaping project yourself or hiring a professional to do it for you, use the following tips to avoid expensive pitfalls:

**Look at the big picture.** Even if you're only tackling one element at a time, consider designing the entire area before you begin. Once a hardscape project is in, it can be costly and difficult to tear out and move.



**Pay attention to drainage.** Make sure you have adequate drainage and when possible capture the water and use it on site.

**Balance boulders.** A big rock, sitting on top of soil does not look natural. Bury boulders deep enough so they blend in and balance them with plants.

**Love your lines.** Think about the natural lines of your outdoor space, use curves to transition gracefully from one element to the next for a natural look. Hard rectangles and squares work well for a contemporary design.

**Leave some lawn.** Many homeowner in southwest states opt for all hardscape and plants but there's nothing like walking barefoot in your yard during summertime in Michigan. Leave enough grass to mow.

**Carefully mix colors.** Complement your home's exterior by finding two or three materials that coordinate with each other and your home. Consider texture as well as color and remember wood decks and railings count as a texture and color.

**Consult an engineer on big projects.** No explanation needed, it will cost you plenty if a big project fails structurally.

**Use good material.** A great design will only last as long as the material used holds up and don't skimp on site preparation only to have your hardscape settle and heave in frost.