

Gray stone pavers mirror the stone and shingles of the homes' facades, creating entrances as elegant as the homes.

Custom paving stones can enhance the exterior of a house by complementing its architecture. With a multitude of stone shape and color combinations, hardscaping can be customized to virtually any house; from very modern styles to the most traditional designs, there are paving stones to match. In areas where brick is common, Green says the variety is extremely wide because brick can be laid in countless styles. "Even a simple rectangular stone can be laid in different ways and in different patterns that would be either more traditional or more modern in style," Green says. "You can lay it in her-ringbone style for a more old-world feel, and if you lay it in a straight running line pattern, it's a little more modern."

Another way brick is used in hardscaping to complement the mode of a home is via its texture. A smooth surface will create a modern feel, while beat-up bricks are ideal for traditional homes. Systems Paving, for example used a tumbling process that beats up the brick to give it an old-world aesthetic. Beyond the basic shape of the brick, Green says there are myriad shapes available for paving stones. Triangle and square stones can be laid in many different patterns, like tile, for a modern look. Many options are also available for the old-world look, especially with cobbles, which are available in a variety of sizes.

"Products that have a multitude of sizes...can all be mixed together in a sort of random design," Green says. "These stones look extremely authentic - old-world-authentic - at a fraction of the cost it would be to go and find real European cobblestone, which would be five to 10 times the price." The weathered product

is the most popular trend that Green encounters. Aside from brick and cobblestone, Systems Paving has a new paving stone that resembles flagstone. This product comes in two options: smooth or bumpy and worn.

Color is another essential variable in determining the look of custom paving stones. For a natural look, Green suggests blending multiple colors and shapes. Any color is possible, from the more muted colors like red, brown, orange to bright atypical colors. "You can go really extreme," Green says. "We've done projects in cobalt blue, yellows and greens; that's not typical, but it can be done."

While the different colors and shapes of paving stones can be installed in any pattern imaginable, some of the common pattern trends include bordering with a different stone from the one in the middle, as well as modular, grid style patterns. Not only are the combinations of stone shapes, colors, and patterns limitless, but there are also many options available as to where to incorporate custom pavers. "Other than driveways, we do a lot of patios,



As Seen In



Worth the Drive

Put in some pretty paving and put out a well-appointed 'welcome mat' with a custom-crafted driveway. By Megan Curtis

The first impression of a house usually originates at its exterior, and homeowners accordingly put forth a lot of effort into maintaining the facade and landscaping of their homes. Cracked concrete driveways and decaying walkways, however, can disturb the overall appearance of even the most manicured houses. But thanks to interlocking paving stones, the driveway and other hardscape areas of a home can dress up a dwelling and elevate it to a striking aesthetic. "One might think it's just a driveway, but it's really out first impression of a house," says Larry Green, chairman and CEO of Systems Paving. "It's kind of the welcome mat of a home in a sense."

open air



PAVING THE (GREEN) WAY

The green movement did not overlook custom hardscaping. Systems Paving is starting to launch permeable pavers, which allow water to permeate through the surface and eventually diffuse to the surrounding natural soil to prevent runoff. Larry Green, chairman and CEO of Systems

Paving, says that some cities, especially those close to beaches, will start limiting the amount of hardscaping a home is allowed on its property. This permeable system, however, does not count as a hardscape. "It is not something we're doing a lot of today, but it is something that we believe will grow to be big as we go

down the road," Green says.

While the options are much more limited with the permeable pavers system, the trade-off may be worth it for homeowners who want an unrestricted amount of hardscaped surfaces or simply want an eco-friendly alternative to concrete.

walkways, swimming pool decks, little courtyard areas - anything that would be an exterior hard surface," Green says. "There are a lot of better options than just putting in concrete, even for service areas, like a place that might just be where trash cans go.

Paving stones can also be used to dress up outdoor socializing locations. Barbecue islands and fire pits, for example, can be customized to match the other handicapped areas of the house. Green says these types of areas are most often requested by returning customers. "We often have customers where we'll do one area and they'll love it so much that they decide to do another," Green says. "Sometimes we'll be in the middle of a project, but most of the time, I think what drives people to want to do another area is their surprise at how much difference the completed project makes and how beautiful it is."

Aside from the aesthetics, another benefit of custom interlocking paving stone is the time it takes - or rather, the lack thereof. From start to finish, Green says most projects take four to five days. Once the stones are in place, homeowners can drive on them almost immediately, unlike concrete, which has to set for days once it is poured. "It's very fast from a homeowner's standpoint because they are just dealing with downtime of the project construction itself," Green says. "You get this really customized product that you can use right away."

Plus, their durability is incomparable. Providing the laid correctly, Green says they will outlast and endure everything. Because they have the ability to expand and contract, pavers are practically crack-free. "These are pretty extreme examples, but even in earthquake and fire situations, where the house gets destroyed, the pavers are still perfect," Green notes. "These products are virtually indestructible, certainly if they're used for the intention that they're manufactured for."

Concrete may be less expensive, but it is neither as durable nor as aesthetically pleasing as custom interlocking paving stones. And with the infinite amount of stone combinations available, the exterior of any house can be dressed up with a coordinating paved stone surface. From both an aesthetic and durability standpoint, Green says, pavers are hard to beat.